

Landlord Engagement & Recruitment Additional Resources

May 2015

Formatted for Double Sided Printing



Landlord Engagement & Recruitment Additional Resources

May 2015 Table of Contents

Brief Re-Housing for Homeless Populations - Los Angeles - Beyond Shelter/Home Start/Partnering for Change	Page 1
Program and community strategies for recruiting private-market landlords & overcoming housing barriers.	
http://www.epath.org/files/PATHBeyondShelter/Brief_RehsingStrategiesFINAL.pdf	
Working with Landlords in Housing First/Rapid Rehousing - Los Angeles - Beyond Shelter	Page 33
Gain an understanding of elements and mechanics of developing an effective marketing plan for landlords outreach and recruitment.	
http://partnering-for-change.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/LandlordRecruitmentRetentionFINAL.pdf	
New Lease for Homeless Families - Massachusetts	Page 51
In late August, 2013, New Lease became the first organization in the nation to establish a <i>homeless family preference in HUD Multifamily housing</i> . New Lease pairs homeless families with affordable units in five regions of Massachusetts.	
http://www.newleasehousing.org/	
Benefits for Landlords: Partnering with a Service Agency to Provide Services to Your Tenants Who Were Previously Homeless - Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness	Page 59
Questions and Answers pertaining to partnering with service agencies, as well as a sample of the Coalitions "Landlord-Tenant-Case Manager Communication Agreement".	
http://www.vceh.org/vceh-pubs/for-landlords	
Landlords are Critical Customers - HUD Office of Public & Indian Housing	Page 65
Without the participation of good landlords, families will not succeed in leasing up and staying leased. Landlord Outreach Objectives and examples of how to remove existing barriers when working with landlords.	
http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/wtw/resources/wtwnc_00/s3_wtw_vouchers.pdf	

Practice Brief: Preparing for HEARTH Act Implementation

Rapid Re-Housing for Homeless Populations: Program and Community Strategies for Recruiting Private-Market Landlords & Overcoming Housing Barriers

December 2010



Beyond Shelter



**Partnering
for
Change**

**The National Institute for Innovative Strategies
to Combat Family Homelessness & Poverty**

Funding for this practice brief was generously provided by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. The primary authors were Ryan Macy-Hurley of Beyond Shelter and Partnering for Change and Joanna Hooper and Ashley Mann of HomeStart, Inc. The authors are grateful to Tanya Tull of Beyond Shelter and Partnering for Change, Linda Wood-Boyle of HomeStart, Inc., and Sharon McDonald of the National Alliance to End Homelessness for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of the report.

This practice brief is part of a forthcoming Technical Assistance Manual and Implementation Toolkit on the same topic to be published in 2012.

Beyond Shelter, Los Angeles, CA 90017
HomeStart, Inc., Boston, MA 02111
Partnering for Change, Los Angeles, CA 90017

Suggested citation: Macy-Hurley, R., Hooper, J. and Mann, A. *Rapid Re-Housing for Homeless Populations: Program and Community Strategies for Recruiting Private-Market Landlords & Overcoming Housing Barriers*. Los Angeles and Boston: Beyond Shelter, HomeStart, 2010.

Rapid Re-Housing for Homeless Populations: Program and Community Strategies for Recruiting Private-Market Landlords & Overcoming Housing Barriers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>The Challenge of Low “Renter Capital”.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Marketing Tailored to Owner Needs</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Creative Advocacy Approaches</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Enhanced Incentives & Protections for Landlords</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Approaches to Addressing the Affordability Problem</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Summary of Program Strategies</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Summary of Community Strategies.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Maintaining Relationships & Facilitating Housing Stability</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Building Upon Success: Expanding the Role of Partnering Landlords.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Related Reading</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>About the Contributing Organizations.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Endnotes</i>	<i>27</i>

This Page Left Intentionally Blank

Introduction

The emerging shift in federal homelessness policy to housing-based solutions, and in particular rapid re-housing/Housing First,¹ necessitates facilitating and expanding permanent housing opportunities for homeless individuals and families. While efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing through new production or rehabilitation of current stock are necessary, agencies and communities cannot “build their way” out of homelessness. Rather, frontline staff, program managers, and systems planners must have a laser-like focus on increasing access to existing rental units for unhoused populations, particularly in the private rental market.

The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) and the new Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act² prioritize the adoption of implementation practices and operational strategies to re-house homeless households as quickly as possible. While some service providers and Continuums of Care have more than

a decade of experience testing and refining rapid re-housing models for various target populations, rapid re-housing is a relatively new approach for most providers and for most Continuums across the country. As such, knowledge of innovative and effective practices remains fairly limited.

