

**SF Asthma Task Force Environmental Committee Recommendations to the SF Housing Authority
FINAL – Bold highlight to greatest priority recommendations**

Topic Area	Goal for Improvement	Recommendation	Rationale
I. Central Services Staffing & Resources to Reduce Work Order Backlog	Central Services clerical and trades staffing and resources will be adequate to ensure tenant complaints are responded to in an effective and timely manner, and consequently work order backlog will be reduced.	<p><u>SFHA shall:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Report back on what staffing levels should be. Increase staffing to adequate levels in order to respond to tenant complaints appropriately and in a timely manner and to fulfill inspection and repair requirements. 2. Provide staffing support to managers to allow for email requests from Property Managers to Central Services. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HUD ratings of Central Services have indicated that staffing cuts have adversely affected ability to fulfill inspection and repair requirements. 2. Central Services' lack of adequate clerical support has prevented efficient intake of maintenance requests communicated by Property Managers and Tenants. Email communication has been said to be too overwhelming with current staffing levels.
II. Central Services Investigative Capability	<p>Increase Central Services investigators ability to measure moisture in building substrates and relative humidity in apartments to improve efficiency of investigations.</p> <p>Increase possible range of pest control responses to include boarding up access points to pests.</p>	<p><u>SFHA shall:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central Services investigators of mold and moisture infiltration should be issued Moisture Meter equipment (approx. \$135-250 each) and be trained in its use for detecting moisture in building substrates. 2. Handheld humidity meters (approx. \$35 each) should also be used by investigators to indicate relative humidity of one apartment relative to others. 3. Determine if current integrated pest management pest control response has been adequate to eliminate pest problems (roaches, mice, etc). If problems have repeated on an ongoing basis, rather than increasing pesticide use, create an additional response to board up pest entry into homes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moisture meters can help determine if there are hidden roof or plumbing leaks, or in a flood or leak situation causing substrates to have water damage, if moisture has been retained, and if substrates such as sheet rock must be replaced. Moisture meters can be also used to demonstrate to tenants that no moisture infiltration is present in building substrate, and that observed mold growth is due to moisture condensation issues from consumer use. 2. Relatively inexpensive tool that can immediately identify homes where tenants do not use available ventilation. 3. Review of work order history of selected addresses showed that pest control work orders were frequently repeated at the same addresses. While some of this problem may be related to tenant housekeeping, it seems that it should also be considered if pests have obtained access to interiors that could be blocked with minimal carpentry work and steel wool.

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<p>III. Central Services Database and Data Analysis Capability</p>	<p>Central Services' database and data analysis capability will allow SFHA management to utilize data analysis to proactively identify issues causing excessive burden on resources, and to create strategies for addressing those issues.</p>	<p><u>SFHA shall:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add a database code that would serve as a marker for an invalid tenant complaint, i.e. a complaint that did not justify work by maintenance staff. 2. Add an indicator to the work order database to show that a Notice of Violation (N.O.V.) from DPH or DBI was the source of work request. Analyze by frequency and type of N.O.V. for the purpose of initiating preventive maintenance activities. 3. Use database to identify units with repeated leaks or repairs for same problem, and as a consequence upgrade level of response to the problem. 4. Reinstate quality assurance protocol or increase preventive maintenance activity if an address history shows reoccurring priority codes in past year, e.g. mold code. 	<p>We were informed that Central Services database was going to be redesigned, and we wanted to assure that these obstacles were addressed in the redesign in order to increase operational efficiency and decrease labor costs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management assessment of wasted or abused maintenance resources would be improved if a database code was added to create a marker for an invalid complaint. Analysis showing the frequency of this code and associated issues could indicate need to initiate tenant education. 2. Database does not currently reflect that work order was generated due to Notices of Violation from DPH or DBI, or prioritize completion due to outside enforcement status. Coding would help track labor costs due to violations and help identify hot spots of tenant frustration. Hot spots may indicate that tenants are experiencing problems communicating with property managers, and have called in outside enforcement agencies as a result. 3. Tracking of repeat problems would assist maintenance in identifying the need for a more effective response. 4. Quality assurance staff no longer exists. Tracking of recurring priority codes would assist maintenance in identifying the need for quality assurance or preventive maintenance activities.
<p>IV. Communication & Public Relations between Property</p>	<p>Communication between Central Services and Property Managers will</p>	<p><u>SFHA shall:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure Central Services phone line is always answered. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Currently the phone line is inconsistently answered and tenants are unable to leave messages or be placed in "on

