HUD kicks off two housing initiatives for the month of June

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced last week the start of two initiatives, National Homeownership Month and National Healthy Homes Month.

The first initiative is geared toward educating Americans about the importance of homeownership while providing buyer resources, and the second initiative's purpose is educating the public about the dangers of lead-based paint in older apartment complexes and residential homes.

In a press release announcing National Homeownership Month, HUD shared a number of tools and tips aspiring homeowners can use, namely applying for low down payment Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans and contacting one of 1,800 Office of Housing Counseling (OHC) locations for "homeowner education, pre-purchase and foreclosure prevention counseling, assistance with creating a budget and setting financial goals, fair housing information."

"Homeownership serves as an enduring symbol of security and prosperity, and it provides many Americans with a legacy they can pass down to their children and grandchildren," said HUD Secretary Ben Carson in a statement. "During National Homeownership Month, we recognize the abiding value of owning a home, and we rededicate ourselves toward helping hard-working families to find their place in the American dream."

For National Healthy Homes Month, HUD will be launching "Protect Our Kids!" an enforcement campaign that reminds sellers and landlords of their responsibility to disclose the use of lead-based paint in their properties.

HUD's Office of General Counsel (OGC), Departmental Enforcement Center (DEC), Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (Healthy Homes), Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Office of Public and Indian Housing, Real Estate Assessment Center and the Office of Multifamily Housing Programs will be involved in the enforcement process, which has already begun.

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The Department said it’s sent six penalty and pre-penalty notices to an Illinois housing authority, two local governments in New York, property managers in New Jersey and North Carolina and individual landlords in Iowa. Each of the notice recipients has histories of filing incomplete lead disclosure forms or not filing them at all.

Secretary Carson noted that children are especially susceptible to lead poisoning, which can cause a number permanent behavioral and cognitive issues and short-term symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, nausea, fatigue and irritability.

“While lead poisoning is entirely preventable, we continue to see far too many children being exposed to lead hazards in their own homes,” Carson said. “All of us have a responsibility to protect kids, and that includes those who rent or sell older homes that may contain potentially harmful lead.”

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