

## **Survey of Public Housing Agencies on Housing for the Elderly and Non-Elderly Persons with Disabilities**

This document presents the results of GAO's survey of public housing agencies that manage developments that house primarily the elderly and non-elderly persons with disabilities. The purpose of the survey was to (1) collect data on physical and social characteristics that constitute aspects of "severe distress," (2) verify HUD data from the PIC and REAC databases, and (3) collect data about ways in which the stock of severely distressed public housing for the elderly and non-elderly persons with disabilities could be improved. We surveyed 46 public housing agencies that manage the 76 developments identified as potentially severely distressed using a mail questionnaire. Questions covered the following topics: physical deterioration, systems requiring renovation or modernization, the neighborhood environment in which the development was located, accessibility features, access to social and public services, and actions to remedy housing challenges. Each questionnaire contained a set of specific questions about the identified development and a set of general questions about public housing for the elderly and non-elderly persons with disabilities. In the 11 cases where the housing agency managed more than one of the identified 76 developments, respondents were asked to provide separate answers—in response to the specific questions—for each of the identified developments. For the 35 public housing agencies with one development, we also asked the local housing agencies whether they had other developments or buildings occupied primarily by elderly persons or non-elderly persons with disabilities that did not score above our distress threshold, but had conditions comparable to or worse than the developments we identified.

We mailed the questionnaire to each public housing agency on June 10, 2005. Participants could return the questionnaire by mail or fax and collection of survey data ended on August 30, 2005. We had 43 housing agencies return the survey, providing a response rate of 93 percent, and representing 66 of the 76 developments. Respondents were asked to provide written comments to open-ended questions; however to maintain the confidentiality of participants, responses to these items are not provided here. We did not attempt to verify the respondents' answers against an independent source of information; however, we used two techniques to verify the reliability of questionnaire items. First, we used in-depth cognitive interviewing techniques to evaluate the answers of pretest participants. Interviewers judged that all the respondents' answers to the

questions were correct. Second, we compared some responses with observations made during site visits; again, observers concluded that responses to these items were correct. A more detailed discussion of our scope and methodology, and a discussion of the survey results are contained in our report, *Distressed Conditions in Developments for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities and Strategies Used for Improvement*. Clicking on the following link will provide access to this report ([GAO-06-163](#)). We conducted our survey work from November 2004 through August 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.



## U.S. Government Accountability Office

Survey of Public Housing Authorities on Housing for Elderly and Non-Elderly Disabled Residents

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### Introduction

In response to a mandate, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is conducting a study to determine the extent of distress in public housing for elderly and disabled residents and to identify ways distressed housing can be improved. Forty-six public housing authorities nationwide will be surveyed to obtain information about the condition of public housing developments and options that are available to address problematic conditions in public housing developments.

Your public housing authority was selected to take part in our survey because GAO identified at least one housing development in your portfolio that is occupied primarily by elderly or disabled residents and is potentially distressed. This questionnaire specifically asks about the following development(s): [*name of development inserted*].

### Instructions

Please complete and return the questionnaire **within 2 weeks** of receipt. Feel free to consult with others at your housing authority who are also familiar with these topics, if the consultation will help provide a more accurate response.

If your business reply envelope is misplaced, please fax or return mail the questionnaire to:

Isidro Gomez  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
301 Howard Street, Suite 1200  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 904-2111 FAX

If you have any questions please contact: Isidro Gomez (415-904-2233, [gomezi@gao.gov](mailto:gomezi@gao.gov)) or Michelle Zapata (415-904-2141, [zapatam@gao.gov](mailto:zapatam@gao.gov)). Thank you very much for your time and assistance!

INFORMATION ON [*Name of Development inserted*]

1. Has this development been demolished or disposed of? ..... N=0 Yes → *SKIP to Question 43* N=65 No

2. Currently, are at least 50% of the heads of households in Metropolitan Gardens elderly residents? ..... N=41 Yes ..N=23 No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Currently, are at least 50% of the heads of households in this development disabled residents? ..... N=29 Yes ..N=35 No \_\_\_\_\_ →

*If you answered "no" to Questions, 2, 3 and 4, SKIP to Question 43.*

4. Currently, are at least 80% of the heads of households in this development elderly or disabled residents? ..... N=53 Yes ..N=12 No \_\_\_\_\_

5. Based on your knowledge of [*name of development inserted*], are the following data correct? (HUD data are as of January 2005.)

