

# HCV-HQS Remote Video Inspection: Best Practices

Overview and Inspection Protocols



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# Introduction

- The COVID-19 pandemic and advances in technology have ushered in a new way to conduct Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections.
- Smartphones and tablets with advanced video streaming make it possible to conduct a Remote Video Inspection (RVI) for HQS.
- An RVI occurs when an inspector performs an HQS inspection from a remote location using video streaming handled by a proxy at the inspection site.
- The proxy follows the directions of the HQS inspector through the entire inspection process.
- In a Building Inspection Service Company (BISCO) survey of 19 public housing authorities (PHAs) conducted in February 2021, all respondents said that RVIs will be a useful tool in the post-COVID-19 age but will not replace onsite inspections.

# History of Subsidized Housing

- 1937 Housing Act.
- 1974 Housing and Community Development Act.
- 1998 Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act.
- 2016 Uniform Physical Condition Standards for Vouchers (UPCS-V) Demonstration.
- 2019 National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) Demonstration.
- 2020 Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) notice allowing RVIs for the HCV program.

# Scope of RVI Best Practices

- To provide guidance to PHA staff when implementing RVIs for their HCV program.
- To discuss scheduling, coordinating, documenting, conducting, and processing for RVIs.
- To present a standardized program that addresses how to prepare for, conduct, and participate in an HQS RVI.

# Purpose of HQS

- The goal of the HCV program is to provide “decent, safe, and sanitary” housing at an affordable cost to low-income families.
- HQS helps the U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD) and PHAs accomplish that goal, including by defining “standard housing.”
- HQS establishes the minimum quality criteria for the health and safety of program participants.
- All units must meet HQS to participate in the HCV program.

# Regulations That Cover HQS

- HQS regulations are found at 24 CFR 982.
- Lead-based paint (LBP) regulations are found at 24 CFR 35.110.
- Chapter 10 of the HCV Program Guidebook: HQS.
- Chapter 17 of the HCV Program Guidebook: Special Housing Types.
- Federal Register: SEMAP final rule, September 10, 1998.
- HQS Inspection Long Form HUD-52580-a with Summary Page.
- HQS Inspection Short Form HUD- 52580.
- The PHA Administrative Plan.
- State and local building and housing codes.
- Notice PIH 2011-29 (HA): Electrical Outlets Guidance.
- Notice PIH 2013-17: Use of Photos to Improve HQS Oversight.
- Federal Register: Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA).
- PIH Notices 2020-5/2020-13, REV-1: PHA Waivers.
- PIH Notice 2020-31: RVIs for HCV Programs.

# HOTMA Life-Threatening Deficiencies

- Natural or liquefied petroleum (LP) gas or fuel leaks.
- Any electrical condition that could result in shock or fire.
- Inoperable heating system.
- Utilities not in service.
- Conditions that present imminent possibility of bodily injury.
- Blocked egress.
- Inoperable toilet.
- Missing smoke detector.
- Missing carbon monoxide (CO) detector.
- Missing, damaged, or expired fire extinguisher.
- Misaligned chimney venting.
- Deteriorated LBP.

# RVI: HQS Inspector

- **HQS inspections** are conducted by the PHA's HQS inspector or a contract inspector to ensure that potential and current HCV program units meet minimum performance and acceptability criteria in each of 13 key housing quality aspects.
- **Remote video HQS inspections** are conducted by the PHA's HQS inspector or a contract inspector from a remote location using video streaming technology, with a person (i.e., the proxy) operating the camera at the inspection site to ensure that units meet the minimum performance and acceptability criteria in each of the 13 key housing quality aspects.



# RVI: HQS Inspection Types

- Initial inspections.
- Annual or biennial inspections.
- Special inspections.

