

## **National Healthy Housing Standard - Strategy**

Oftentimes, the physical condition of a property affects the health and safety of occupants. With the exception of policies governing federally assisted housing — which is only a small percentage of homes nationwide — no national healthy housing standard exists. Newly constructed homes are generally safer and healthier because they've been built to meet modern codes and are subject to routine inspections as part of the permitting and building process. By contrast, existing properties are governed by the building codes that applied at the time of their construction as well as a fragmented set of property maintenance requirements.

The National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) and American Public Health Association (APHA) hope to elevate the likelihood that every U.S. family will live in a healthy home by developing an attainable, enforceable, evidence-based and practicable healthy housing standard suitable for adoption by local and state governments and federal agencies. The standard will inform and deliver housing policies that reflect the latest understanding of the connections between housing conditions and health. Its wide availability will enable agencies at all levels of government to enact policy that's effective in preventing disease and injury and improving health outcomes, while avoiding the confusion of state-by-state and community-by-community code development.

### **What Will the National Healthy Housing Standard Add to the Current Array of Housing Policies?**

1. The best thinking of health and housing experts as to what constitutes minimum public health standards that are attainable, enforceable and practicable.<sup>1</sup>
2. A model healthy housing standard policy for rental housing units, including multifamily properties, which can be adopted in its entirety by a local, state or federal agency.
3. A standard of care for homeowners seeking to maintain a healthy home.
4. Updated provisions that strengthen basic housing standards in federal policies, existing local and state housing codes, sanitary codes and property maintenance codes.

The standard will differ from a new construction or rehab standard in that it governs the maintenance and condition of occupied dwellings.

### **Overview of the Process and Timeline for Developing the National Healthy Housing Standard:**

The new standard will build on the 1986 APHA-CDC “Recommended Minimum Housing Standards” to reflect the current scientific knowledge about building science and hazards to occupant health. NCHH and APHA have recruited members of a National Committee on Housing and Health to provide visionary leadership. The Technical Review Work Group reviewed the staff-developed draft and proposed changes during working sessions December 2012 – April 2013. After the National Committee has reviewed the draft, staff will circulate the document through a wide array of stakeholders to obtain public comments for consideration by the Technical Review Work Group in September. The National Committee on Housing and Health will endorse the final document for publication in November 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> Goal as stated by Charles-Edward Amory Winslow in 1952 model ordinance

## **Key Elements of the Process for Developing the National Healthy Housing Standard**

***National Committee on Housing and Health:*** Leaders in the fields of health and housing have been recruited by NCHH and APHA to serve on this committee and oversee development of the standard. Similar to APHA's previous committee on this subject, members include visionaries in the fields of housing and health who have provided exemplary leadership in academia, government and private sector practice. This committee meets via teleconference to review the standard development plan and endorse the final product, with regular updates as the committee requests.

***Technical Review Work Group:*** Expert health and housing practitioners with subject matter expertise who serve on the Technical Review Work Group participate directly in the development of the standard. The work group reviewed the working draft, which is the original 1986 "Recommended Minimum Housing Standards" document, with preliminary staff and consultant edits that incorporate provisions from more recent policies. The work group considered changes during working sessions that resulted in the revised draft document that was released for public comment in June 2013. At the end of the comment period, the work group will consider modifications based on public comments, with support from NCHH staff.

***Key constituents:*** NCHH has briefed key housing industry and federal agency leaders early in the process to alert them to the strategy and gather their suggestions and concerns. These have include organizations that represent rental property owners, code officials, and tenants, as well as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Environmental Protection Agency.

***Stakeholders:*** NCHH has solicited comments on the public comment draft by widely publicizing this document to key stakeholders through email, listserv postings and teleconferences. The targeted stakeholders include the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition, Healthy Homes Training Center and Network, Grassroots Advocacy Network, Green Affordable Housing Coalition, real estate industry experts, code officials, and other thought leaders in healthy housing and green building strategies. NCHH will consolidate the comments to facilitate the Technical Review Work Group's consideration of modifications.

***Staff and consultants:*** NCHH's consultant Richard Svenson, formerly with the New York State Department of Health, compared the "Recommended Minimum Housing Standards" with newer policies. Svenson and NCHH staff Jane Malone and Jill Breyse have recommended changes. Malone and Breyse staff the work group, with other NCHH staff providing appropriate support as needed. NCHH has obtained specialized advice from key subject-matter experts on selected technical topics and tenants' rights.

### Work Plan and Schedule

Task	Activities	Deadline
Create proposed standard development strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize proposed approach</li> </ul>	June 2012
Preliminary work: Review APHA-CDC Minimum Housing Standards to develop working draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop working draft of standard</li> </ul>	August 2012
Recruit key leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite members of Committee on Housing and Health</li> <li>• Invite members of Technical Review Work Group</li> </ul>	September 2012
Adopt strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee on Housing and Health accepts strategy</li> </ul>	October 2012
Plan release of standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee on Housing and Health plans implementation</li> </ul>	January 2013
Develop public comment draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Review Work Group meetings</li> </ul>	April 2013
Key constituent outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with selected housing industry and federal agency leaders</li> </ul>	June 2013
Obtain stakeholder input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment period</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	August 2013
Develop final version of the standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and address comments</li> <li>• Finalize document</li> </ul>	September 2013
Committee on Housing and Health accepts standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief committee members for committee endorsement</li> </ul>	October 2013
Publication and dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish and disseminate</li> <li>• Encourage adoption</li> </ul>	November 2013