

MAINTENANCE GUIDEBOOK I - MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

CHAPTER SIX - VACANT UNITS

SECTION A PROGRAM

One of the prime objectives of an HA is to have vacant units reoccupied as quickly as possible. Since rents generate a significant portion of an HA's income, a substantial number of vacancy days cuts into this source of income. Also, there is a great need for public housing, as indicated by lengthy waiting lists. The more quickly the units are turned around, the more this need is met. Finally, vacant units are an invitation to vandalism and security problems, which create an undesirable and unsafe environment.

Vacant-unit turnaround is also a PHMAP indicator. To receive an 'A' rating for indicator #5, vacant units must be prepped and leased within 20 days. To ensure that this time limit is met, HAs should develop an aggressive system to ensure that all relevant inspections, work orders, and work are completed in an expeditious manner.

SECTION B SCHEDULE

Inspections should be scheduled and work orders issued for vacant-unit turnaround as soon as notice is given or a vacant unit is discovered. All HA staff members, and housing and maintenance personnel in particular, should be instructed to keep a constant watch for vacant units (for cases of skip-moves). Vacant units should be inspected as soon as possible (move-out inspection in the presence of the resident, if possible), the unit secured, the locks changed, the utility meters (if applicable) read, prep work completed, and the unit re-occupied.

For planning purposes, the HA should review move-out records of the previous year during formulation of the annual plan. Those records will enable them to estimate the vacancies likely to occur during the coming year. When appropriate, transfers should also be included in the estimate to plan the work load.

SECTION C VACANT-UNIT TURNAROUND SYSTEM

A good vacant-unit turnaround program should be carefully planned, promptly scheduled, and completed. Following is a generalized guide to assist HAs in developing their vacant-unit turnaround programs. This guide may be adjusted to fit the actual needs.

- Notice is received, or it has been detected, that a unit will be or is vacated.
- Exit inspection is conducted with resident (if possible).

- Deficiencies found during inspection are noted, and those, if any, which are chargeable to the resident are identified. (Have the resident sign the inspection form.)
- Where applicable, utility meters are read.
- The unit is secured and locks are changed.
- Complete custodial clean-out is performed.
- Appliances and heating system are serviced. (Areas of high vandalism may require that appliances be removed until reoccupancy takes place.)
- Electrical and plumbing systems are repaired as needed.
- Doors and windows are adjusted and kitchen cabinets repaired.
- Floor tile, walls, and ceilings are repaired and the unit painted.
- Unit is inspected to ensure that all needed work has been completed.
- Move-in inspection is conducted with new resident. (Write work orders for any items that are missing or needed and complete them within 24 hours.) Determine whether any disability accommodations are required. Complete the move-in inspection form to identify condition of the unit so that the new resident will not be held liable for existing defects. Then have him or her sign it.
- Instruct new resident on cleaning techniques, proper operation of appliances, procedure for requesting maintenance, and emergency service.

Again, vacant-unit turnaround is PHMAP indicator #5. Having the unit prepped and reoccupied within 20 days should always be the objective.

SECTION D RECORDS

All inspection reports, resident charges, checklists, work orders, and contracts should be maintained in a permanent filing system. Such records will assist management in resolving debated issues, maintaining readily available materials, supplies, and equipment, budgeting for repairs or replacements, and estimating future vacancy rates.

At least two forms should be used in the vacant-unit turnaround process: one inspection form which is used for both the Move-Out Inspection and for the Move-In Inspection, and the Vacancy Control Log. This same form is used for the annual unit inspection (See Appendix D).

1. MOVE-IN INSPECTION

This form or checklist should be used when conducting the entry inspection with the new resident. It should contain:

- Development number,
- Unit number or address,
- Names of Inspector and new resident,
- Date,
- Missed or unfinished work items,
- Status of unit, appliances, and fixtures,
- Instructions given to the resident,
- Inspector's signature,
- Resident's signature.

2. MOVE-OUT INSPECTION

This form should be used for conducting the exit inspection with the vacating resident (except when the resident is unavailable). It should contain:

- Development number,
- Unit number or address,
- Names of Inspector and former resident,
- Date,
- Deficiencies and work required to correct them,
- Defects for which the resident is responsible,
- Inspector's signature,
- Resident's signature,
- Date(s) work is completed and by whom (to be completed after inspection by HA staff),
- Date unit is inspected for reoccupancy and by whom (to be completed after inspection by HA staff).

3. VACANCY-CONTROL LOG

HAs should establish a system to track the vacancies as required by PHMAP indicator #5. The log should include, but not be limited to:

- Development number,
- Unit number or address,
- Bedroom size,
- Date vacated,
- Date of work order issued,
- Work order number,
- Date of work-order completion,
- Date the unit was rented,
- Whether the unit is accessible for mobility-impaired residents (including whether certain features have been limited because of load-bearing structural members and if access to another floor is limited to stairs) or for sight or hearing impaired.
- Comments.

Sample forms are included in Appendix D for review or use as models.

END OF CHAPTER SIX