



Housing Choice Voucher Program

Owner • Landlord Participation Guide

Updated for 2026



HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM (HCV PROGRAM)

OWNER/LANDLORD PARTICIPATION GUIDE

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program is a federally funded program managed by RIHousing that helps renter families by subsidizing a portion of their monthly rent.

As a landlord, you'll still manage your property as usual—choosing tenants, collecting rent, maintaining the unit, and lease terms. The paperwork is minimal, and you retain full management rights and responsibilities.

This guidebook offers a helpful overview of what to expect when renting to HCV tenants. It highlights key information for landlords, though it doesn't cover every detail.

Have questions or ready to get started?
Contact us at **landlords@rihousing.com**



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WHO ARE THE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS?

The HCV Program assists income eligible tenants from across the state. Participants may be single, couples, families with children or the elderly. The program helps tenants find a home in the community of their choice by paying a portion of their rent.

WHERE CAN THEY RENT?

Our HCV Program participants can rent in the following towns:

Barrington	Glocester	Narragansett	Richmond
Block Island	Hopkinton	Newport	Scituate
Charlestown	Jamestown	North Kingstown	South Kingstown
Exeter	Little Compton	North Smithfield	West Greenwich
Foster	Middletown	Portsmouth	

If your property is not located in one of the towns listed above, it falls under the responsibility of the local Public Housing Authority (PHA). Property owners should contact the PHA in that municipality directly to get information about how the HCV Program is managed in their area.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

Individuals and families apply to RIHousing to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. While the waitlist for a voucher is long, those selected receive a voucher that allows them to choose rental housing in the private market.

Program participants typically live in a variety of housing types, including multi-family buildings, single-family homes, and duplexes. All rental housing types are eligible, as long as the unit meets program requirements.

RIHousing provides the monthly rental assistance payments directly to participating property owners. Tenants are responsible for paying their share of the rent directly to the owner.

All units must pass a RIHousing inspection before a tenant moves in, and inspections are repeated every two years. These inspections check that the homes meet general safety and health standards.

THE PARTNERSHIP

RIHousing partners with property owners and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide quality, affordable housing for lower-income residents.

Once a unit passes inspection and the rent is approved, the property owner and tenant sign a lease agreement. The tenant contributes between 30% and 40% of their income toward rent, and RIHousing covers the remaining balance.

To formalize this arrangement, RIHousing and the property owner sign a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract. This contract ensures that RIHousing pays its share of the rent directly to the property owner each month.



PROPERTY OWNER OBLIGATIONS

Here are some of the main responsibilities property owners take on when participating in the HCV Program:

- Screening and selecting tenants through your usual process—RIHousing does not screen for suitability.
- Maintaining the property and making necessary repairs in a timely manner.
- Notifying and coordinating with RIHousing to approve all household members living in the unit.
- Collecting the security deposit and the tenant's portion of the rent directly from the tenant.
- Enforcing the lease terms and addressing any violations by the tenant.
- Paying for utilities and services unless otherwise specified in the lease as the tenant's responsibility.
- Complying with the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract signed with RIHousing.
- Submitting all tenant-related communication in writing to RIHousing and maintaining records of all correspondence (to ensure accuracy and avoid misunderstandings).
- Informing RIHousing immediately if the tenant vacates the unit.
- Notifying RIHousing of any changes in property ownership.
- Complying with all fair housing, federal, state and local laws

TENANT OBLIGATIONS

Below is a summary of key responsibilities tenants must follow while participating in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program:

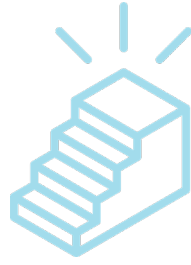
- Find a qualified rental unit within the approved rent limits.
- Complete all required paperwork and pay the security deposit, if applicable.
- Attend all scheduled appointments and submit documents on time.
- Report the names of all household members living in the unit to both the property owner and RIHousing.
- Keep the unit in good condition and repair any damage beyond normal wear and tear.
- Do not sublease, assign the lease, or transfer the unit to another party.
- Pay your portion of the rent on time each month.
- Pay for any utilities not covered by the landlord, as stated in the lease.
- Follow the lease terms and meet all family obligations under the HCV Program.

