



**National Center for  
Healthy Housing**



## **National Healthy Housing Standard Communications Tool Kit**

*To all stakeholders and partners in the fight to help ensure healthy and safe housing for the families currently living in our nation's 100 million homes:*

The National Center for Healthy Housing and the American Public Health Association have unveiled the *National Healthy Housing Standard*. The *Standard* is a health-focused property maintenance policy that can be adopted as a regulation by government agencies and as a voluntary best-practice by any property owner. To help encourage adoption, we ask for your help to spread the word about the availability of the *Standard*. Below please find drafts of a blog post, tweets, newsletter article, and talking points to assist you in your communications efforts, as well as the May 16th news release and quotes from key partners. Thank you again for your assistance.

### **DRAFT BLOG POST**

#### **National Healthy Housing Standard Aims to Improve Housing Conditions**

The home can be one of the most dangerous places for families. The affordability, location, and quality of housing have all been independently linked to health issues. Currently, there are more than [35 million metropolitan homes](#) in the U.S. with at least one health or safety hazard. As we know, it is important to continue making strides to help improve the quality of housing nationwide.

The National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) and the American Public Health Association (APHA) are aiming to improve these substandard conditions with the release of the [National Healthy Housing Standard](#), which will serve as a blueprint and model to ensure the health and safety of neighborhoods across our country.

The *Standard* is a health-focused property maintenance policy targeting the nation's 100 million existing homes that can be adopted as a regulation by government agencies and as a voluntary best-practice by any property owner. The *Standard* provides clear recommendations covering the seven principles of healthy housing, which range from specific guidelines on safety and personal security to chemical and radiological agents.

We support the efforts by NCHH and APHA to improve housing conditions in our neighborhoods because it is imperative that all families have access to quality and affordable housing. Everyone can get involved by showing support for this cause and especially by asking local code and housing officials to adopt the *Standard* in order to keep all families safe in their homes and community.

Follow #AdoptHHStandard on Twitter or go to [www.nchh.org/Standard.aspx](http://www.nchh.org/Standard.aspx)

### SAMPLE TWEETS

We support @PublicHealth and @NCHH efforts to improve housing conditions via the National Healthy Housing Standard #AdoptHHStandard (Characters: 131)

@PublicHealth and @NCHH unveil Healthy Housing Standard with clear recommendations on how to improve housing conditions in our neighborhoods (Characters: 140)

Ask your local officials to #AdoptHHStandard to help improve the housing conditions in our neighborhoods (Characters: 104)

35 million metro homes in America have 1 or more health and safety hazard, ask your local officials to #AdoptHHStandard [insert link: [www.nchh.org/standard.aspx](http://www.nchh.org/standard.aspx)]” (Characters: 119)

6.3 million homes have substandard conditions, new Healthy Housing Standard by @NCHH and @PublicHealth helps address this #AdoptHHStandard (Characters: 138)

20-30% of asthma cases are linked to home environment conditions; we can do better. Ask your officials to #AdoptHHStandard [insert link: [www.nchh.org/standard.aspx](http://www.nchh.org/standard.aspx)]” (Characters: 124)

21,000 lung cancer deaths result from radon in homes. @NCHH and @PublicHealth release National Healthy Housing Standard #AdoptHHStandard (Characters: 136)

### NEWSLETTER CONTENT

Too many people in our nation are left making the false choice between affordable or quality housing. All families deserve access to quality and affordable housing that allows them to put roots down in a community. As a much-needed step in helping to improve housing conditions, the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) and the American Public Health Association (APHA) have created the evidence-based *National Healthy Housing Standard* as a tool for improving the conditions of our nation’s existing housing stock—over 100 million homes.

We had the opportunity to join forces with NCHH and APHA and participate in the development of the *Standard*. We need to encourage the widespread adoption of the *Standard* in order to help save lives, shrink disparities, and ensure our nation’s homes are the safe havens they were meant to be.

## TALKING POINTS

### About Healthy Housing in the U.S.

- 35 million (or 40%) of American homes have health and safety hazards, according the State of Healthy Housing, a report released in September, 2013 by the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH).
- Between 20-30 percent of asthma cases are link to home environmental conditions.
- About 21,000 lung cancer deaths result from radon in homes.
- Home injuries are the leading cause of death for young children and put six million adults over 65 in hospitals and nursing homes due to falls.

