

NAHP Update

Final NSPIRE Standards Available

BY JENNIFER JONES

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In 2018, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced it would overhaul the Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) Uniform Physical Condition Standards (UPCS) inspections. Since the end of April, and after a multiple-year demonstration, HUD has released updates regarding the new National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) protocol.

Those activities include the issuance of the NSPIRE final rule and the release of a score calculator.

To view the latest NSPIRE updates, webinars, workshops and other resources, visit https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/reac/nspire/.

NSPIRE FINAL RULE

On May 10, HUD published the final rule for NSPIRE in the *Federal Register*. According to the press release, the rule proposes a new approach to defining and assessing housing quality and reduces regulatory burden. The final rule publication follows 16 listening



sessions in 15 states with more than 3,330 attendees.

According to HUD, NSPIRE improves the department's oversight by aligning and consolidating inspection regulations to evaluate HUD housing across multiple programs. NSPIRE strengthens HUD's physical condition standards, formerly known as UPCS and the Housing Quality Standards. HUD's REAC inspects HUD-assisted properties in the public and Multifamily Housing programs.

The start dates for physical

inspections using the [NSPIRE Standards](#) are: Public Housing inspections begin July 1, and Housing Choice Vouchers, Project-Based Vouchers and Multifamily inspections start Oct. 1.

Some of the changes the final NSPIRE rule makes include the following:

■ New Self-Inspection Requirement and Report. Public housing authorities (PHAs) and owners must conduct self-inspections of all units at least annually and

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NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (NAHMA)—Protecting the Interests of Affordable Housing Property Managers and Owners

correct all identified deficiencies. Property self-inspection scores under 60 must be provided to HUD. Records related to the self-inspection should be maintained for three years.

■ **Timeline for Deficiency Correction.** For life-threatening and severe deficiencies, the PHA or owner must correct the deficiency within 24 hours after receiving the inspection report and upload evidence of that correction within 72 hours to HUD.

■ **New Affirmative Requirements.** HUD developed new “affirmative standards” for all units that participate in HUD’s rental assistance programs. These include basic requirements for habitability, such as kitchens and flushable toilets, but also essential safety concerns like Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter outlets, a permanent heating source, and safe drinking water.

■ **Tenant Involvement.** HUD will allow tenants to make



■ HUD Committing to Reviewing Standards at Least Every Three Years

■ Retaining 3-2-1 Rule

■ Changes to Deficiency Categories: Life-threatening, Severe, Moderate, Low (New)

■ Post-Inspection Report (New)

■ Smoke Detector and Carbon Monoxide Alarms Requirement

tion standards to consolidate and align housing quality requirements and associated inspection standards across programs. After developing and testing draft standards and receiving public comment on prior versions of the standards, HUD is providing the final NSPIRE physical inspection standards to accompany HUD’s final rule. Additionally, HUD is providing a list

ACCORDING TO THE NOTICE, “The rule provides that HUD publish in the Federal Register a set of NSPIRE inspection standards to consolidate and align housing quality requirements and associated inspection standards across programs.”

recommendations regarding units to be inspected and will require that the PHA or owner correct all identified deficiencies within established timeframes and provide inspection results to residents.

Additional changes in the final rule include the following:

■ Removal of the Occupancy Requirement Related to Children of the Opposite Sex

■ Elimination of Cosmetic Deficiencies

According to the notice, “The rule provides that HUD publish in the Federal Register a set of NSPIRE inspec-

tion standards to consolidate and align housing quality requirements and associated inspection standards in place of codifying the list, which HUD proposed in the ‘Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA) of 2016—Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)

NAHPUpdate

summer 2023
volume 21 | number 3

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NAHP Update is published four times a year by the National Affordable Housing Management Association, 400 North Columbus St, Suite 203, Alexandria, VA 22314, Phone 703-683-8630, website: www.nahma.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Complimentary to NAHMA credential holders.

QUERIES: Letters to the Editor and other queries should be sent to Jennifer Jones, jjones@nahma.org or to the address above.

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and Project Based Voucher Implementation: Additional Streamlining Changes' proposed rule."

SCORING CALCULATOR

Additionally, HUD released a tool to help PHAs, property owners and agents calculate their estimated inspection score under the new NSPIRE protocol.

