

# CHG-Homelessness Prevention: Habitability Certification and Inspection Policy

Spokane County & City of Spokane  
Lead Grantees / System Administrators

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## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all rental units receiving homelessness prevention rent assistance meet minimum habitability standards and comply with the Washington State Landlord-Tenant law prior to the release of funds. This policy protects households from being placed or stabilized in unsafe housing conditions and ensures public funds are not used to subsidize uninhabitable units.

## Applicability

This policy applies to all households receiving homelessness prevention rent assistance, including but not limited to:

- Rental arrears
- Current rent payments
- Move-in assistance where rent is paid directly to a landlord

This requirement applies regardless of referral source, housing type, or length of assistance. The only exception is if a household moves in with friends or family.

## Required Habitability Certification

Prior to the issuance of any rent payment, the provider must obtain one of the following acceptable forms of habitability verification, completed for the assisted unit.

Acceptable verification includes any one of the following:

1. CHG Landlord Habitability Standards Certification and Tenant Acknowledgment (landlord and tenant signed)
2. Washington State Department of Commerce Housing Habitability Standards (HHS) Inspection Form
3. HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Form

The verification must:

- Confirm the unit meets minimum habitability standards
- Be completed prior to payment
- Be retained in the client file

No rent payment may be made without acceptable habitability documentation on file.

## Use of Landlord Habitability Certification

When the CHG Landlord Habitability Standards Certification form is used:

- The form must be signed by the landlord or authorized representative and the tenant
- The provider may rely on the certification unless the tenant discloses habitability concerns, or the provider has reason to believe the unit may not meet standards

## Tenant Disclosure of Habitability Concerns

If, during completion of the certification form or at any point prior to payment, a tenant discloses habitability concerns, the provider must suspend payment processing and initiate an inspection.

Habitability concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of heat, water, electricity, or hot water
- Mold, pests, water intrusion, or sewage issues
- Unsafe electrical, plumbing, or structural conditions
- Any condition that endangers health or safety

Tenant disclosure overrides landlord certification for the purposes of payment approval.

### Required Inspection Following Disclosure

When an inspection is triggered, the provider must complete one of the following inspections:

- Washington State Department of Commerce Housing Habitability Standards (HHS) Inspection, or
- HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection

Inspection requirements:

- The inspection may be conducted on-site or via live video, at the provider's discretion
- The inspection must document whether the unit meets minimum habitability standards
- Inspection documentation must be retained in the client file

### Units Failing Inspection

If the unit does not pass inspection:

- No rent payment may be made until deficiencies are corrected
- The landlord must address identified habitability issues and provide confirmation of correction
- A re-inspection (HHS or HQS) must confirm compliance before payment may proceed

Rental assistance cannot be used to subsidize units that fail habitability standards.

### Documentation and Monitoring

Providers must retain the following in the client file:

- Completed Landlord Habitability Standards Certification Form
- Inspection documentation, if applicable
- Any correspondence related to habitability concerns and resolution

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- Disallowed costs
- Repayment of funds
- Findings during monitoring

### Authority

This policy is issued pursuant to:

- RCW 59.18 (Residential Landlord-Tenant Act)
- Washington State Department of Commerce Consolidated Homeless Grant requirements
- SMC 10.57 (Regulation of Residential Rental Housing)