This practice brief discusses housing barriers commonly faced by homeless households and highlights promising and successful techniques, tools, and policies agencies and communities across the country are utilizing to build partnerships with landlords and overcome these barriers. Communities wishing to develop new, or strengthen existing, rapid re-housing initiatives can look to these strategies as models for *adaption*, recognizing that replication is not realistic nor even desirable, given that conditions, needs, resources, and opportunities vary from one community to another.

The strategies and tools outlined in the brief are intentionally diverse and range from those that can be implemented by single agencies serving homeless persons to those requiring community-level commitment, resources, coordination, and/or policies to implement. As such, the brief is intended to speak to the challenges and opportunities of the broad array of actors and stakeholders responsible for addressing homelessness today.

¹ Rapid re-housing refers to an approach that emphasizes moving homeless families and individuals into permanent housing *as quickly as possible*, followed by the provision of usually time-limited, home-based stabilization services to promote housing retention. Typically, rapid re-housing tenancies are scattered-site, private-market rentals, funded with time-limited rental assistance. The term “Housing First” is also used to describe this approach, both for families and individuals, though that term is increasingly being used more exclusively to describe interventions for chronically homeless individuals.

² For a review of forthcoming changes to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance programs, see the National Alliance to End Homelessness’ Summary of the HEARTH Act (June 2009), available at <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/2098>

The Challenge of Low “Renter Capital”

The assets a household brings to a prospective rental situation have been described as “renter capital.”ⁱ By virtue of their housing status, homeless families and individuals have low renter capital. In addition to financial barriers to housing, homeless persons also face other barriers, to varying degrees, including eviction histories, poor credit or no credit, criminal records, limited rental histories, poor landlord references, and various forms of discrimination based on race, family composition, housing status, and income source. These barriers often mean that homeless households cannot pass standard tenant screening criteria, and consequently, are at a competitive disadvantage relative to other low-income tenants, particularly in tight rental markets.

It is the job of frontline, rapid re-housing staff – whether dedicated housing specialists or case managers responsible for housing search and placement – to address the rental barriers of homeless families and individuals. While housing relocation services designed to address such barriers are evolving into a “practice standard” in the field, prior approaches did not recognize the central importance of these services. In the mid-1990s, for instance, a rigorous national survey of shelter providers and users found that only 20% of homeless families reported receiving help finding housing; the most common forms of assistance received were transportation, clothing, and public benefits advocacy.ⁱⁱ

In addressing the housing barriers of homeless persons, housing specialists and case managers must seek, where possible, to increase the renter capital of homeless households through such means as accessing financial resources (e.g., move-in funds, temporary subsidies, Section 8 vouchers) to make housing more affordable. In many cases, however, many housing barriers cannot be directly addressed or reduced *per se*, such as multiple evictions or drug-related felonies. In those cases, the approach service providers must take is to advocate with and persuade property owners and management companies to overlook whatever capital deficits a particular family or individual may possess.

Sometimes it is necessary to provide property owners and managers with certain protections and/or incentives before they are willing to relax their screening criteria. Some incentives and protections, particularly those that are financial in nature, are beyond the means of individual service agencies but are possible with community leadership and resources.

The following sections describe many of the practices, tools, and methods currently being employed by re-housing providers and local Continuums to overcome the housing barriers of homeless persons and increase their access to private-market housing.

Marketing Tailored to Owner Needs

Homeless service providers typically consider their clients to be the individuals who are accessing their services. Housing search and placement requires a different mindset, one in which property owners are also viewed as “clients” or “customers” who have needs and wants that must be met through the program. In many ways, re-housing providers are tasked with “selling a product” (i.e., the program) and promoting prospective tenants in the open market, one in which property owners and managers often have many different choices.

This business or market-oriented mindset requires the use of selling points that speak to landlord needs and goals, address their concerns, and mitigate actual or *perceived* risks. In our experience, the three most common concerns and perceived risks of landlords in leasing to homeless persons are non-payment of rent, property damage, and the burden of having to deal with potential “problems” caused by the incoming tenants.

Successful marketing efforts often utilize the following selling points to explain the “win-win” for landlords in partnering with social service programs:

- Households are provided individualized case management before and after the move, including tenant education, budgeting, household management, employment

assistance, and crisis intervention

- Services are often provided on-site through regular home visits (often for a transitional period of time, e.g. 3-6 months)
- Landlords have access to support “hotlines” and dedicated point persons responsive to their concerns and needs, and can expect prompt intervention with tenants when requested
- Tenants – program participants and sometimes other tenants in the same buildings – have access to, or can be linked to, intervention programs to address issues or crises (e.g., rent-to-prevent eviction assistance)
- Landlord costs associated with advertising vacancies and finding qualified tenants are reduced through free tenant screening and referrals
- Security deposits are paid on behalf of tenants

For many landlords and for many program participants, these risk mitigation services are sufficient to open the doors to rental opportunities. All landlords at one time or another have dealt with problematic tenants, many of whom had never been homeless, and do not easily forget the burden, irritation, and sometimes financial cost of dealing with those individuals. Landlords often feel reassured when they discover that

program participants receive home-based support services and that there is a reliable, sympathetic contact to call in case problems arise. During our 40 years of collective experience, case management services and having a designated, responsive backup have consistently been the most persuasive selling points for landlord partners.