Characteristic	HUD Data	Are these data correct?	If the data are not correct, what are the correct data?	
a. Number of units		N=52 Yes    N=13 No	<i>If no</i> →	
b. Number of occupied units		N=19 Yes    N=46 No	<i>If no</i> →	
c. Construction year		N=53 Yes    N=11 No	<i>If no</i> →	
d. Percent of Heads of Households that are Elderly		N=24 Yes    N=39 No	<i>If no</i> →	
e. Percent of Heads of Households that are Non-Elderly Disabled		N=25 Yes    N=36 No	<i>If no</i> →	
f. REAC Physical Inspection Score		N=43 Yes    N=15 No	<i>If no</i> →	
g. Percent of Units that are Accessible		N=30 Yes    N=32 No	<i>If no</i> →	
h. Was an application submitted for HOPE VI, mandatory conversion, demolition or disposition for this development?		N=45 Yes    N=20 No	<i>If no</i> →	

**6. Currently, is the percent of vacant units at this development greater than 5%?**

**N=33** Yes, the percent of vacant units is greater than 5%.

**N=31** No, the percent of vacant units is 5% or less. → *SKIP to Question 8*

**7. (If yes) Do the following contribute to this development’s vacancy rate?**

a. Development is not able to retain residents ..... **N=12** Yes ..**N=16** No

b. Housing Authority has difficulty marketing units ..... **N=12** Yes ..**N=16** No

c. Low market demand for elderly/disabled housing for low-income individuals ..... **N= 9** Yes ...**N=18** No

d. Natural unit turnover ..... **N=22** Yes ..**N= 8** No

e. Units require modernization or renovation ..... **N=20** Yes ..**N= 9** No

f. Units require accessibility modifications ..... **N=16** Yes ..**N=12** No

g. Other reason..... **N=13** Yes ..**N= 0** No



*Please describe the other reason(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

**PHYSICAL CONDITIONS OF METROPOLITAN GARDENS**

**8. What problematic areas, if any, were identified during your REAC assessment that resulted in development’s current rating?**

**9. Has a physical needs assessment for this development been completed in the past calendar or fiscal year?**

**N=38** Yes

**N=26** No → *SKIP to Question 11*

**10. (If yes) What are the dollar amounts for the capital repairs and replacement cost as well as the value of the development?**

a. capital repairs and replacement cost:

**N=31 mean=\$3,854,368.5 median=\$1,890,000.0 range=\$23,147,395.0**

b. value of the development:

**N=27 mean=\$9,117,817.6 median=\$6,694,000.0 range=\$23,283,785.0**

**11. Currently, how deteriorated are the physical structures at this development?**

**N= 3** Extremely deteriorated

**N= 6** Very deteriorated

**N=19** Somewhat deteriorated

**N=20** A little deteriorated

**N=14** Not at all deteriorated

**12. What are the reasons for your rating of the deterioration of the physical structure?**

**13. How soon will the following require renovation or modernization at [name of development inserted]?**

	<i>0 - 12 months</i>	<i>13 - 36 months</i>	<i>More than 36 months</i>	<i>Not Applicable, Not a feature at this development</i>	<i>Not Applicable, Feature was recently renovated</i>
a. Air conditioning systems	N=10	N= 7	N=17	N=14	N=10
b. Boiler/hot water system	N=12	N= 8	N=19	N= 7	N=13
c. Building foundation	N= 6	N= 2	N=32	N=10	N= 6
d. Electrical systems	N= 8	N= 7	N=28	N= 5	N= 8
e. Elevators	N=10	N=15	N= 9	N=14	N=13
f. Exterior building doors	N= 8	N=16	N=20	N= 5	N=10
g. Exterior windows	N=10	N= 6	N=27	N= 4	N=13
h. Fire alarm system	N= 9	N= 7	N=25	N= 7	N= 8
i. Fencing	N= 5	N= 4	N=23	N=19	N= 9
j. Heating systems	N=12	N= 7	N=20	N= 5	N=14
k. Landscaping	N=10	N=11	N=21	N= 6	N=10
l. Parking lots	N= 8	N=13	N=17	N= 7	N=14
m. Plumbing/sewer systems	N=11	N=14	N=23	N= 4	N= 7
n. Roof	N= 8	N= 7	N=24	N= 4	N=16
o. Site lighting	N=11	N=11	N=20	N= 5	N=13
p. Other system, <i>please describe:</i>	N= 2	N= 4	N= 0	N= 0	N= 0