[The NSPIRE Score Calculator](#) tallies a possible NSPIRE score based on the types and locations of deficiencies identified during an NSPIRE inspection. HUD cautions that the score is only an estimate since other factors can impact the actual inspection score.

Property owners and NSPIRE Demonstration participant properties using the calculator tool are advised not to use their last UPCS score or demo results in the proposed NSPIRE scoring methodology to forecast an NSPIRE score.

UPCS and NSPIRE standards do not offer an apples-to-apples comparison. For example, a door deficiency in a unit under UPCS may not align directly with door deficiencies under NSPIRE, which has multiple door standards.

HUD also said if properties limit the severe life-threatening and life-threatening defects inside a unit, the chances increase for a better score as the focus is on resident health and safety.

NSPIRE HISTORY

NSPIRE is HUD's new physical inspection model designed to promote the goal of reducing health and safety hazards in the home. To achieve this goal, NSPIRE prioritizes the condition of residents' homes and aligns multiple HUD programs to a single set of inspection standards.

To develop NSPIRE, HUD collaborated with diverse stakeholders, including property owners and



update standards and to score at least every three years.

According to HUD, NSPIRE makes key inspection improvements to increase objectivity, accuracy, and consistency. Under NSPIRE, inspections are based on deficiency indicators to ensure deficiencies cited by inspectors accurately reflect substandard conditions within a property.

With NSPIRE, inspec-

ter living conditions for residents. NSPIRE inspections will more accurately reflect the true physical conditions of properties and ensure that property owners adopt sound maintenance practices to eliminate health and safety hazards that may threaten residents. By emphasizing the condition of residents' homes, the new inspection model aligns more closely with stakeholder expectations regarding housing quality. As a result, NSPIRE will encourage property owners to perform year-round maintenance and promptly address health and safety deficiencies. Properties will not be expected to expend more resources but rather shift their maintenance plans to prioritize residents' health and safety. It will also eliminate unnecessary complexity by aligning inspection standards across diverse HUD programs while accommodating flexible protocols. **NU**

Jennifer Jones is senior director of communications and public relations for NAHMA.

NSPIRE INSPECTIONS WILL MORE ACCURATELY reflect the true physical conditions of properties and ensure that property owners adopt sound maintenance practices to eliminate health and safety hazards that may threaten residents.

According to HUD, this will yield inaccurate results because the past inspections only offer a snapshot of a property at a particular point in time. Additionally, all NSPIRE Demo inspections used previous versions of the NSPIRE Standards, which have changed. Furthermore,

managers, public housing agencies, public health and public safety professionals, and resident groups, who provided critical input to the standards, processes, and protocols. Under NSPIRE, HUD plans to leverage inspection data, lessons learned, and stakeholder feedback to

tors for HUD-assisted and HUD-insured housing will be able to conduct objective, defensible, and consistent assessments to evaluate housing conditions. According to HUD, this will result in inspection results that more accurately indicate property conditions and promote bet-

Invest in Yourself

You can never go wrong when investing in yourself, and NAHMA can help you achieve your professional goals. NAHMA offers several professional education and certification programs.

*National Accredited Housing Maintenance Technician (NAHMT)

*National Accredited Housing Maintenance Supervisor (NAHMS)

*National Affordable Housing Professional (NAHP)

*National Affordable Housing Professional-Executive (NAHP-e)

*Specialist in Housing Credit Management (SHCM)

*Blended Compliance Designation (BCD)

*Certified Professional of Occupancy (CPO)

*Credential for Green Property Management (CGPM)

*Fair Housing Act (FHC)



For more information, visit www.NAHMA.org and click on Education.

COQ Awards Honor Achievements Of Affordable Housing Providers

Now is the time to start thinking about your entry for the NAHMA 2023

Communities of Quality (COQ) Awards competition. The awards competition submission deadline to NAHMA is Nov. 2. The [COQ Awards](#) recognize outstanding property management companies providing the highest quality of safe, affordable multifamily rental housing in communities nationwide.

A property must first apply for and achieve [national recognition](#) as a NAHMA Community of Quality with a minimum score of 325 points on its National Recognition application to be eligible for the awards competition. The deadline for submitting a COQ National Recognition application to a local AHMA for consideration in the national program is Sept. 7.

