The following are service practices related to completing the Home Safety Evaluation. This guidance not only ensures client housing is provided in compliance with the Cooperative Agreement (CA) but supports high-quality resettlement service standards.

1. The Home Evaluation and Safety Checklist is based on a thorough assessment of the housing unit, housing site/complex, and neighborhood. Guidance in the CA and verbally from PRM regarding the completion of this form include:

• this form must be completed prior to or on the date of arrival for a client’s initial housing;

• the form must be completed for all housing that the refugee client lives in within the

R&P period;

• a new form must be completed **each time** the client moves during the R&P period;

• post-arrival assessments should be completed during the 1st home visit to ensure a safe living environment; and

• the form can be completed by a **trained** co-sponsor, support team, or volunteer.

2. Some best practices related to completing this form include:

• most sites have affiliate staff complete the form;

• some sites complete a Home Evaluation and Safety Checklist form both pre-arrival and post-arrival to better ensure compliance.

3. In order to evaluate the safety of the housing site/complex and neighborhood, the evaluator should assess whether the site and neighborhood are free from conditions which would seriously and continuously endanger the health and safety of the residents. Some examples of environmental conditions could include, but not be limited to the following:

• another building, on or near the property, that poses a serious hazard (e.g. dilapidated garage which could collapse);

• evidence of flooding or major drainage problems;

• evidence of mud slides or large land settlement or collapse;

• proximity to open sewage;

• unprotected heights (cliffs, quarries, mines, sandpits);

• fire hazards; and

• abnormal air pollution or smoke throughout the year and continuous or excessive vibration of vehicular traffic

Personal safety and security should also be taken into account when evaluating for acceptability. Affiliate staff can review the recent history of criminal activity in the housing site/complex and neighborhood, discuss with current residents their perception of the level of personal safety in the area, and meet with local law enforcement representatives to assess the level of support available to area residents.

4. The affiliate housing coordinator/resettlement program manager may annually request and keep on file copies of the inspections and certifications for all housing complexes where refugees are housed to ensure their compliance with local fire, lead, and safety codes.

5. Staff must become familiar with federal guidelines, or local and state standards/laws if higher than federal, regarding minimum habitable area for each occupant (including number of bedrooms or sleeping areas), fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and lead safety checks.

6. Affiliates should research their local occupancy codes (city and/or region) to determine the minimum habitable area for each occupant (including bedrooms or sleeping areas). The calculation of the minimum is typically based upon the square footage of the apartment. This figure can be obtained from the landlord for the housing unit. The number of bedrooms/sleeping areas for the maximum number of people in the housing unit must be recorded on each Home Evaluation and Safety Checklist form.

7. Emergency escape route(s) should be identified during the Home Evaluation and Safety Checklist assessment and also reviewed with the client post-arrival (personal safety orientation). The identified route should not be blocked. Fire exits should meet local or state regulations and can include:

• an operational window if the unit is on the first floor or second floor or easily accessible to the ground;

• a back door opening to a porch with a stairway leading to the ground; and

• fire escape, fire ladder, or fire stairs.

8. Fire extinguishers should be made available in accessible locations where required. To determine requirements for placement of fire extinguishers for housing in your local area, contact the local fire department or office of the State Fire Marshall for guidance. Staff should be trained on the local requirements. Where fire extinguishers are required, landlords or the affiliate agency must ensure that fire extinguishers are present. Best practice is to provide all clients with fire extinguishers and training on how to use them, even when they are not required by local regulations.

9. To determine requirements for the appropriate number of smoke detectors for an apartment or house in your state, contact the office of the State Fire Marshall for guidance. Some states have also enacted requirements for carbon monoxide detectors. Staff should be trained on local requirements. Landlords or the affiliate agency must ensure that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are present where required by state law. More information about alarms can be found at the following links:

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/smoke_alarms.html><http://www.ajfire.org/uploads/smoke_alarm_requirements.pdf>[http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/smoke-and-carbon-](http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/smoke-and-carbon-monoxide-alarms-codes.aspx)  <http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/smoke-and-carbon-monoxide-alarms-codes.aspx>

10. Houses built before 1978 often used lead paint. If that paint is peeling or flaking, it can easily end up on the floor where children play. This paint can then be ingested by children, causing potential lead poisoning. Lead poisoning in children can lead to a number of issues, including developmental delays, nervous system and kidney damage, and hearing loss.

A Lead Safety Check **IS NOT NECESSARY** for residences built after 1978 and for residences which will not be occupied by a child under age 6. If this applies to the housing unit under review, write N/A on the Home Evaluation and Safety Checklist form.

A Lead Safety Check **IS NECESSARY** for a residence built before 1978 which will be occupied by a child under age 6. Visual assessment of deteriorated paint (peeling, chipping, cracking, etc.) is necessary for:

• All interior painted surfaces including walls, floors, ceilings, built in cabinets, baseboards, doors, door frames, window systems, or any other painted components of the housing unit.

• All exterior painted surfaces associated with the housing unit, including windows, windowsills, exterior walls, floors, porches, railings, doors, decks, stairs, play areas, garages, fences or other areas frequented by children under age 6.

If deteriorated paint is found in an area that exceeds two square feet or 10% of a surface, then the landlord should be notified for safe repair. If the landlord is unwilling to provide the repair in a safe manner, then the housing unit should not be utilized for refugee arrivals.

For more information on lead safety in multiple languages, review the US Environmental Protection Agency’s pamphlet “Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home” at this link: <http://www2.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-lead-your-home-real-estate-disclosure>

11. Housing for clients with disabilities must accommodate the known disability to the extent required by law. The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful for any person to refuse “to permit, at the expense of the [disabled] person, reasonable modifications of existing premises occupied or to be occupied by such person if such modifications may be necessary to afford such person full enjoyment of the premises, except that, in the case of rental, the landlord may where it is reasonable to do so condition permission for the modification on the renter agreeing to restore the interior of the premises to the condition that existed before the modification, reasonable wear and tear excepted.”

A reasonable modification is a structural change made to the interior or exterior of an existing house/apartment in order to afford a disabled person full use of the premises. A request for a reasonable modification may be made at any time during the tenancy. Staff should become familiar with local housing options prior to allocation of a disabled client, as accessible housing stock can be limited, and modifications may be required for existing housing. For more information on accessible housing and the housing needs of disabled clients, please review materials available at the following sites:

<https://www.disability.gov/housing>http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/information\_for\_disabled\_persons <http://www.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/Easy_Access_Housing.pdf?docID=11023>

12. Case management staff should case notes discussions and document instances when a client chose a housing situation or living conditions that are not in compliance with the RP housing standards and/or federal, state, local standards. PRM expects to see case notes, documenting the refusal of alternatives and counseling by staff. Case notes should include:

• the non-compliance housing situation or living conditions in dispute;

• client statement indicating the client’s refusal of alternative living arrangements; and

• the provision of counseling regarding the housing guidelines.