Getting Your Message Across to Property Owners & Management Companies

The key to engaging property owners and managers lies in presentation and appeal. Landlords appreciate when service providers demonstrate an understanding of the dollars and cents of the rental business and can communicate the protocols and measures they have instituted to mitigate owners' financial risks. Targeted and professional marketing materials and outreach strategies are essential in order to effectively present these messages, and pique the interest of prospective landlords.

Successful re-housing programs often use a variety of materials and tactics to recruit and engage property owners and managers. Some of the most common are agency and program brochures, one-page fact sheets or flyers, "Dear Landlord" letters, and business cards. Other materials used by some programs include client success stories that highlight how stable, affordable housing has transformed their lives, program or agency media coverage including newspaper articles, agency newsletters for donors and community members, and letters of recommendation from peers currently partnering with the program.

Marketing materials are often left with landlords during outreach visits or presentations at association meetings, or made available at trade shows or conferences. Sometimes, materials are mailed directly to landlords and management companies based on leads or initial contacts.

On a community-wide scale, landlord marketing efforts have been strengthened in recent years through the creation of web-based housing locators. These websites are essentially one-stop shops for service providers and homeless and low-income individuals to identify affordable housing opportunities in their communities. The sites are appealing to landlords due to their free advertising of rentals, easy-to-use listing tools, dedicated customer service, and steady stream of tenant referrals.

Customized locators have sprung up in localities across the country, typically through partnerships between state or local government agencies (e.g., housing finance agencies, housing authorities, and community development agencies) that fund and manage the sites and private developers of these sites. Socialserve.com is one of the leading national developers, but there are other companies, including RentLinX.

In addition to, or in lieu of, affordable housing websites, communities often utilize other means to attract landlord partners. One such approach is to place targeted advertisements of re-housing initiatives or rental assistance programs in local or community newspapers, or in publications of apartment owner/rental housing associations.

Creative Advocacy Approaches

Rapid re-housing providers often need to employ additional, creative strategies to convince landlords to take risks that they might otherwise not take. This is particularly the case when working with homeless families or individuals with spottier rental, credit, and/or criminal histories.

Certificated Tenant Education Programs

One strategy to address rental barriers is to develop a certificated, community tenant education program endorsed by the local landlord association.

Most, if not all, rapid re-housing programs provide tenant education directly or through local partnerships, and market such training as a selling point to prospective landlords. While useful to program participants and potentially attractive to landlords, tenant education of this kind tends to lack known standards and may be less rigorous in nature. A more formal program recognized by a landlord association, and developed with their input, on the other hand, provides a marketing advantage over traditional approaches.

Several communities around the country have established *Ready to Rent*³ programs, based upon the tenant readiness curriculum originally

developed in the late 1990s by the Portland Housing Center.

In King County, Washington, for example, the local United Way certifies area service providers in curriculum instruction. The providers then teach the curriculum to homeless clients through a 12-hour course; upon completion, clients receive a program certificate.

The Rental Housing Association of Puget Sound – the largest association of rental housing owners in the Pacific Northwest – provides tenant background checks for *Ready to Rent* participants and encourages its more than 3,000 members to accept the program certificate from graduates with screening barriers.ⁱⁱⁱ⁴

Character and Advocacy Letters

Character letters can be another useful tool in advocating for housing access for homeless families and individuals. Generally speaking, property owners like to see that a prospective renter has taken responsibility for past indiscretions or problems.

Letters from case managers and/or respected third parties, such as religious leaders, employers, or even parole officers, describing how the head of household or individual concerned has participated in specialized services

³ For more information about the program, including curriculum content, certification and licensing requirements, and cost, visit www.readytorent.org.

⁴ Another example of a certificate program is Multnomah County's (Oregon) Rent Well Tenant Education Program - <http://www.portlandonline.com/phb/index.cfm?c=50130>.

(e.g., substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, financial education classes) and has made great strides in overcoming personal problems indicates to a landlord a level of commitment, motivation, and ability to turn one's life around.

While certainly not all landlords or management companies are swayed by such letters – no matter how impressive – experience has shown that some will respond by “bending” conventional rules or making exceptions on a case-by-case basis, particularly in light of ongoing program support for tenants. Typically, individual owners, and “mom and pop” landlords in particular, are more flexible in this regard; however, program advocacy of this nature can also work with management companies.

It is important to note that relaxing rules or practices in this manner does not violate fair housing laws, provided that housing determinations are not made on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, color, creed, or national origin, religion, or familial status.⁵ Some landlords misunderstand the bounds of these laws. All other things being equal, it is lawful for landlords to give preference to one applicant over another on the basis of his or her participation in a case management program, even if the applicant has a poorer rental “resume” than other applicants.