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<p>Management, Central Services and Tenants</p>	<p>improve to make both parties more effective in responding to tenant concerns.</p>	<p>or phone system technology improved to allow voice messaging, “on hold” queue or forwarding to after-hours resource staff.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Central Services staff will enter work order request into the system at the time of request, and automatically provide work order tracking number to both the property manager and the tenant, regardless of which party communicated the request, rather than waiting to enter the request into the system at a later time. 3. Allow Property Managers to use the e-mail system to submit work order requests. Require Central Services to reply to Property Manager email requests with assigned work order number, anticipated dates work will be scheduled, and when work has been completed. This information should be given to tenants by property managers. 4. Allow Property Managers read-only access to Central Services work order database, to track status of work order requests. 5. Provide onsite tagging of tenant residences when work is completed. As mentioned in tenant education section, provide affected tenant a short notice of any preventive tips within their control. 6. Require Property Managers to follow-up with tenants 2 to 4 weeks after maintenance work has been completed to assure that problem has been adequately fixed. 	<p>hold” queue in order to get their maintenance requests assigned a work order. We were informed that phone system redesign is planned, and wanted to assure that this obstacle was addressed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Currently both property managers and tenants experience problems obtaining a work order number indicating that their request is now in the system. This is related to inadequate staffing of the phone intake system. 3. E-mail is a more effective way to communicate work orders than by phone. Currently property managers are required to submit work order requests via phone and do not have a “paper trail” to document their submission of a work order request. Also, Central Services does not have a consistent system to inform Property Managers of when work is scheduled or has been completed. 4. Property managers do not have access to Central Services work order database and as a result have no easy way to track the status of the requests they have submitted. Property Managers’ level of service will also be enhanced if they can more easily relay the status of requests to tenants. 5. This activity serves to improve communication with tenants so they will know when work has been completed and have proof that SFHA is responding to their needs and maintenance requests. Succinct prevention information emphasizes the tenants’ role in preventing a reoccurrence of the problem. 6. This activity serves to ensure that the problem has not

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<p>V. Property Management Resources for Tenant Education & Mold Prevention</p>	<p>Property Managers will provide tenants access to health education and resources on how to create and maintain an asthma-friendly home environment, consequently reducing unnecessary demands on Central Services. SFHA will obtain support from outside agencies.</p>	<p><u>SFHA shall:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Report back on cost of hiring a dedicated resource person (health educator and/or public health nurse) to coordinate community resources for SFHA and its developments. Hire dedicated resource directly or explore the feasibility of DPH or another city agency assigning this resource to SFHA or establishing a satellite site at SFHA. 2. Work with Healthy Families in Healthy Housing collaborative to bring in community resources from outside service agencies such as HERC, DPH, SFFD Paramedics, MediCal Health Plans to provide education, outreach and resources. 3. Provide incentives for tenants to participate in forums, or to review written information, re. mold, dust mite and pest prevention. 4. At the completion of a work order, provide affected tenant a short notice of any preventive tips within their control. 	<p>reoccurred and to instill confidence in tenant that SFHA has addressed their complaint and is concerned about quality.</p> <p>Feedback from Central Services managers identified tenant education as a need. They perceive tenant behavior as a major cause for mold and other work order requests. Anecdotal information suggests that tenants are not always aware of their rights with regards to resolving maintenance problems.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A dedicated resource would have the best opportunity to establish a rapport and understand the communities and residents with which they are working. 2. SFHA stated that it has difficulty connecting tenants to community resources but is interested in making these connections. SFHA wants and deserves outside resources. 3. Existing fact sheets developed for SFHA tenants are not distributed consistently. Tenant education on mold and other asthma triggers is vital to helping tenants understand their role in prevention as well as in the case of a medically documented disability, their right for reasonable accommodation. 4. same as 3.