### About the issue:

- Poor-quality housing and rundown neighborhoods diminish property values, increase crime, and erode the cohesiveness and political power of some communities.
- We need to bring more attention to housing and its importance to our wellbeing.

### The solution:

- NCHH, along with the APHA, unveiled the *National Healthy Housing Standard* in May.
- The *Standard* is a health-focused property maintenance policy targeting the nation's 100 million existing homes – single-family, multifamily, rental, and owner-occupied.
- The *Standard* can be adopted as a regulation by government agencies and as a voluntary best-practice by any property owner.
- NCHH and APHA based the *Standard* on evidence from the fields of environmental public health, safety, building science, engineering, and indoor environmental quality.
- The *Standard* governs the maintenance and condition of occupied dwellings but also provides a performance-based standard for new construction and housing rehab.

### Call to action:

- We want to bring together property owners, advocated, code officials, public health leaders, and others to recognize and coordinate their shared missions of keeping people safe and healthy in the places they live.
- We can do this by calling on government agencies and property owners to adopt the *Standard* and take the needed step in improving housing conditions for every family.
- Visit [nchh.org](http://nchh.org) or follow #AdoptHHStandard on Twitter for the latest developments.

## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

### NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTHY HOUSING AND AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION RELEASE NATIONAL HEALTHY HOUSING STANDARD

*New standard provides clear recommendations to improve healthy and safe housing conditions in communities across the United States*

**WASHINGTON, DC (May 16, 2014)** - The National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) and the American Public Health Association (APHA) developed the *Standard* – a health-focused property maintenance policy targeting the nation’s 100 million existing homes – single-family, multifamily, rental, and owner-occupied. The *Standard* can be adopted as a regulation by government agencies and as a voluntary best-practice by any property owner.

“While we have made great strides in improving the quality of housing nationwide, too many Americans are left making the false choice between affordable or quality housing. Families deserve access to quality *and* affordable housing that allows them to put down roots in a community, build wealth, put kids through college, and start businesses,” said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. “The *National Healthy Housing Standard* represents a needed step in improving housing conditions for all of our nation’s citizens, regardless of their ZIP code. This *Standard* can serve as a model that housing and development officials can adopt to keep families safe in the home.”

In September 2013, NCHH found that 35 million (or 40 percent) of metropolitan homes in the U.S. have one or more health and safety hazards, as reported in the [State of Healthy Housing](#), a comprehensive study of housing conditions in 46 metropolitan areas of the nation. That study draws on data from the American Housing Survey, which found that approximately 6.3 million housing units are considered to be substandard—a statistic that has remained relatively static for over a decade.

“The consequences of not dealing with substandard housing are dire in both human wellbeing and cost,” said Georges Benjamin, MD, FACP, executive director of the American Public Health Association. “In most places, homes are safe and healthful havens, largely due to the protective regulations put into place a century ago. Yet, in many communities, housing regulations have neither kept pace with the way Americans interact with their homes nor with the modern diseases that plague society—including chronic diseases such as asthma and depression, cancer, and certain injuries.”

Between 20 and 30 percent of asthma cases are linked to home environmental conditions. About 21,000 lung cancer deaths result from radon in homes. Over 24 million homes that have lead-based paint hazards put children at risk of the irreversible neurologic effects of childhood lead poisoning. In addition, home injuries are the leading causes of death for young children and put six million adults over 65 in hospitals and nursing homes due to falls that are too often preventable.

NCHH and APHA based the *Standard* on evidence from the fields of environmental public health, safety, building science, engineering, and indoor environmental quality. The National Committee on Housing and Health and a Technical Review Work Group, comprised of leading international experts and professionals, oversaw the development of the *Standard*.

“We hope the *Standard* will inspire action and cross sector collaboration. Most of all, we hope through the implementation of this *Standard* we will save lives, shrink disparities, and ensure our nation’s homes are the safe havens they were meant to be,” said Henry Cisneros, who served on the National Committee for Housing and Health. Cisneros was the 10th Secretary for HUD and is the Chairman of CityView, an institutional investment firm focused on urban real estate.