**14. Currently, are there vacant businesses near this development?**

N=23 Yes

N=40 No

**15. Currently, are there vacant homes near this development?**

N=19 Yes

N=44 No

**16. Currently, is there graffiti on buildings within this development?**

N= 0 Yes

N=63 No

**17. Currently, is there graffiti on buildings surrounding this development?**

N=16 Yes

N=47 No

**18. In your opinion, how much of a problem is crime (that is, personal attacks, theft, vandalism, violent crimes, and so forth) in this development?**

N= 1 Very much

N= 3 Fairly much

N=20 Some

N=23 A little

N=16 None or almost none

**19. In your opinion, how much of a problem is crime (that is, personal attacks, theft, vandalism, violent crimes, and so forth) in the neighborhood surrounding this development?**

N= 5 Very much

N=12 Fairly much

N=21 Some

N=19 A little

N= 6 None or almost none

**20. Compared to one year ago, is the neighborhood surrounding this development more safe, less safe, or about as safe?**

N= 1 Much more safe

N=14 More safe

N=45 About as safe

N= 3 Less safe

N= 0 Much less safe

**21. Currently, does this development have controlled security entrances?**

N=49 Yes

N=14 No



22. In your opinion, is this development's premises well-lit?

N=53 The premises are well-lit.

N= 9 The premises are not well-lit.

23. Within the last year, was mold identified in any of the units at this development?

N=11 Yes

N=53 No → SKIP to Question 27

24. (If yes) In how many units was mold identified?

N= 11 mean= 3.1 median=1.0 range=19.0

25. Was maintenance work conducted to eliminate mold in the units?

N= 9 Yes

N= 2 No → SKIP to Question 27

26. (If yes) In how many units was maintenance work conducted to eliminate mold?

N=9 mean=3.7 median=2.0 range=18.0

27. On average, about how many days do residents typically have to wait for completion of non-emergency repairs to essential systems (such as, heating, air conditioning, appliances, or plumbing) at this development?

N=60 mean=2.7 median=2.0 range=10.0

28. For each of the following, consider the front entrance and lobby of [name of development inserted].

	Yes	No	Not Applicable
a. Can a person in a wheelchair easily turn around in the elevators?	N=38	N=13	N=11
b. Are there ramps available for a person who uses a wheelchair, power scooters, walker or some other type of mobility assistance?	N=48	N= 5	N=10
c. Do the hallways have grab bars?	N=30	N=23	N= 9
d. Do the doorways allow passage for a person in a wheelchair or power scooter?	N=58	N= 3	N= 2

29. Currently, how many units are adaptable in this development?

N= 54 mean=30.9 median=5.5 range=350.0

AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES AT [*Name of Development inserted*]

30. Currently, how easy is it for elderly and disabled residents to access public transportation from [*name of development inserted*]?

N=28 Extremely easy

N=17 Very easy

N=12 Somewhat easy

N= 5 Not very easy

N= 0 Not at all easy

31. Currently, how easy is it for elderly and disabled residents to access transportation from this development for activities, such as grocery shopping, visiting the doctor, or participating in recreational activities?

N=29 Extremely easy

N=13 Very easy

N=12 Somewhat easy

N= 9 Not very easy

N= 0 Not at all easy

32. Currently, are the following services available on-site to elderly residents in this development?

(These services can be provided either through your housing authority or another service agency.)

- a. On demand door-to-door transportation (such as vans or shuttles).....N=27 Yes.. N=37 No
- b. Scheduled door-to-door transportation (such as vans or shuttles).....N=50 Yes.. N=13 No
- c. Medical or health services .....N=28 Yes.. N=35 No
- d. Counseling services .....N=30 Yes.. N=33 No
- e. Personal grooming assistance .....N=18 Yes.. N=45 No
- f. Housekeeping assistance .....N=42 Yes.. N=21 No
- g. Meal preparation assistance.....N=34 Yes.. N=28 No
- h. Recreational Activities .....N=42 Yes.. N=21 No

**33. Currently, are the following services available on-site to disabled residents in this development?**  
 (These services can be provided either through your housing authority or another service agency.)