# Remote Video Inspector: Requirements

- Must be a certified HQS inspector.
- Must complete the free online LBP visual assessment training course.
- Must have a fully charged, high-resolution laptop with a large screen or monitor, or a data collection device (DCD; i.e., a standalone tablet or smartphone).
- Must have HUD Form 52580-a or 52580, or a DCD loaded with HUD-approved HQS software.
- Must have reliable internet connection, such as wi-fi or cellular (4G or better).
- Must have a clear script to direct the proxy.
- Must use a systemic approach to inspect each inspectable area and system.
- Must practice RVI before going live.

# Remote Video Inspector: Giving Instructions

- The ability to give instructions is a skill that can be developed and proactively managed by the RVI inspector.
- A disregarded instruction or missed step can lead to a loss of efficiency, compromise the quality of the RVI, negatively impact the proxy's experience, and have health- and safety-related consequences.
- Use two-way communication to check for understanding and agreement between the remote HQS inspector and the proxy, especially as to their respective roles and responsibilities.

# Remote Video Inspector: Clear Instructions Guide

- Use direct, clear, and specific commands.
- Give skill-appropriate instructions.
- Give instructions one at a time.
- Use appropriate tone and do not lose your cool.
- Keep explanations simple.
- Repeat your directions, if needed.
- Give the proxy time to process.
- Break the RVI into manageable chunks.

# Proxy Requirements

- Must be a landlord, property representative, tenant, or an adult associated with the tenancy and at least 18 years of age. If a minor, must be accompanied by an adult.
- Must complete the free online LBP visual assessment training course if the unit was built before 1978 and if a child under age 6 resides there.
- Must provide email address or phone number and a preferred RVI platform.
- Must have a fully charged, high-resolution smartphone or tablet with camera.

## Proxy Requirements (continued)

- Must have a reliable internet connection, such as wi-fi or cellular (4G or better), on their device and at the inspection location.
- Must be able to follow the remote inspector's directions.
- Must be able to smell natural gas, methane, or other noxious gases.
- Must have a tape measure, flashlight, two-prong outlet tester, ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet tester, and long stick to test smoke and CO detectors.

# Proxy: Receiving Instructions

- Following instructions is important for making the RVI simpler, ensuring that the inspection is done effectively, eliminating confusion, and saving time.
- When instructions and directions are properly followed, the RVI will be successful.
- It is very important for the proxy to follow instructions and directions during the RVI. If they do not, many unnecessary or unwarranted side effects may occur.

# Proxy: Receiving Instructions Guide

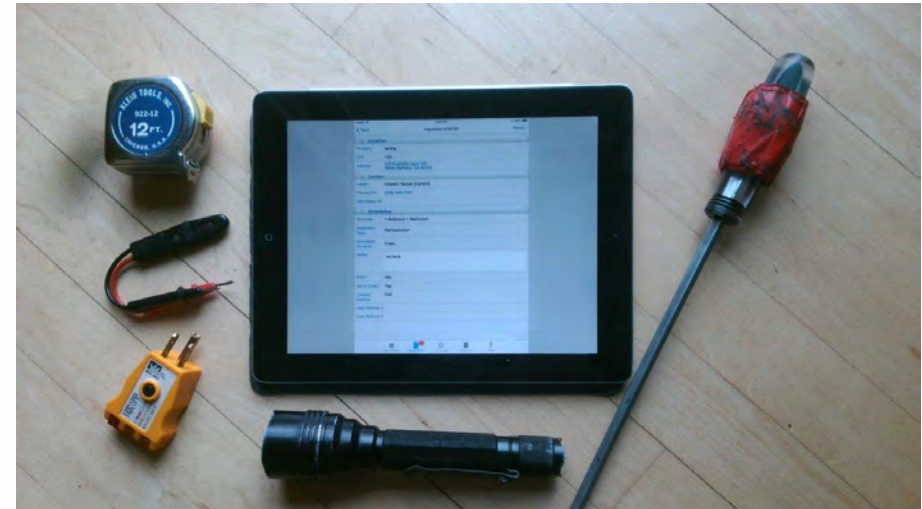
- Listen carefully.
- Take your time.
- Follow the remote inspector's instructions and directions.
- Ask questions if you do not understand the instructions or directions.
- Speak up if for some reason you cannot do what is asked.
- Have a positive attitude.
- Take care of your part of the inspection and do not worry about the inspector's role.