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<p>VI. Modification to Standard Lease & Reemployment of Social Services Information Form</p>	<p>Tenants will receive formal notification of their right to reasonable accommodation for a medically documented ADA-defined disability.</p> <p>Property management staff and tenants will have increased awareness of breathing difficulty as an Americans with Disability Act (ADA) defined disability. Property managers will document disabilities declared by tenants to justify and prioritize reasonable accommodation requests or related work order requests.</p> <p>Tenants will understand terms of the lease that prohibit installation of clothes dryers.</p>	<p><u>SFHA shall:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modify Mold Notification Lease Addendum to include SFHA obligations in response to reported mold and moisture infiltration problems. 2. Provide tenants with Reasonable Accommodation Lease Addendum to sign in receipt of notification of their right to reasonable accommodation. Modify current lease and reasonable accommodation form to indicate that the definition of “disability” includes chronic breathing problems, including asthma. If necessary, work with HUD to make these changes. 3. Reestablish confidential use of SFHA Social Services Information Form for documentation of medical conditions or disabilities declared by the tenant, which may be used by Property Manager to request prioritization of a work order request. 4. Revise lease to specifically state that tenants may not install clothes dryers in their units and will be held accountable for repairs resulting from accumulated moisture in the home due to the dryers. 	<p>This section’s recommendations do not incur significant expense, and would provide greater communication of both property owner and tenant rights and responsibilities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Currently Mold Notification Lease Addendum only delineates tenants’ responsibilities, and does not enumerate SFHA obligations in response to reported mold and moisture problems. The Standard Lease agreement includes both sections, so the addendum should follow that model. 2. The current lease (Section 12I) does not provide sufficient notification of a tenant’s right to reasonable accommodation under ADA, and therefore a lease addendum would establish notification of that right. The current lease also does not provide any information that medically documented chronic breathing problems are a disability defined by ADA, and there is a lack of such understanding among SFHA property managers and tenants. As a result, some tenants that should apply for reasonable accommodation have not done so. In tenant testimony, we heard of one tenant who spent more than a year getting her asthma-related reasonable accommodation request fulfilled. We did not have access to system that tracks RA requests (or to her dated RA request forms) to verify the allegations. 3. Tenants who have declared such a disability and submit a complaint about a housing condition that is exacerbating their asthma or other chronic breathing problems should have a system of accountability by SFHA. If there is no format for confidentially documenting such declarations, they are more likely to be forgotten or ignored.

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			<p>4. Improperly installed and un-vented dryers in a unit cause moisture to accumulate, leading to mold growth and the need for mold remediation. The current lease language (Section 13I) does not specify the prohibition for installing clothes dryers or tenant responsibility for unauthorized dryers.</p>
<p>VII. Property Management Training and Accountability Mechanisms</p>	<p>Property Managers will have an increased understanding of their job duties as it relates to providing a healthy environment for tenants affected by asthma, and will be evaluated according to that criteria.</p> <p>Property managers will cultivate positive tenant relations, and will be held accountable if there is evidence of tenant intimidation. Tenants will have recourse if they feel intimidated by property manager actions, and will be able to report grievances to a third party to ensure grievances are addressed objectively.</p>	<p><u>SFHA shall:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide regular internal staff education/training to SFHA Property Management and Central Services about asthma/indoor air quality/ mold/expected response to tenant concerns. 2. Provide incentives for property managers to establish good working relations with tenants. 3. Provide system for tenants to grieve lack of service/disrespect by Property Managers, utilizing ombudsman approach that is either outside the Property Manager chain of command, the SFHA, or within a neutral body comprised of tenants and SFHA staff. 4. Modify SFHA job description of Property Management duties to include duties proposed in these recommendations as well as duties defined in the HUD Property Manager Certification training. Inform all current and new hire Property Managers of these expectations. 5. Enforce the established periodic evaluation of property manager job performance and use of individual improvement plans where warranted. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding the severity of asthma and the health effects of poor indoor air quality and mold will assist SFHA staff in making decisions that will promote healthier units, healthier tenants and cost-savings. Participants have found this training valuable in the past. 2. No formal and independent grievance procedure is offered to tenants who feel they are not receiving the appropriate services or responses they are entitled to from the Housing Authority. 3. Tenants have reported feeling intimidated and threatened by their property managers and perceive that property managers do not follow through with complaints or take them seriously. Property Managers need to take proactive role to reinstate tenant confidence in them. 4. Property Manager job descriptions should have clear explanation of duties, and should be communicated to those who must fulfill those duties as well as to those conducting performance evaluation. The recommendations of this committee won't have any long-term bearing unless they are incorporated into such guiding documents. 5. Clear expectations need to be established to ensure Property Managers understand and carry out their duties in serving in the best interest of the tenants they represent and serve. Tenant

