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How to Fix 50, 100 or 400+ Past-Due Recertifications Without Burning Out Your Staff

A practical backlog-recovery playbook for HUD affordable housing teams

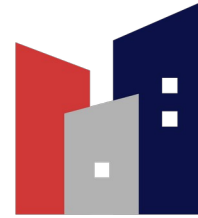


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A recertification backlog is not simply a stack of unfinished files. It is a workflow problem that can affect residents, rent calculations, subsidy administration, staff morale, and audit readiness. The answer is not to ask an already exhausted site team to work faster. The answer is to redesign the recovery process.

THE HCA BACKLOG PRINCIPLE

Protect today's work while repairing yesterday's work. If the team clears old recertifications but allows new ones to become late, the property has not recovered - it has only moved the backlog.



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First: Stop Treating Every Late File the Same

HUD Multifamily guidance requires annual recertifications to be completed by the tenant's anniversary date and lays out a defined process involving notices, interviews, EIV review, verification, rent calculations, HUD-50059 execution, and TRACS submission. When dozens or hundreds of files are late, the fastest recovery comes from separating files by status instead of treating the backlog as one giant pile.

The first 24 to 48 hours of a recovery project should be devoted to building a reliable backlog inventory. Until you know what is missing from each household, you do not actually know whether you have 100 recertifications to complete or 100 different problems to solve.

Step 1: Build a Backlog Command Center

Create one master tracker containing every past-due and soon-to-be-due recertification. At minimum, track the resident, unit, anniversary date, days overdue, notices issued, interview status, household documents received, EIV status, third-party verifications, calculation status, certification status, signatures, software entry, TRACS status, resident follow-up, and assigned team member.

Use simple status categories

- **READY TO PROCESS** - documents are substantially complete and the file can move to calculation/review.
- **WAITING ON RESIDENT** - interview, signatures, statements, or household documentation are outstanding.
- **WAITING ON THIRD PARTY** - employer, asset, benefit, or other verification is outstanding.
- **COMPLIANCE REVIEW** - file is assembled but requires technical review or correction.
- **SOFTWARE / 50059** - verification is complete and the certification needs to be generated, signed, corrected, or transmitted.
- **ESCALATION** - resident nonresponse, termination issue, complex household change, repayment concern, or another issue requires management/compliance attention.

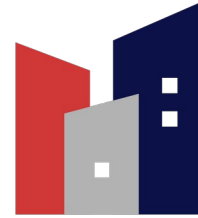
WHY THIS WORKS

The tracker converts a stressful number - 'we are 100 behind' - into manageable work queues. Ten files waiting on employers require a different action than ten files waiting for a calculation.

Step 2: Create a Firewall Around Current Recertifications

One of the most damaging recovery mistakes is assigning the entire site team to the backlog. While everyone attacks old files, the next month's recertifications quietly become late. The property then spends enormous energy without reducing the underlying problem.

Designate capacity for current work first. New recertifications should continue to receive notices, interviews, verification follow-up, calculations, resident communication, and final processing on schedule. The backlog team works behind that firewall.



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Step 3: Triage by Risk, Not Just by Age

The oldest file is not automatically the file that should be completed first. Prioritize cases where delay creates the greatest operational or compliance exposure.

HCA recommends prioritizing:

1. Files that are substantially complete and can be closed quickly.
2. Households with potential rent or assistance changes requiring careful effective-date review.
3. Files involving unreported income, EIV discrepancies, household composition changes, or eligibility concerns.
4. Residents who have already supplied documents and are waiting on management.
5. Files associated with upcoming MOR, audit, contract-administrator, or internal review activity.
6. Long-outstanding cases involving resident nonresponse or termination-related procedures that require management attention.

Step 4: Divide the Work Into Specialized Lanes

Backlogs grow when one person is expected to perform every task from reminder calls through final compliance approval. A recovery team moves faster when work is divided by function.

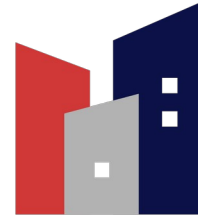
- Resident outreach lane: schedules interviews, sends missing-item lists, follows up, and documents contact attempts.
- Document lane: receives, names, organizes, scans, and tracks incoming paperwork.
- Verification/EIV lane: reviews EIV and obtains or follows up on required verification.
- Certification lane: calculates income, assets, deductions, allowances, and rent and prepares the certification.
- Quality-control lane: reviews completed work for accuracy before finalization.
- Software/TRACS lane: enters or corrects data, generates required forms, tracks signatures, and confirms transmission status.