# Scheduling the RVI

- The remote inspector will use the standard HQS procedures for scheduling the RVI.
- The HQS inspector will give the proxy information that describes the RVI, discusses the proxy's responsibilities, and describes how to prepare and conduct the RVI and receive the inspection results.
- The inspector will provide a contact number and email address for landlords and tenants to discuss questions or concerns.
- The PHA will deliver tools to the proxy, as necessary.
- The remote inspector will call the proxy the morning of the inspection at the phone number provided to establish the appointment window.
- The remote inspector will initiate the RVI call to the proxy at the scheduled time on their preferred platform (or application) and will conduct the inspection remotely.
- Due to unpredictable workloads, the inspector may call as many as 15 minutes before or 15 minutes after the agreed-upon inspection time.

# Inspection Necessities



# Proxy Prepares for the RVI

- Read and fully understand the platform login instructions for Android and iPhone.
- Download the preferred application (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams) onto a smartphone or tablet before the inspection.
- Prepare to accept the electronic invitation from the inspector at the scheduled time.
- Turn off phone notifications that may interrupt the call.

iPhone iOS 8.4+	Android OS 5
<p>In Settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tap on “Do Not Disturb.”</li><li>• Set the “Manual” slide button to green.</li><li>• Scroll down to “Silence.”</li><li>• Tap next to “Always” to add a checkmark.</li></ul>	<p>In Settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tap “Sound.”</li><li>• Tap “Do Not Disturb.”</li><li>• Slide to “Off.”</li></ul>



# Proxy Prepares for the RVI (continued)

- Use earbuds with an integrated microphone, if possible.
- Set the phone so there is a small-screen view of what the remote inspector sees:
  - Clean camera lens and screen for maximum clarity.
  - Tap the platform screen (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams).
  - Tap the camera icon.
  - Tap the reverse camera icon in the small view that the inspector sees.
- Have all the required tools necessary for the inspection.
  - Tape measure; flashlight; two-prong outlet tester; GFCI outlet tester; long stick to test smoke detectors, CO detectors, auxiliary lights, and emergency lights.
- Stop any loud activities (e.g., dryer, dishwasher, TV, window AC unit), as background noise will make it difficult to communicate with the inspector.
- Allow 60 minutes for the inspection.

# Conducting the RVI: Overview

- The remote inspector receives the video stream and directs the proxy around the unit, common areas, building exterior, site, and neighborhood.
- The remote inspector records data on the HUD forms or DCD.
- The proxy walks through the unit in a clockwise direction (i.e., going to the right), starting at the unit entry door and inspecting the first floor, second floor, then the basement.
- The proxy tells the inspector the number of bedrooms and locations (e.g., first floor, left rear bedroom).
- The proxy walks around the common areas used by the tenant, the building exterior, and the site and neighborhood.
- The proxy restores their preferred settings on their phone after the inspection and the call are completed.