Advocacy letters can also be helpful in explaining the circumstances surrounding past rental and/or credit

problems. It is important for re-housing providers to thoroughly investigate with program participants the reasons for past problems. Take evictions for example. While all evictions that have gone through the full legal process are recorded and generally remain on one's credit report for seven years, not all evictions are created equal.

Sometimes there are mitigating circumstances that can be presented to prospective landlords. For instance, some homeless persons have been evicted in the past because they used poor judgment in withholding rent money as retaliation for landlords refusing or being slow to make requested repairs. Or, due to domestic violence, some homeless mothers have prior, and sometimes unlawful, evictions stemming from property damage and/or disorderly conduct caused by a former batterer, even though he was not on the lease and was not a household guest at the time of the incident(s) that led to the family's displacement.

In such cases, housing specialists can explain the reasons for negative marks on a client's credit report and describe how tenant education, domestic violence counseling, home visits, and other relevant services provide assurances that such problems will not recur.

Other Advocacy Approaches

At times, housing specialists have to be very resourceful and tenacious in order to assist homeless families and individuals with severe housing barriers. This may require, for example, a combination of character letters and

⁵NOTE: Some states afford additional or expanded protections to certain classes, so providers should be aware of applicable state laws in addition to federal laws.

copies of children's report cards and sports awards, or news of an adult's new job or recent promotion, in order to ease a property owner's initial concerns about renting to a particular client. Such creativity and persistence is a hallmark of successful programs.

While these approaches may not work on their own, they can be very effective when marketed alongside tenant and landlord supports, including case management services and landlord "hotlines."

As a general rule of thumb, the more barriers a homeless household has, the more strategies a re-housing provider must employ in order to find housing opportunities for that individual or family.

Enhanced Incentives & Protections for Landlords

For the “hardest to house” populations, including persons with felony records, multiple evictions, behavioral health challenges, and long-term or chronic homelessness, some agencies and communities have developed enhanced incentives and protections for landlords. These generally fall under two broad categories: non-financial and financial.

Non-Financial Incentives and Protections

Given landlords’ and property managers’ concerns over rent payments, property damage, neighbor relations, and other potential issues, some communities have developed non-financial strategies to reduce owner liability and/or share potential risk.

One such strategy is master leasing, in which a third party, usually a government agency or non-profit service provider, leases a unit, or a block of units, and then sub-leases to a high-risk tenant(s).⁶ Several counties in Pennsylvania, for example, are combining master leasing with rental assistance in order to overcome the housing barriers of justice involved individuals with mental illness.^{iv}

⁶ Master leasing arrangements sometimes involve entire buildings. For example, the San Francisco Department of Public Health’s Direct Access to Housing Program master leases SRO hotels in order to re-house chronically homeless-disabled individuals who are living on the streets or exiting various institutional settings.

Master leasing arrangements do not have to be long-term and have been used effectively on a time-limited basis, often lasting no more than six to twelve months.⁷ This transitional period provides sufficient time for high-risk tenants to demonstrate their reliability to landlords, who then become willing to transfer primary control of the lease to them. One notable exception to time-limited master leasing are scattered-site Housing First programs that work directly with private, for-profit landlords to re-house chronically homeless individuals (e.g., Pathways to Housing in New York City).

As an alternative to master leasing, some providers and communities will co-sign leases for high barrier tenants for a limited period of time. This is a similar risk-sharing approach that can appeal to otherwise reluctant landlords and enable tenants to develop a payment record. In addition to rental contracts, co-signing is also sometimes done for utility services.

Re-housing providers should carefully consider whether to engage in master leasing or co-leasing, even if only for a limited period of time. Such arrangements leave a provider or other third party liable for financial damages or loss, as well as potentially placing them in the awkward position of having

⁷ For example, the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless and the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance have used short-term master leases in the past to re-house harder to serve populations.

to “evict” a problematic tenant, while at the same time still advocating for their permanent housing needs.

In over twenty years of re-housing homeless families, Beyond Shelter has never signed a family’s lease, even for those households with serious screening barriers. Based on this experience, Beyond Shelter and HomeStart recommend that providers first pursue other strategies to overcome their clients’ housing barriers in order to minimize program liability and to facilitate greater independence for tenants. Generally speaking, master leasing, or co-leasing, should be targeted very selectively and used as a last resort when no other options exist.

Another tool to protect against landlord loss and to mitigate perceived (or actual) risks are protective payee programs. Such programs hold clients’ monthly incomes in escrow accounts managed by third parties, who are responsible for making rent payments directly to landlords on behalf of tenants.