Smaller properties may combine lanes, but the roles should still be conceptually separate. That prevents every staff member from repeatedly switching between phone calls, calculations, scanning, software entry, and compliance research.

What Changes at 50, 100 and 400+ Late Recertifications?

If You Are 50 Recertifications Behind

A backlog of 50 is serious but often recoverable with a focused sprint if the current workload is protected. Start with a complete inventory, dedicate specific recovery blocks each day, batch resident outreach, and move all nearly complete files to a fast-close queue. Management should review progress at least several times per week until the backlog is stable.



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Do not automatically require overtime. A disciplined workflow and temporary redistribution of administrative duties may create more useful capacity than asking staff to stay late every night.

If You Are 100 Recertifications Behind

At 100 files, the property usually needs a project structure rather than an informal push. Assign a recovery lead, establish daily production targets, create dedicated work lanes, and consider temporary compliance or occupancy support. Separate site operations from technical file processing whenever possible.

A 100-file backlog can overwhelm a property manager who is simultaneously handling residents, vacancies, vendors, staff supervision, emergencies, reporting, and compliance. Expecting that manager to personally repair every file is not a recovery plan.

If You Are 400+ Recertifications Behind

At 400 or more, treat the situation as a portfolio-level recovery project. The work may span multiple properties, anniversary months, staff teams, software environments, and states. Centralized project management becomes essential.

Create property-level inventories and then roll them into one portfolio dashboard. Establish consistent definitions for 'complete,' 'waiting,' 'review,' and 'closed.' Deploy enough processing capacity to create meaningful throughput while leaving site staff responsible for local resident relationships and property operations.

400+ FILES REQUIRES SCALE

The objective is not to make four exhausted employees work four times harder. It is to create parallel processing capacity, standardized workflows, centralized quality control, and clear accountability.

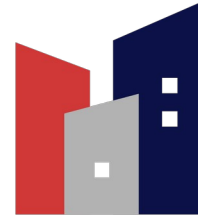
Step 5: Batch Resident Outreach

Calling residents randomly throughout the day destroys concentration and creates inconsistent follow-up. Instead, group outreach into defined blocks. Use consistent missing-document notices, appointment scheduling, call scripts, and follow-up documentation.

Where permitted by policy and applicable requirements, use multiple communication channels to improve response. Every contact attempt should be documented. For residents with disabilities, limited English proficiency, or other communication needs, ensure reasonable accommodations and meaningful access requirements are addressed.

Step 6: Give Every Resident One Clear Missing-Item List

Residents become frustrated when they submit one document and receive another request two days later. Before contacting the household, review the entire file and produce one consolidated list whenever possible. The request should identify exactly what is needed, the applicable period, how it may be submitted, whom to contact with questions, and any applicable deadline.



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This reduces repeated phone calls, duplicate paperwork, and the perception that the property does not know what it needs.

Step 7: Create a Verification Escalation Clock

Third-party verification can become a black hole. The recovery tracker should record the date requested, follow-up date, response status, and next action. Staff should know when to follow up, when another acceptable verification method may be used under applicable HUD requirements, and when a compliance specialist must review the situation.

The goal is to keep files moving without skipping required verification or leaving a request untouched for weeks.

Step 8: Quality-Control Before You Call a File 'Done'

A fast backlog recovery that produces inaccurate certifications creates a second backlog: corrections. Build quality control into the process rather than auditing mistakes after hundreds of files have been finalized.

Before closing a file, confirm:

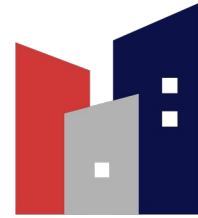
- Required notices and resident communications are documented.
- Household composition is correct.
- Income, assets, deductions, and allowances are supported and calculated under the applicable rules.
- EIV has been reviewed and discrepancies are resolved when applicable.
- Effective dates and any required rent notices are correct.
- HUD-50059 data matches the supporting documentation.
- Required signatures and dates are present.
- Software and TRACS processing are complete or appropriately tracked.
- The file contains a clear audit trail explaining unusual decisions or corrections.

