

# SMS Inspection Reminder Program

**Kentucky Housing Corporation**

Rental Housing: Multifamily Management

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### SMS Inspection Reminder Program

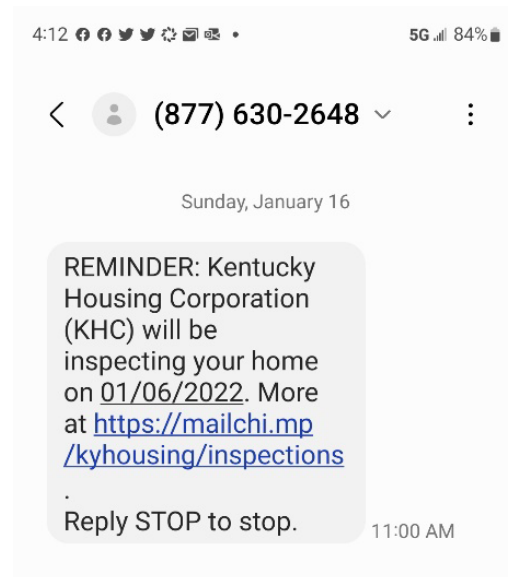
Before the pandemic, the Multifamily Compliance and Asset Management teams at Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) used a two-fold system to notify Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) holders about upcoming inspections. First, they sent tenants a letter weeks in advance with the date and time of their upcoming inspections. Then, closer to the inspection date, they followed up with an email reminding tenants of their scheduled inspections.

For many years, this two-fold notification system worked. Last year, though, the number of missed appointments began to increase. Too often, inspectors would arrive for an in-person inspection or call for a virtual inspection and receive no answer. This was unacceptable for many reasons, the most glaring being that a tenant who misses two appointments loses their voucher. Likely, they waited a long time to get the voucher in the first place; and they would have to wait a long time to get it again. In addition, missed appointments are costly to KHC, both in terms of time (driving and paperwork) and money (mileage). To be better stewards of the program, KHC had to change something.

#### Solving A Problem

The Compliance team looked for new ways to communicate about the inspection process. They wanted to give tenants an additional and a more direct reminder of their upcoming inspections. After having done countless virtual inspections during the pandemic, the Compliance team knew that nearly every tenant had access to a cell phone.

If KHC could reach tenants via phone, too, tenants would be more likely to remember and keep their appointments. It was plausible that tenants could miss a letter or an email, but it was unlikely that they could miss a letter, an email, and a text message. The mass text messaging program was born.



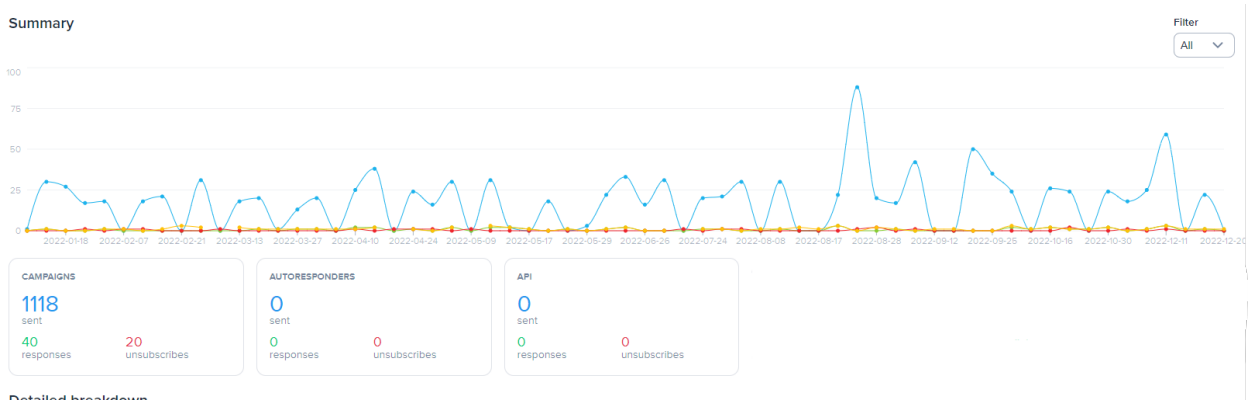
Starting in January 2022, KHC began sending [emails](#) and text messages each Sunday to all the tenants on the list provided by Multifamily Compliance reminding them that they have an inspection that week and the date it will occur. The email references the letter they were mailed earlier that month and the email and text direct recipients to a [landing page](#) with

information about the inspection process, including what happens at an inspection, what they are checking, what to expect, how they can help during the process and how they can reschedule in the case of illness.

It is a multilayered approach that hopefully results in the tenant remembering their inspection appointment.

## Results

In 2022, 1,118 text message reminders were sent, and the number of missed appointments has dropped by more than 50 percent. In 2021, there were 839 missed appointments. In 2022, there were only 352. This year is on pace to be close to 2022.



Also, the new approach helps us capture better contact information for our tenants. When they said they did not get the message or email, we can ask for an updated number or email address and update our system. It helps us maintain a better database of our tenants in case we need to contact them for another reason. Plus, the tenants feel more informed about and comfortable with the process after visiting the landing page and learning about what inspectors look for and do during their visit.

## Replicable

We believe that the mass texting program would be a valuable and inexpensive tool for any housing finance agency. For the most part, KHC used existing resources to begin the mass texting program. KHC already had a list of the emails and phone numbers of the tenants requiring an inspection. Every two weeks, a member of Multifamily Compliance sends Communications a list of tenants, their contact information and the date of their inspections.

KHC already used a service called MailChimp for its e-newsletters, public notices, and press releases (pricing based on the number of contacts an organization has; for KHC it is \$742 per month). KHC set up the email reminder and the landing page using MailChimp.

KHC bought a \$25/month subscription (now \$29/month) to the SMS service SimpleTexting, which integrates with MailChimp.

The cost of the program is \$29/month and the time it takes a staff member to pull the list, schedule the Sunday email and SMS batch. The reward is huge: keeping families and individuals

in quality homes they can afford. In our view, it has been a way to meet tenants where they are – using electronic, mobile devices rather than checking their mailbox – and a small investment that reaps big rewards. For those reasons, we feel the program is innovative and effective.



**KHC** | Kentucky  
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*Investing in quality housing solutions.*

### What Is A KHC Inspection?

Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) provides thousands of low-income Kentuckians rental assistance through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and Project-Based Contract Administration.

To ensure that these homes and rental units are safe and up housing quality standards, we conduct routine inspections. It is a quick and painless process.

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