The Technical Review Work Group considered more than 300 public comments from health and housing practitioners and advocates representing 50 different organizations, and accepted many of their insights on the *Standard*.

“We are calling on federal, state, and local agencies to seek the adoption of this health-based standard to ensure that every person in America has access to a safe and healthy home,” said Dr. Thomas Vernon, who chairs NCHH’s Board of Directors and also chaired the National Committee on Housing and Health.

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

“These new standards will make it easier to assure local policy can be created to support healthy housing,” said Dr. David Fleming, Director and Health Officer for Public Health – Seattle and King County. “Housing is a significant determinant of health and it is important that our housing stock be built and maintained to create the healthiest living conditions possible.”

To review the full document, please visit: [www.nchh.org/Standard.aspx](http://www.nchh.org/Standard.aspx)

#### **About the National Center for Healthy Housing**

The National Center for Healthy Housing is the preeminent national nonprofit dedicated to creating safe and healthy housing for America’s families. It has trained over 35,000 individuals in lead-safe and healthy housing practices since 2005, and its research provides the scientific basis for major federal policies and programs. NCHH develops scientifically valid and practical strategies to make homes safe from hazards and to protect low-income families at highest risk. You can follow NCHH on Twitter @nchh or become a fan on Facebook at Facebook.com/HealthyHousing.

#### **About the American Public Health Association**

APHA champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the profession of public health, share the latest research and information, promote best-practices, and advocate for public health issues and policies grounded in research. We are the only organization that combines a 140-plus-year perspective, a broad-based member community, and the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public’s health. For more about APHA, visit [www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org).

## **Statements of Support for The National Healthy Housing Standard**

### **Frank Lesh, Executive Director, American Society of Home Inspectors**

The American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) has reviewed and supports the *National Healthy Housing Standard* as an important resource for protecting families from health hazards in their own homes. We are exploring how to integrate the *Standard* into ASHI's suite of tools for evaluating conditions in existing homes.

### **James R. Thele, Planning Director, City of Omaha**

The *Standard* is a comprehensive tool that we can use in conjunction with our code enforcement process to improve public health. We plan to make it an integral part of our Healthy Homes program.

### **Thomas Osdoba, Vice President of Green Initiatives, Enterprise Community Partners**

Enterprise Community Partners is committed to accelerating the adoption of healthier operations and maintenance practices within housing – the link between quality housing and human well-being is inextricable. As part of that commitment, we will work to integrate the new *National Healthy Housing Standard* into the next iteration of our Enterprise Green Communities Criteria for affordable multifamily housing.

### **Chris Wood, East Coast Sales Manager, Executive Cabinetry**

The *National Healthy Housing Standard* gives us a cohesive, comprehensive, and attainable guideline for protecting the inhabitants of single- and multi-family dwellings. This *National Healthy Housing Standard* is a tool all stakeholders can rally around, a starting point for protecting our families from the seen and unseen hazards of everyday living.

### **Sheila Crowley, President and CEO, National Low Income Housing Coalition**

The National Low Income Housing Coalition applauds the release of the *National Healthy Housing Standard*, which constructively seeks to improve the quality of our nation's housing so that our homes don't make us sick, prevent us from recovering from illness, or injure us. Everyone deserves a healthy place to call home.

### **Chuck Wehrwein, Acting Chief Executive Officer, NeighborWorks America**

The support of healthy, safe places to live for everyone is central to our work. This new healthy housing *Standard* provides an evidence-based tool that can strengthen and enhance our work in the thousands of communities that we serve across the country."

### **Don Stevens, National Research and Development Manager, Panasonic Eco Solutions North America**

This *Standard* does a much better job of "covering all the bases" than anything else I have seen in my 30-plus years of involvement in energy efficient ventilation and construction.

### **Charley Shimanski, President and CEO, Rebuilding Together**

The *National Healthy Housing Standard* is an excellent framework to help address the large and growing threat facing America's low-income homeowners. We will use the *Standard* as a tool to rebuild homes and, ultimately, to transform the health, well-being, and lives of the thousands of homeowners we serve every year.