Step 9: Measure Throughput Without Turning Staff Into Machines

Production metrics are useful, but raw file counts can be misleading. One uncomplicated fixed-income recertification is not equivalent to a household with multiple employers, assets, interim changes, EIV discrepancies, or missing documentation.

Track both quantity and movement. Useful measures include files closed, files advanced to the next stage, resident contacts completed, verification requests resolved, average days in each queue, percentage of the backlog older than 30/60/90 days, and new files becoming delinquent.

Celebrate sustained reduction and clean files - not rushed volume that creates rework.



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Step 10: Protect the Staff Who Are Doing the Recovery

Burnout is not a motivational problem. It is often a capacity and workflow problem. Staff who spend all day managing a property and all evening completing recertifications will eventually lose accuracy, engagement, or both.

During a recovery project:

- Remove nonessential meetings and low-priority administrative work.
- Set realistic daily production expectations based on file complexity.
- Give staff uninterrupted processing blocks.
- Use one escalation point for difficult compliance questions.
- Rotate high-friction resident outreach responsibilities.
- Avoid making routine nights and weekends the permanent recovery strategy.
- Bring in temporary support before the existing team reaches the point of resignation.

A Practical 30-Day Recovery Rhythm

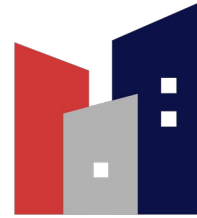
7. Days 1-3: Validate the backlog, categorize every file, identify high-risk cases, and protect current recertifications.
8. Days 4-7: Launch resident outreach, verification requests, fast-close processing, and daily dashboard reporting.
9. Week 2: Increase parallel processing, clear nearly complete files, escalate nonresponse and complex compliance cases, and audit a sample of completed work.
10. Week 3: Focus on harder files, repeat resident outreach, resolve verification bottlenecks, and rebalance staff based on actual queue volume.
11. Week 4: Close remaining actionable files, document unresolved cases, perform quality-control review, and establish a prevention plan for the next 90 days.

For very large portfolios, 30 days may represent the stabilization phase rather than complete elimination of the backlog. The recovery timeline should be based on actual file condition, resident responsiveness, verification needs, program requirements, staffing capacity, and quality standards - not an arbitrary promise.

Do Not 'Fix' the Backlog by Cutting Compliance Corners

HUD's Multifamily Occupancy Handbook lays out required annual recertification steps, including notices, interviews, EIV review, verification, rent calculations, HUD-50059 execution, and transmission. Recovery pressure does not eliminate those requirements. A late but properly documented correction is preferable to creating a new compliance problem through rushed or unsupported processing.

HUD has also extended the Multifamily mandatory full-compliance date for HOTMA Sections 102 and 104 to January 1, 2027. Properties should make sure their backlog procedures reflect the rules actually applicable to each certification effective date and their HOTMA implementation status.



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When Outside Support Makes Sense

Outside support is most useful when the backlog is larger than the site's realistic excess capacity, vacancies and day-to-day operations are already consuming staff time, a deadline or MOR is approaching, the portfolio spans multiple properties, or technical compliance issues are slowing production.

Temporary support should expand capacity without creating another management burden. A strong recovery partner should be able to help inventory files, conduct resident follow-up, gather documentation, review EIV and verification, calculate certifications, work within the client's software, perform quality control, and report progress in a way leadership can understand.

How Housing Consultants of America Can Help

Housing Consultants of America provides temporary affordable housing staffing, recertification backlog recovery, HUD and LIHTC file audits, third-party compliance support, MOR preparation, training, and occupancy assistance for owners, management companies, housing authorities, nonprofits, and affordable housing portfolios.

HCA can deploy support around the specific bottleneck rather than forcing a one-size-fits-all solution. For one property, that may mean clearing 50 aging files while the site team protects current recertifications. For another, it may mean building a multi-property recovery team for hundreds of late certifications, resident interviews, missing documentation, calculations, software updates, and final quality-control review.

The goal is bigger than reducing a number on a spreadsheet. A successful recovery leaves the property with a manageable workload, cleaner files, a stronger process, and a staff that still has the capacity to serve residents.

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Recertification Backlog Recovery • Temporary Staffing • File Audits • MOR Preparation • Compliance Support

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