Shelter to Independent Living (SIL) in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, one of the oldest rapid re-housing programs for homeless families in the country, uses this strategy on a time-limited basis – generally one year but determined on a case-by-case basis – to address landlords’ concerns about the typically very high income to rent ratios and negative rent and credit histories of their clients. Tabor Community Services, the agency that operates the SIL Program, has found this strategy to be an effective

response to the housing barriers of their target population and the limited supply of rental assistance, including Section 8 subsidies, for homeless families in Lancaster County.^v

Protective payee services should not be confused with representative payee services. While the latter are often targeted to individuals deemed incapable of handling their own finances (e.g., severely disabled individuals on SSI), the former have no legal requirements for participation. Protective payee programs are one strategy, among many others, to convince landlords and management companies to relax screening criteria, while at the same enabling program participants to build budgeting and financial management skills.

Financial Incentives and Protections

Sometimes re-housing programs combine non-financial incentives with financial carrots in order to access rental housing for hard-to-house populations.

Financial incentives can be provided directly by programs or by third-party collaborators, such as government agencies (e.g., local welfare or mental health department). Incentives can range from very modest cash payments to more significant financial commitments.

Modest incentives sometimes include providing leasing bonuses to landlords, particularly during the launch phase of large-scale re-housing initiatives, and paying broker’s fees in communities

with such fees.⁸ More commonly, modest incentives include paying security deposits for program participants or negotiating increases in deposit amounts, sometimes of a few hundred dollars or, when necessary, double in amount. Re-housing providers often utilize public funds, such as EFSP, ESG, HOME, and TANF EA⁹, to pay for many of these types of incentives.

Recognizing the limitations of public dollars, some communities have established non-traditional funding sources for rental start-up costs. For example, the Cambridge Housing Assistance Fund in Cambridge, Massachusetts supplements start-up costs for homeless individuals and families, including security deposits, realtor fees, first and last month's rent, moving costs, storage, and utility bills.

What is unique about the Fund is that it was created in 1999 by the Cambridge Community of Realtors as a response to growing housing costs, and is primarily funded by proceeds from an charity event. The Fund has evolved into a strong public-private partnership involving the Cambridge banking community, local homeless service providers, including HomeStart, and the rest estate community.¹⁰

Some rapid re-housing initiatives that provide rental assistance will offer advance payments to landlords, such as the first 3 month's rent upon lease signing, or quarterly payments, as a means to incentivize owner participation. Other programs will guarantee a portion of the rent for a certain period of time, to assuage landlord concerns about financial risk. Some programs will also pay housing-related arrears to remove household debt as a housing barrier.

Financial guarantees of other kinds are increasingly being used in localities to provide insurance against landlord or management company loss. Similar to how auto, life, and other forms of insurance operate, these guarantees allow landlords to make claims against the policies in certain circumstances. In effect, these guarantees provide a safety net for property owners and managers.

The Rapid Exit Program in Hennepin County, Minnesota, and the Homeless Assistance Rental Project (HARP) in Salt Lake County, Utah, for example, provide eviction/unlawful detainer guarantees. If a landlord has to go through the normally expensive eviction process with a tenant, those programs will cover the landlord's legal costs.

HARP, which provides re-housing services for justice-involved individuals and families and those awaiting release from mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, also provides a wear and tear guarantee to landlords. This guarantee provides insurance against financial harm stemming from damages

⁸ Many communities do not have broker's or realtor's fees, but in those that do, the landlord is often the person responsible for those fees, but in some localities the tenant is responsible. Such fees could be as high as two month's rent.

⁹ All four programs are national programs under the direction of federal departments, as indicated parenthetically: EFSP is the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (Homeland Security). ESG is the Emergency Shelter Grants program (HUD). HOME is the HOME Investments Partnerships Program (HUD). TANF EA is the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Emergency Assistance program (HHS).

¹⁰ For more information, go to <http://chafund.org/>

in excess of what a tenant's security deposit would cover.^{vi11}

Though these types of insurance policies might seem prohibitively expensive, their design, as well as program evaluations¹² and anecdotal evidence to date, suggests that implementation costs are fairly modest for several reasons.

First, the programs are often targeted to households with the greatest housing barriers, and so most homeless persons do not need or receive such assistance in order to access permanent housing. Second, the financial guarantees are normally capped (e.g., \$1,000 - \$2,000 per household) and are time-limited, typically expiring after 6-12 months. Third, some landlord guarantee funds restrict eligibility to households that graduate from community tenant education programs.¹³ Finally, the guarantees are tied to the provision of individualized housing stabilization services, which are designed to promote stable tenancies. Collectively, these factors reduce the likelihood of frequent and/or large payouts from risk mitigation funds.

Though these programs have not been rigorously evaluated and many funds are still relatively new, experience to date suggests that communities can establish and operate such programs without overly burdensome financial costs. In so doing, they would have a promising strategy to entice property owners to take on more risk than they normally would.