# Conducting the RVI: Section 8 HQS Protocol

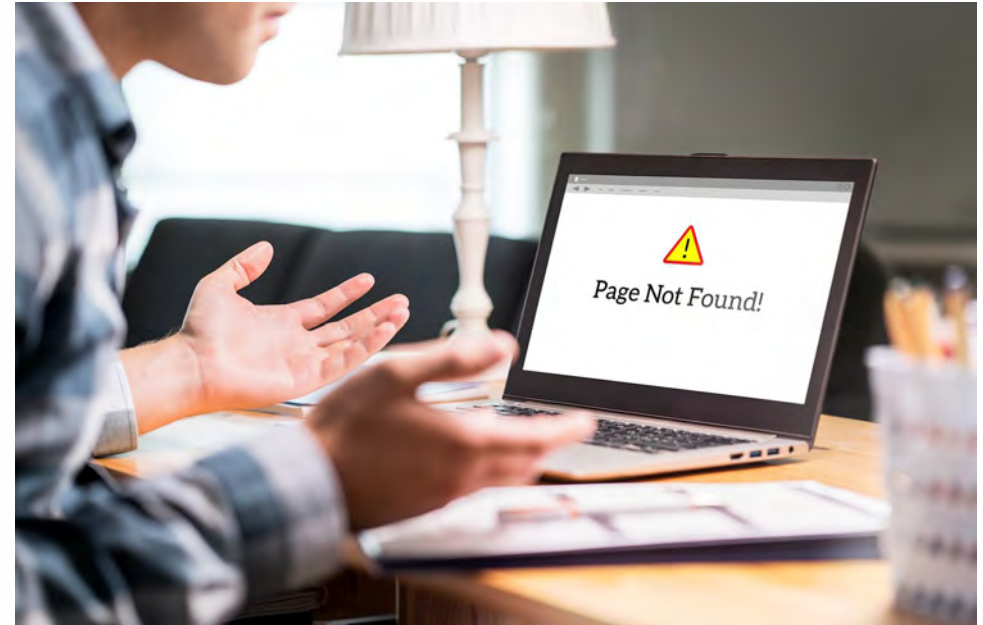
- Use HUD Form 52580-a Booklet (long form) or HUD Form 52580 Inspection Checklist (short form) or a DCD loaded with HUD-approved HQS software.
- HQS requires the following areas to be inspected:
  - Living room
  - Kitchen
  - Bathroom
  - Bedrooms
  - Other rooms
  - Secondary rooms
  - Building exterior
  - Plumbing and heating
  - Health and safety

# Conducting the RVI: Step by Step

- The remote inspector calls the proxy at the scheduled date and time (plus or minus 15 minutes).
- The proxy receives the email with the video link and opens the platform.
- The inspector instructs the proxy to switch the camera to the outward (i.e., rear-facing) camera.
- The proxy and inspector verify that the video streaming connection is good.

# Lost Connection

- **Tell the proxy:**
  - If the video freezes, wait for streaming to return.
  - If the RV inspector drops the call, wait for the inspector to return.
  - If the proxy drops the call, sign back on.
  - If a dropped call cannot be reconnected, the inspection will be completed onsite later.





# Video Clip: Inspection Introduction



# Conducting the RVI: Step by Step (continued)

- The proxy follows the directions of the remote inspector.
- The inspector tells the proxy to move to the street and point the camera at the front of the unit.
- The inspector tells the proxy to move toward the unit and point the camera at the address of the assisted unit.
- The inspector records the unit address on the HUD form or DCD.



# Video Clip: Address Identification





# Conducting the RVI: Step by Step (continued)

- The remote HQS inspector and proxy will make every attempt to provide adequate privacy safeguards for the **protection of personally identifiable information**.
- The remote inspector and proxy must make sure that **NO personal or easily identifiable information** appears in the video.



# Video Clip: Unit Entry Door Inspection



# Conducting the RVI: Unit Inspection

- The unit is a group of rooms located within a structure forming a single habitable space, with facilities used by the tenant for living, sleeping, cooking, and eating. According to HQS protocol, the inspectable areas include:
  - Living room
  - Kitchen
  - Bathroom
  - Bedrooms
  - Other rooms
  - Secondary rooms
  - Building exterior
  - Plumbing and heating
  - General health and safety

# Conducting the RVI: Preview of the Next HQS Inspection Modules

- **Unit Interior Rooms:** Living Room, Kitchen, and Bathroom.
- **Unit Interior Rooms:** Bedrooms, Other Rooms Used for Living, All Secondary Rooms.
- Electric, Plumbing, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and Building Exterior.
- **General Health and Safety:** Common Areas, Elevators, and Site and Neighborhood.



Thank You  
for Watching!