RIHOUSING OBLIGATIONS

Below is a summary of key responsibilities RIHousing fulfills:

- Determine tenant eligibility, appropriate unit size, and reasonable rent.
- Issue housing vouchers to eligible tenants.
- Conduct program briefings for tenants and enforce HCV Program rules.
- Inspect rental units to ensure they meet NSPIRE standards.
- Approve the rental unit, property owner, and lease, including joint approval of all household members residing in the unit.
- Make Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) directly to the property owner each month.





STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

For Participating in the HCV Program

1

Find a Tenant

Eligible tenants are issued a voucher and will contact property owners directly.

Property owners can list their available rental units with RIHousing on HousingSearchRI.org. For more information, contact lanlords@rihousing.com or (401) 443-1661.

2

Approve a Tenant

Property owners are encouraged to screen potential tenants based on tenancy history, including factors such as:

- Past rent and bill-paying history
- History of caring for property
- Respecting the rights of others to peaceful enjoyment of the property
- Compliance with essential conditions of tenancy

Property owners are responsible for screening HCV participants just as they would any other prospective tenant, using their standard application and screening process.

Tenants are responsible for paying the security deposit; however, the amount cannot exceed one month's rent.

3

Submit a Leasing Packet

Property owners must complete and submit the following documents. Some forms require signatures from both the owner and the tenant:

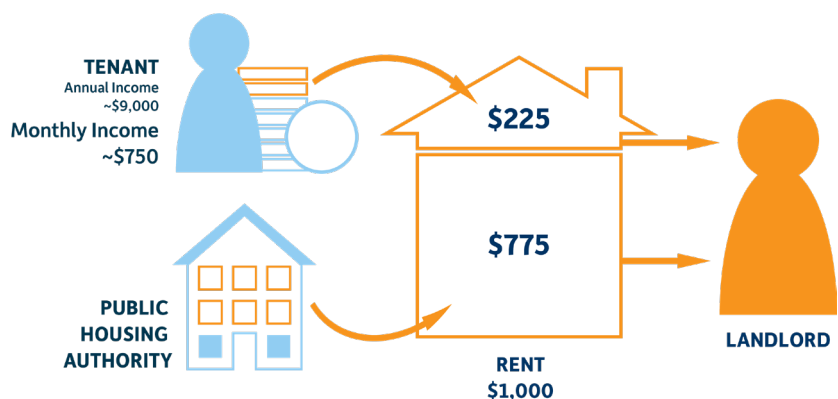
- Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)*
- Owner Certification and proof of property ownership*
(ex. copy of a deed, water bill, mortgage, home/fire insurance binder)
- Restriction on Leasing to Relatives*
- Lead-Based Paint Disclosure Form*
- Proof of compliance with the Lead Hazard Mitigation Law
(see page 18 for details)
- W-9 Form and proof of the Social Security Number or Employer Identification Number (EIN) used on the W-9
- Voided check for Direct Deposit enrollment
- Tentative lease agreement including tenant names, proposed rent amount, and a breakdown of which utilities are covered by the landlord and which by the tenant

*Requires joint signatures from the property owner and tenant.

Rental Assistance Calculation & Payments

Tenants typically pay between 30% and 40% of their income toward rent and utilities. RIHousing covers the remaining balance through a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), which is paid directly to the property owner.

Property owners receive HAP payments on the first of each month. *While direct deposit is not required, it is strongly encouraged to ensure timely and reliable payment.*



4

Approve Rent Amount

All proposed rents—both at the start of a lease and for any requested increases—must be approved by RIHousing through a **market analysis**. This analysis ensures the rent is reasonable compared to similar, non-subsidized units in the area.

Factors considered include the unit's location, size, type, age, condition, amenities, maintenance, and who is responsible for utilities (landlord or tenant). Property owners may request a rent increase after the initial one-year lease term.

5

Inspect the Unit

Before a tenant can move in—and then every two years thereafter—RIHousing conducts an inspection to ensure the unit meets HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE). To avoid delays in Housing Assistance Payments (HAP), the unit should be fully move-in ready at the time of inspection, with all utilities on before the inspection can be conducted.

NSPIRE inspections are typically scheduled within 7 to 10 days after the rent amount is approved through the market analysis.

If the unit fails for a non-life-threatening issue, the tenant may still move in. However, the property owner must correct the issue within 30 days to maintain eligibility for HAP.