¹¹ The Fresh Start Program and the Landlord Guarantee Fund in Portland/Multnomah County, Oregon and the Grand Chance Program of Associated Ministries in Tacoma, Washington are other examples of risk mitigation funds for landlords that insure against financial harm due to property damages and/or eviction costs.

¹² For example, the interim evaluation for King County's Landlord Liaison Project found that few partnering landlords needed to file reimbursement claims against the Risk Reduction Fund due to the success of the program (Landlord Liaison Project: 2010 Performance and Evaluation Report). http://www.kingcounty.gov/socialservices/Housing/PlansAndReports/HCD_Reports.aspx.

¹³ For example: Landlord Guarantee Fund in Multnomah County, Oregon.

Approaches to Addressing the Affordability Problem

Regardless of whatever personal challenges a homeless family or individual may have, their primary housing barrier is affordability. Presently, there is not a single county in the nation in which a worker earning the federal minimum wage (\$7.25/hour) can afford a one-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent.^{vii}

Federal, state and local efforts to address homelessness must focus on strategies to close the growing gap between household income and housing costs. The most well-designed landlord incentive packages and outreach efforts will only go so far, if direct measures are not taken to lessen household rent burdens, whether through tenant-based assistance, workforce development initiatives, or both.

States, counties, and cities are responding to the systemic challenge of housing affordability through various demand-side initiatives focused on expanding access to existing housing stock.¹⁴ The universe of these initiatives is quickly evolving and fairly diverse, and comprehensive coverage of these initiatives is beyond the scope of this brief. However, some of the leading and

more innovative strategies, with examples, are described below.

Provide HPRP-Like Rental Assistance

The launch of the Federal HPRP Program introduced the terms *short- and medium-term rental assistance* into the national homelessness lexicon. Though such terms were new at the time for many communities across the country, HPRP was designed after successful temporary rental assistance programs across the country, including the State of Minnesota's Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP).¹⁵

One of the primary challenges to providing short- and medium-term rental assistance is funding. HPRP has helped to fill the void that has existed for many years in Continuums of Care across the country, but HPRP funding is only available through September 2012. While statutory changes under HEARTH to the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG)¹⁶ program demonstrate an ongoing federal commitment to flexible funding to

¹⁴ Demand-side approaches focus on expanding access to existing housing stock by increasing consumer purchasing power and choice, as opposed to supply-side strategies that focus on increasing the overall supply of affordable housing, primarily through subsidies to developers for new construction or rehabilitation.

¹⁵ The program provides flexible, outcomes-based funding, including up to 24 months of rental assistance to promote rapid re-housing for homeless families with children, youth, and single adults. The success of Hennepin County's Rapid Exit Program – often cited nationally as a best practice for rapid re-housing – is due in large part to the structure and design of the FHPAP. For more information, see Burt, M.R., Pearson, C., & Montgomery, A.E. (2005). *Strategies for Preventing Homelessness*. Washington, DC: Department of Housing and Urban Development.

¹⁶ The Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) program is being re-named the Emergency Solutions Grant, to incorporate a broader range of eligible activities and an enhanced commitment to homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing.

promote housing stability, housing resources under the new ESG will be at a *significantly* reduced funding level compared to HPRP.¹⁷ To make inroads in addressing homelessness going forward, communities will need to strategize about how to utilize existing and/or create new sources of money to provide temporary housing subsidies.

Maximize mainstream resources. One mainstream resource that is under-utilized for direct rental assistance is the Federal HOME program: HOME Investments Partnerships Program. While many state and local jurisdictions currently use HOME funds for rental start-up costs, far fewer use those funds for tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA). The program allows up to 24 months of rental assistance, with renewable terms, and provides local jurisdictions with the flexibility to design and customize their TBRA programs.¹⁸

The Salt Lake County, Utah Housing Authority and its service partners, including The Road Home, utilize HOME funds for multiple temporary

subsidy programs, including the previously mentioned HARP program. Some of these programs blend HOME funds with county general funds in order to maximize available dollars for rental assistance.

Other communities can follow Salt Lake County's example and utilize HOME funds for time-limited rental assistance, coupled with workforce development strategies. For populations needing long-term housing assistance, TBRA funds can be used as a bridge to long-term subsidy programs, including Section 8, Shelter Plus Care, HUD VASH, and FUP.

The Federal TANF program – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – is another block grant program that can be utilized for temporary rental assistance. While some states and counties currently use TANF funds for this purpose, many do not dedicate funds in this manner, even though stable housing is a vital work support for homeless families on welfare, as well as those exiting the program.