- a. On demand door-to-door transportation (such as vans or shuttles)..... **N=29** Yes.. **N=34** No
- b. Scheduled door-to-door transportation (such as vans or shuttles)..... **N=47** Yes.. **N=16** No
- c. Medical or health services ..... **N=25** Yes.. **N=38** No
- d. Counseling services ..... **N=29** Yes.. **N=34** No
- e. Personal grooming assistance ..... **N=17** Yes.. **N=46** No
- f. Housekeeping assistance ..... **N=37** Yes.. **N=26** No
- g. Meal preparation assistance..... **N=32** Yes.. **N=31** No
- h. Recreational Activities ..... **N=39** Yes.. **N=23** No
- i. Job training or placement services ..... **N=25** Yes.. **N=37** No

**34. A service coordinator is a person who assists elderly individuals and persons with disabilities to obtain needed supportive services from community agencies. Currently, do elderly or disabled residents of this development have access to the services of a service coordinator?**

**N=45** Yes

**N=19** No → *SKIP to Question 37*

**35. (If yes) How many days per month do residents have access to a service coordinator?**

**N=45** mean=**14.1** median=**20.0** range=**30.0**

**36. Is this service coordinator funded through HUD?**

**N=28** Yes

**N=14** No

**37. Currently, are the following services located near this development?**

- a. Vocational schools, colleges, or universities ..... **N=37** Yes.. **N=26** No
- b. Religious institutions ..... **N=59** Yes.. **N= 4** No
- c. Grocery store ..... **N=49** Yes.. **N=14** No
- d. Pharmacy ..... **N=48** Yes.. **N=15** No
- e. Bank (not an ATM) ..... **N=48** Yes.. **N=15** No
- f. Post office..... **N=39** Yes.. **N=24** No
- g. Health clinic or hospital..... **N=47** Yes.. **N=16** No
- h. Beauty salon or barber shop ..... **N=48** Yes.. **N=15** No

CONCLUDING INFORMATION ABOUT [*name of development inserted*]

**38. On average, how frequently do elderly residents make complaints about non-elderly disabled residents at this development?**

N= 6 Extremely frequently

N= 6 Very frequently

N=17 Somewhat frequently

N=16 A little frequently

N=19 Not at all frequently

**39. On average, how frequently do non-elderly disabled residents make complaints about elderly residents at this development?**

N= 1 Extremely frequently

N= 0 Very frequently

N= 4 Somewhat frequently

N=24 A little frequently

N=35 Not at all frequently

**40. What current conditions at this development, if any, most adversely affect the quality of life for elderly and disabled residents?**

**41. What actions are you taking or do you plan to take to address the current conditions described in Question 40?**

**42. Will any of the following funding sources be used to implement the actions you described in Question 41?**

- a. Capital fund..... N=31 Yes. N=16 No
- b. Capital fund bond program or private financing..... N=11 Yes. N=33 No
- c. HOPE VI..... N= 7 Yes. N=36 No
- d. Local agencies..... N=16 Yes. N=29 No
- e. Low-income housing tax credits..... N=14 Yes. N=30 No
- f. Medicaid Waivers ..... N= 3 Yes. N=41 No
- g. State agencies..... N=10 Yes. N=34 No

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF ELDERLY AND DISABLED HOUSING

**43. Other than the developments just discussed, does your Housing Authority currently have developments or buildings that meet any of the following criteria:**

- at least 50% of the heads of households are elderly residents,
- at least 50% of the heads of households are disabled residents, or
- at least 80% of the heads of households are elderly or disabled residents?

N=33 Yes

N= 6 No → *SKIP to Question 53*

**44. (If yes) In your opinion, do you have developments or buildings for elderly and disabled residents that are more distressed than Metropolitan Gardens?**

N= 8 Yes → What are the names of those developments or buildings:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

N=21 No → *SKIP to Question 46*

**45. What are the reasons for your response to Question 44?**

**46. In your opinion, do you have developments or buildings for elderly and disabled residents that are less distressed than Metropolitan Gardens?**

N=20 Yes → What are the names of those developments or buildings:

\_\_\_\_\_

N= 8 No → *SKIP to Question 48*

**47. What are the reasons for your response to Question 46?**

**48. In your opinion, do you have developments or buildings for elderly and disabled residents that are about the same in their distress as Metropolitan Gardens?**

N=11 Yes → What are the names of those developments or buildings:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

N=17 No → *SKIP to Question 50*

**49. What are the reasons for your response to Question 48?**

**50. In the last 15 years, what challenges have you encountered with your elderly and disabled public housing?**

**51. How, if at all, have you addressed the challenges identified in Question 50?**

**52. What resources, if any, did you use to address the challenges identified in Question 50?**

**53. What program(s) have you observed other public housing authorities using that best address challenges they encountered with their elderly and disabled public housing?**

**54. Is there anything else that you would like to tell Congress about public housing for elderly and non-elderly disabled residents?**

**55. Who is completing this questionnaire?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Public Housing Authority: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

(Area Code) Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you worked at this housing authority? \_\_\_\_\_ years