In addition to routine inspections, RIHousing may conduct special inspections if there are concerns about the unit's condition or compliance between the biennial inspections.

6

Sign the Housing Payment Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract and Lease!

Once the unit passes inspection, RIHousing will notify the property owner when the HAP Contract is ready for signature. Rent payments will begin after both the HAP Contract and the lease have been signed and returned.

The tenant must sign a **lease** with the property owner in order to rent the unit. This lease should be the same standard lease the property owner uses for non-voucher tenants, but it must reflect the approved rent, lease dates, and all requirements outlined in the HAP Contract. The initial lease term must be for one year.*

RIHousing will also provide a **Tenancy Addendum**, which outlines program-specific requirements and details the approved household members. This addendum must be attached to the lease and signed by both the tenant and the property owner.

**After the first year, the lease may convert to a month-to-month agreement if both the property owner and tenant agree.*



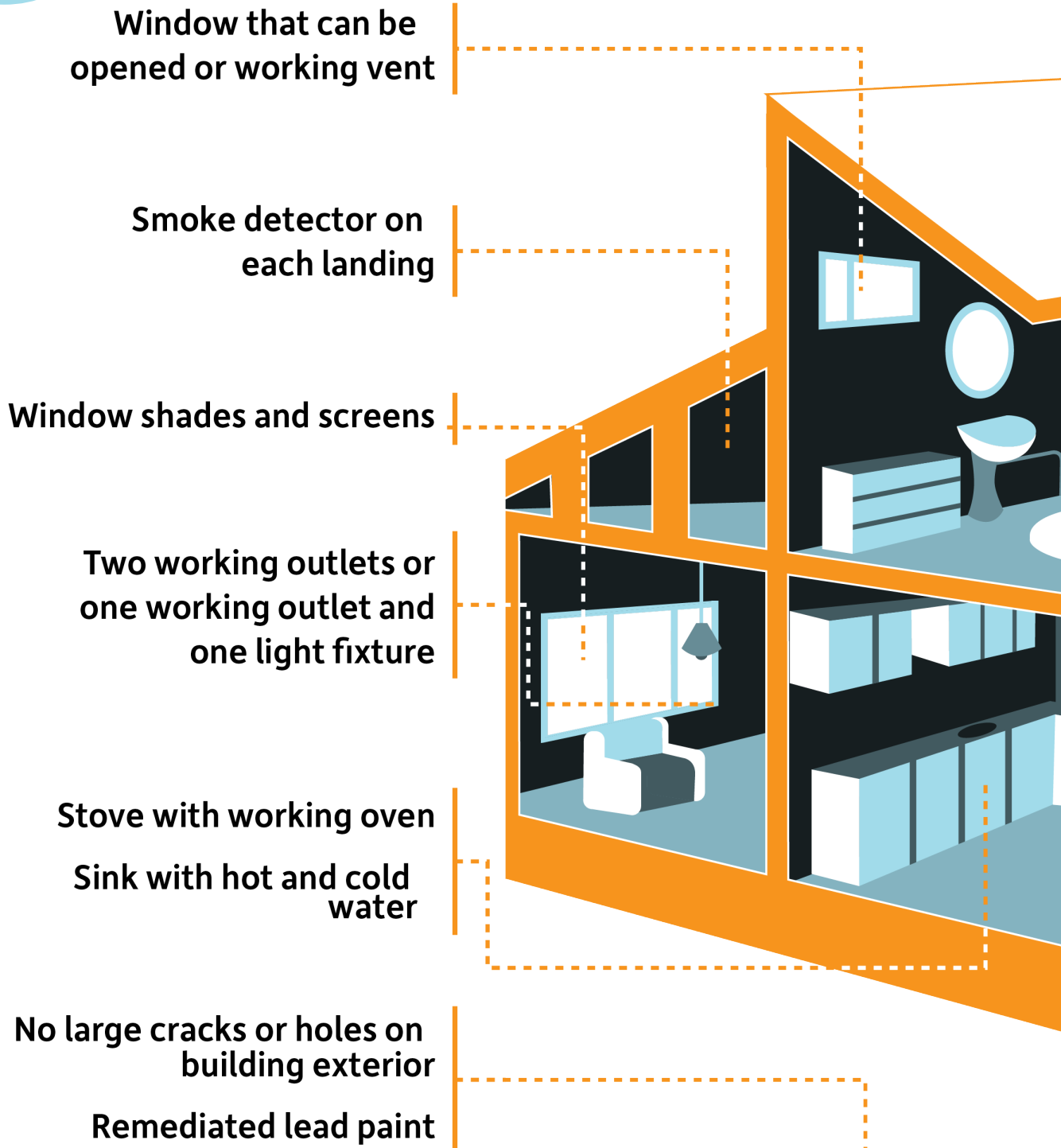
Most Common Inspection Failiures

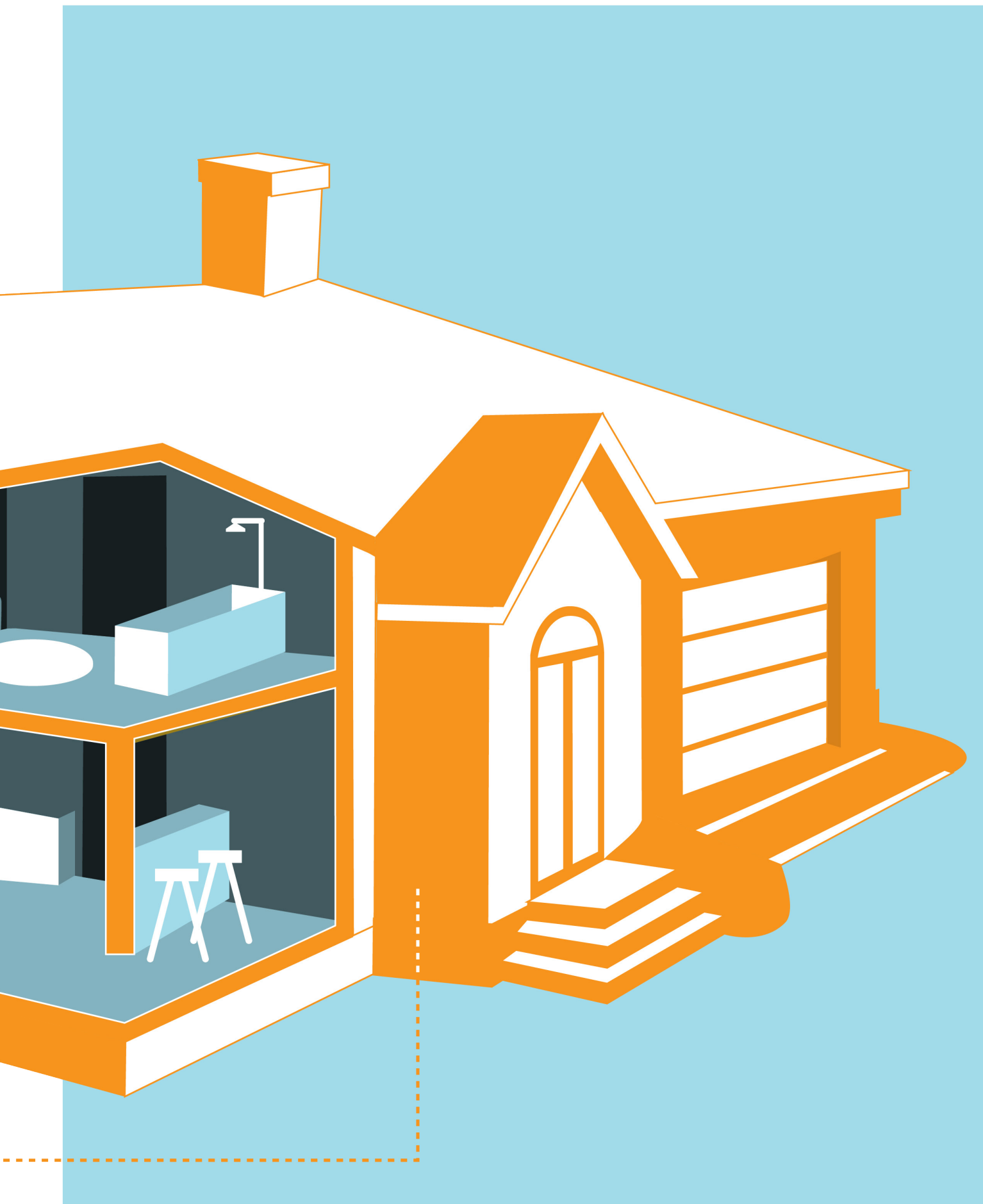
- ✖ Broken or missing smoke detectors
- ✖ Missing or cracked electrical outlet cover plates
 - ✖ Railings missing where required
 - ✖ Peeling interior or exterior paint
- ✖ Trip hazards caused by installed floor coverings (carpet/vinyl)
 - ✖ Broken windows
- ✖ Inoperable burners on stove or range hoods
 - ✖ Missing burner control knobs
- ✖ Inoperable bathroom fan/no ventilation
 - ✖ Leaking faucets or plumbing
- ✖ No temperature/pressure relieved valve on water heaters
- ✖ Lead paint hazards (see more information on page 18)