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			testimony has indicated that some property managers have been a significant barrier to obtaining needed services from SFHA, and that there has not appeared to be a system of accountability.
VIII. Efforts to Reduce Health Impacts Of Community Violence and Related Social Issues	SFHA will join DPH and community-wide efforts to decrease violence at Housing Developments, which will help decrease asthma exacerbations related to emotional stress. Violence will not be a factor in preventing tenants from properly ventilating their homes. Housing Authority will seek to improve security features that will improve tenants opening their windows and using existing laundry rooms.	<u>SFHA shall:</u> 1. Provide greater resources and linkages for violence prevention. Join with DPH and community-wide efforts to decrease violence at Housing Developments, which will help decrease asthma exacerbations. 2. Study tenant acceptance of quick release bars on windows as a means to improve security and allow tenants to properly ventilate their homes by opening their windows. 3. Work with tenants associations to address laundry room access and resources for improved security. Make laundry rooms usable and accessible.	1. There is documented association between violence in the community and poor health outcomes, including worsened asthma from violence-associated stress. Violence also prevents tenants from opening their windows and properly ventilating their homes. 2. Improper ventilation of homes retains moisture and creates unhealthy living environments for tenants with asthma. Tenants keep their windows closed due to safety concerns and need safe options for ventilating their homes with fresh air. 3. Tenant Associations control the functioning of laundry rooms in their developments. Safe and accessible laundry rooms would curtail the problem of tenants installing un-vented dryers in their units which leads to moisture and mold.
IX. Evaluation of Health Impact of Redeveloping the Big 4 Housing Complexes	The Big 4 Housing Developments will be replaced with adequate, healthy, and affordable housing without displacement of current residents from their communities or providing access to safer affordable housing.	<u>SFHA shall:</u> 1. Conduct feasibility analysis of rebuilding the “Big 4” housing developments and avoiding displacement of current public housing tenants. 2. As an alternative to housing redevelopment, designate and qualify a certain number of units in each development as “asthma-friendly units” (as modeled by Kings County Housing Authority, Seattle, WA).	1. Because they are over 50 years old the investment in their infrastructure may not be worthwhile. It would be more economical to tear the existing developments down and rebuild healthy, affordable, and structurally sound housing developments. Displacement has been a reality in past rebuilding projects and loss of housing is a legitimate fear of tenants. 2. Access to a “asthma friendly” unit may minimize or eliminate the need for additional work generated by reasonable accommodation requests related to asthma.

Footnote:

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The goal of the San Francisco Asthma Task Force Environmental Committee is to pursue resolution of the Committee’s first priority recommendation, contained within the *Strategic Plan on Asthma for the City and County of San Francisco*, issued June 2003. In conjunction with the San Francisco Housing Authority, we wish to ensure that current SFHA inspection and maintenance practices provide housing conditions for people with asthma that do not exacerbate or lead to the onset of asthma. When housing conditions do worsen asthma, particularly those related to poor indoor air quality, we wish to ensure those conditions are prevented or responded to in a timely and effective manner.