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This article presents qualitative research findings of Section 8 landlord perceptions regarding healthy housing practices to inform landlord-focused initiatives.

Five focus groups were conducted with landlords.

Boston, Massachusetts.

Section 8 landlords participated in focus groups (n = 39).

Focus group transcripts were coded for key themes using a grounded theory approach.

Landlords' primary challenges to creating a healthy housing environment included tenant behavior, financial burden, and policy enforcement; tenant safety and cost savings were seen as primary benefits.

Landlords play a critical role in implementing healthy housing practices. Several opportunities exist to reduce barriers and capitalize on perceived benefits of implementing these practices, including increasing access to educational and financial resources.

environmental health, housing, qualitative research

Low-income populations are disproportionately affected by unhealthy housing¹—including exposure to secondhand smoke² and pesticides³—and consequently experience higher rates of associated health conditions, such as asthma.⁴ The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assists over 1.2 million low-income families with affordable housing through Section 8 and expects landlords to provide healthy housing conditions.^{5,6} The HUD defines healthy housing as dry, clean, pest-free, safe, contaminant-free, well ventilated, well maintained, and thermally controlled.⁷ Studies examining landlord perspectives on healthy housing are primarily quantitative⁸⁻¹¹ and data on landlords' perceptions of implementing healthy housing practices (eg, lead abatement) are lacking. This qualitative study aimed to explore: (1) What role Section 8 landlords believe they have in providing healthy housing; (2) perceived challenges and benefits of implementing healthy housing practices; and (3) resources needed to help implement these practices.

This study was approved by the New England Institutional Review Board.

To recruit focus group participants, the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, a nonprofit housing agency, sent an e-mail to their listing service of over 2,000 landlords. Potential participants self-selected to participate in this study by responding to the recruitment e-mail and providing their contact information for eligibility screening (n = 214). Eligibility criteria required participants (landlords) own or manage

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² Division of Healthy Homes and Community Support, Boston Public Health Commission, Boston, MA, USA

³ Inspectional Services, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, Boston, MA, USA

Researchers collected qualitative data via 5 focus groups with landlords of Section 8 rental units in Boston, Massachusetts.

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Although landlords play a critical role in creating a healthy housing environment, they cited tenant behavior, financial burden, and policy enforcement as barriers.

There are several limitations to this study. Participating landlords may not be representative of the larger landlord population because those who chose to participate may have done so for financial remuneration. In addition, focus groups used a nonrandom sample and recruitment was conducted via an e-mail listing service—only landlords for whom updated contact information

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