Suppose a property initially received less than 325 points when its COQ National Recognition application was first submitted. In that case, the property may update the original application to earn more points if improvements have



2022 COQ award winner Stanfill Towers in New Jersey.

since been made. Detailed instructions for updating the initial COQ National Recognition application are included in the COQ Awards application brochure.

"The Communities of Quality Awards honor the achievements of affordable housing providers who make an unprecedented contribution to developing outstanding properties for families of modest means. NAHMA believes it is essential that outstanding affordable properties—and the individuals who maintain them—be publicly recognized for providing quality housing that offers a safe, healthy environment," Larry Sisson, FHC, SHCM, NAHP-e,

CGPM, chair of the NAHMA Board of Directors, said. "They are communities supplying essential programs and services for their residents. These awards bring well-deserved valuable attention to the important work we are all doing."

The COQ Awards competition has five categories: Exemplary Family Development; Exemplary Development for the Elderly; Exemplary Development for Residents with Special Needs; Exemplary Development for Single Room Occupancy Housing; and Outstanding Turnaround of a Troubled Property.

Management companies are invited to enter more than one category and/or multiple entries in a single category; however, each property may only be entered in one category.

Award winners will be notified in early January 2024. They will receive their awards in a special ceremony at the NAHMA Biannual Top Issues in Affordable Housing Winter Conference, March 6-8, 2024, in Washington, D.C.

This year's COQ Awards program is jointly sponsored by

Navigate Affordable Housing Partners, a nonprofit engaged in developing, owning, and managing affordable housing, is also a federal contractor providing compliance and financial services on behalf of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the Section 8 Performance-Based Contract Administrator (PBCA) for multiple states; and Yardi, which develops and supports industry-leading compliance, accounting and property management software for every type and size of the affordable housing provider.

An overview of the COQ program and the awards' detailed application information and submission materials are available at the NAHMA website at <http://www.nahma.org/awards-con-tests/communities-of-quality/>.

The National COQ Recognition Program application was recently revised, making it easier to read, understand, and complete. The changes also make it accessible for non-HUD properties to participate in the national recognition program.

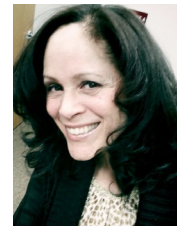
The AHMAs will also honor their local NAHMA Communities of Quality program participants. Please check the local AHMA's program details; a directory of the AHMAs is available on the NAHMA website <http://www.nahma.org/membership/ahma-directory/>.

For more information about the COQ program and awards, contact Paulette Washington at 703-683-8630, ext. 110 or pwashington@nahma.org. **NU**

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Most Rewarding, Challenging, And Humbling Experiences

NAME: Maria Cotto, NAHP-e, CPO

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: The Community Builders Inc.

POSITION: District Manager/Senior Property Manager

When asked how she got involved in the affordable housing industry, Maria Cotto said, “By default.”

In 1988, Cotto was hired as project manager for a local community development corporation in Worcester, Mass., that had a property consisting of six residential units and two commercial units under

the Meredith Management Company and the Main South Community Development Corporation.

“I like working with a great team beyond the sites and community,” Cotto said of her longevity in the industry. “It’s helping and meeting the needs of our community and working through many industry challenges and

tified Occupancy Specialist from the National Center for Housing Management and C14P certification. Additionally, she is a Notary Public.

Cotto likes exercising and tending to her vegetable garden when she isn’t working. Cotto also enjoys attempting to learn new languages—or at least the basics of a new language, she said.

“IT’S HELPING AND MEETING THE NEEDS of our community and working through many industry challenges and changes that keep me in the industry.”

construction that needed management during an occupied rehabilitation. Wearing many hats, she has been in the industry ever since.

For the past year, Cotto has been a district manager for The Community Builders Inc. and a senior community manager for the last 12 years. Previously, she was a community manager, then general manager for TGM Associates, and a property manager for

changes that keep me in the industry.”

As for the future, Cotto expects to remain in the affordable housing industry for as long as she can.

“It is what I find joy in; being of service to others,” she said.

Cotto earned her bachelor’s degree in business administration and management from Curry College in Massachusetts in 2007. Besides her NAHP-e and CPO, she has earned a Cer-

For anyone considering a career in the affordable housing industry, Cotto said, “Over the last 35 years of working in various housing industries, the affordable housing industry is by far the most rewarding, challenging, and humbling experience of my career.” —JJ