Typically, localities use their required state matching dollars, known as maintenance-of-effort (MOE) funds, to provide longer-term rental assistance, including to families not receiving cash assistance. Those funds offer greater flexibility to states [when administered and accounted for separately] than federal dollars, because benefits paid with the latter normally trigger lifetime time limits and work participation requirements.^{viii}

¹⁷ HPRP funding amounts to \$500 million per year, whereas ESG funding has plateaued at about \$160 million for the last several fiscal years, and most of that funding has been dedicated to shelter activities, rather than prevention or re-housing activities. Provisions in HEARTH, however, essentially double the proportion of HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs funding that must be dedicated to the new ESG program. These changes will significantly increase ESG funding, assuming actual appropriations comply with the new statute, but funding will still far fall short of HPRP levels. For more information, see FY 2011 HUD Homeless Assistance Funding Scenarios: Federal Policy Brief, August 31, 2010, by the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

¹⁸ For more information on HOME TBRA, see <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/programs/home/> as well as: Council of State Community Development Agencies. (December 1997). Using Home Funds to Address Homelessness Within a Continuum of Care. Washington, DC: Author. Available at <http://www.cosed.org/publications/care.htm>

Communities using TANF funds for housing assistance have had some success in combating family homelessness. One striking example is Westchester County, New York, located close to New York City.

In the early 2000s, the recession and expensive rental market had resulted in increasing numbers of homeless families in Westchester, as well as longer lengths of stay in county-funded shelters. Among other responses to this crisis, the Westchester Department of Social Services participated in the Shelter Supplement Program, offered through the state. The program essentially doubled the housing allowance of long-staying (i.e., 6 months or more) welfare-dependent families, thereby enabling them to leave shelter. The success of this and complementary initiatives resulted in a 57% decrease in family homelessness from 2002 to 2006 and enabled the county to close some of its family shelters.^{ix}

More recently, some communities have used TANF funding for tenant-based assistance, in conjunction with HPRP. TANF funds – particularly from the Emergency Contingency Fund authorized by the Recovery Act (ARRA) – have been used to provide non-recurrent, short-term assistance (i.e., up to 4 months based on federal regulations), with HPRP funds used to extend rental assistance up to 18 months for households needing more time to achieve housing and financial stability.

Reallocate existing resources.

Sometimes existing resources that are, or

otherwise would be, dedicated to “managing” homelessness can be reallocated for pilot rental assistance programs.

Hamilton Family Center in San Francisco, for example, persuaded the local government to allow it to close two family shelters it had been operating and to reallocate those dollars for shallow subsidies. The success of the pilot program helped in part to propel the city to allocate general fund revenue for a first-ever city-wide rental assistance program for homeless families.

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, which had been battling mushrooming shelter and motel costs, allocated funds for similar pilot programs. These rental assistance programs produced improved housing outcomes for homeless families, thereby reducing lengths of stay in shelter as well as financial costs to the state.¹⁹

Leverage resources from community stakeholders. Homelessness is expensive, and the prevailing business model in most communities of shelter-based responses is not only ineffective, but also inefficient, arguably inhumane. Some communities at the vanguard of ending and preventing homelessness have been able to reframe homelessness for certain target populations as an affordable housing issue that impacts other social problems (e.g., health care utilization, criminal recidivism, child welfare involvement, and welfare-to-work).

¹⁹ For a description of these initiatives, see One Family, Inc. (Fall 2006). *Housing First: An Unprecedented Opportunity*. Boston: Author. <http://www.onefamilyinc.org/cgi-script/csArticles/uploads/491/PolicyPaperFINAL.pdf>

Homeless and affordable housing advocates have been able to accomplish such reframing through the use of cost-benefit arguments and have successfully leveraged financial commitments from non-traditional sources.

The Indianapolis/Marion County Housing Trust Fund, for example, was able to secure an annual donation of \$1 million to the trust fund from the Health and Hospital Corporation of Marion County. The Corporation made this substantial commitment because it came to view permanent supportive housing as an effective strategy to reduce health care costs, particularly those related to recurrent emergency room visits and ambulance services.^x

Engage faith communities. Faith communities are also important stakeholders in efforts to address homelessness. The missions and fundamental teachings of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and other religions make these communities natural allies in efforts to combat economic injustices like homelessness. Not surprisingly, faith-based partnerships have been spreading in communities across the country, due in part to priorities set forth in local Ten Year Plans.

One successful example of a faith-based rental assistance program is Project CATCH in Boise, Idaho. This Housing First project is a collaboration between local congregations, businesses, city government, and the United Way of Treasure Valley. Congregations and businesses fund most of the budget, including sponsorships of homeless

families involving six to twelve months, generally, of rental assistance. Mountain West Bank, a local partner in the initiative, provides a dollar-for-dollar savings match while families are enrolled in the program.²⁰

Create new public revenue streams. Given the limited supply of affordable, market-rate housing across the country and the fact that only one in four households eligible for federal housing assistance actually receives assisted housing of one form or another,^{xi} state and local communities have turned to other strategies to create housing resources. Taxes and fees of various kinds are some of the most common approaches.