WHAT IS NSPIRE?

HUD established a new physical inspection model necessary for the health and safety of program participants. Inspections are assessing items covered by NSPIRE.

What is expected during an inspection?







LEAD HAZARD MITIGATION LAW

Rhode Island requires that all owners of rental properties built before 1978 meet the following three requirements:

1. Receive a Certificate of Conformance from a certified lead inspector for each rental unit owned. In order to remain current, this certificate must be updated every 2 years, or with a change of tenancy (lead inspectors can be found online at www.doh.ri.gov)
2. Provide tenants with information about lead hazards, including the Certificate of Conformance
3. Respond to tenant concerns of lead in the home

R.I. Gen. Law § 42-128.1-8 requires that landlords of owner-occupied units obtain lead certificates for their pre-1978 rental units, regardless of the number of units in the building, beginning on January 1, 2024.

The only exempt properties are rental units with a Full Lead-Safe or current Conditional Lead-Safe Certificate, Temporary, seasonal housing rented no more than 100 days in a calendar year to the same tenant and housing designated for residents age 62 or older.

For more information on the Lead Hazard Mitigation Law, visit: <https://health.ri.gov/lead-poisoning-exposure>.

RIHousing administers the LeadSafe program which offers forgivable loans for lead remediation. Please see page 14 for more information on this program.

RIHOUSING RESOURCES FOR LANDLORDS/PROPERTY OWNERS

HOUSING STABILIZATION

RIHousing has dedicated staff available to assist landlords with concerns and questions as they arise. For more information, contact us at landlords@rihousing.com or at (401) 443-1661.

LEADS SAFE HOMES

RIHousing's LeadSafe Homes program helps income eligible Rhode Islanders reduce lead hazards in their homes. There is no cost for these services and includes:

- Funds available to help make a rental property lead safe and increase its value
- Health and safety hazard assessment of a rental property
- Personalized assistance every step of the way

For more information on eligibility, visit: www.leadshomesri.com/
401-450-1350 // leadinfo@rihousing.com.

OTHER RESOURCES

FAIR HOUSING

Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights | www.richr.ri.gov

HUD Fair Housing | www.hud.gov/fairhousing

South Coast Fair Housing | www.SouthCoastFairHousing.org

RI Center for Justice | www.centerforjustice.org

LANDLORD – TENANT HANDBOOK

Executive Office of Housing

<https://housing.ri.gov/data-reports/landlord-tenant-handbook>

LEAD HAZARD MITIGATION

Department of Health

Inspection information: www.doh.ri.gov

Landlord Registry www.health.ri.gov/lead-poisoning/ri-rental-registry

LEGAL QUESTIONS

Rhode Island Legal Services | 401-274-2652 // www.rils.org

OFFICE OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

Rhode Island HUD Office

401-277-8300; 800-877-8339 (TTY) // www.hud.gov/states/rhode_island/offices

LANDLORD MEDIATION

The Center for Mediation & Collaboration of RI offers mediation services to landlords and tenants. Fees are minimal and offered on a sliding scale to those that qualify.

401-273-9999

NSPIRE RESOURCES

HUD NSPIRE Standards | www.hud.gov/reac/nspire-standards

HUD NSPIRE Resources | www.hud.gov/reac/nspire

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401-273-9999



If you have available units or upcoming availability
and would like to lease to RIHousing tenants in the
HCV Program:

RIHousing.com/Landlords

landlords@rihousing.com