In 2005, for instance, the Illinois Legislature passed legislation authorizing a \$10 surcharge on real estate recordings. This recordation fee provides tens of millions of dollars annually, including over \$10 million for Chicago/Cook County. Chicago has earmarked half of these resources for implementation of its Ten Year Plan, including for tenant-based rental assistance.^{xii}

Miami-Dade County, Florida imposes a 1% tax on sales at larger restaurants in the community. The Food and Beverage Tax generates millions of dollars for the Homeless Trust each year.

Communities have also developed other types of taxes or fees, or agreed to dedicate revenue from extant fees, to address homelessness. Such revenue

²⁰ For more information on Project CATCH, go to <http://www.cityofboise.org/CATCH/index.aspx>

streams have included lodging fees, parking fees, real estate transfer fees, and income taxes.

The Community Shelter Board, the lead agency for the Continuum of Care in Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio uses revenue from a modest real estate transfer fee to address homelessness. California has a 1% tax on household income over \$1 million. Revenue from the “millionaire’s tax,” formally known as Prop 63/Mental Health Services Act, funds permanent housing and comprehensive services for mentally ill populations.

Target Long-Term Assisted Housing Resources More Effectively

The other key strategy communities are employing to overcome the rental affordability challenge is to selectively allocate long-term assisted housing resources, including Section 8 and public housing. Although many homeless persons, and impoverished households at-large, could benefit from permanent subsidies, most have demonstrated that they can exit homelessness and remain housed without such assistance.

In the past, and to some extent still today, poor targeting of these resources based largely on housing status created perverse incentives in some communities to enter, and/or remain, in the shelter system in order to access housing assistance.^{xiii} Though targeting remains at best an imperfect science – as no research exists indicating how to match level and duration of subsidy to household need – some communities are

experimenting with more sophisticated targeting approaches.

New York City, for example, had prioritized (until recently) homeless individuals and families on fixed incomes (e.g., SSI or SSDI) due to a disability and child-welfare involved families for Section 8 vouchers.^{xiv}

Other communities are moving away from basing eligibility for permanent subsidies on housing status and instead are embracing a “progressive engagement” approach to housing assistance.^{xv} Under this approach, homeless households are provided temporary rental assistance, often combined with workforce development strategies. Households are re-evaluated on a periodic basis (e.g., quarterly, much like HPRP) to determine ongoing need for financial assistance, up to a defined period of time, and to ascertain whether service interventions remain appropriate or need to be adjusted in some way. Households that are not able to achieve housing stability once the temporary assistance ends are targeted for permanent subsidies.

The State of Massachusetts is a good example of this approach. The Moving to Economic Opportunity Program (MEOP) is a pilot initiative providing a two to four year subsidy to homeless and near-homeless TANF recipients with little to no work history. In addition to housing assistance, participants receive intensive work supports to help them overcome their employment barriers. Of particular importance, after exiting shelter through this program, participants do not lose their priority for

subsidized housing (Section 8 and public housing).^{xvi} Therefore, if the time-limited rental assistance proves inadequate for certain families, the state plans to transition those households to long-term assistance. The program design thus enables the Commonwealth to de-link shelter and housing subsidies, while targeting long-term assistance to households with demonstrable need for it.

programs dedicating a portion of their vouchers that turn over each year to homeless populations.

Currently, approximately one quarter of public housing authorities (PHAs) across the country have *set-aside programs* through which certain homeless populations are prioritized for Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers.^{xvii} In those jurisdictions, homeless providers, advocates, and planners should ensure that those tenant-based vouchers are being targeted to homeless households with the greatest housing barriers, if such targeting policies are not already in place. The Administrative Plan of each PHA spells out the eligibility criteria and administrative policies and procedures for all vouchers.

In communities without set-aside programs, providers, advocates, and planners should engage their state and local PHAs in efforts to combat homelessness. HUD permits every PHA to establish “needs-based” preferences for their waiting lists. PHAs can be asked to adopt such preferences for high-risk, high-barrier homeless populations in both their Public Housing Agency Plans as well as their Administrative Plans. To counter the common argument about “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” homeless advocates and planners can advocate that PHAs implement pilot

Summary of Program Strategies to Overcome Housing Attainment Barriers

Develop Marketing Tools

- Program brochures
- Flyers/fact sheets
- “Dear Landlord” letters
- Client success stories
- Program or agency media coverage
- Letters of recommendation from partnering landlords

Strategically Target Outreach to the Landlord Community

- Present at local apartment owner association meetings
- Recruit owners at association conferences or trade shows
- Host landlord orientation sessions

Emphasize Core Program Benefits

- Home-based case management
- Financial assistance for move-in costs
- Landlord backup
- Free tenant screening
- Speedy tenant referrals to reduce turnover time in rental units
- Reduced advertising costs

Utilize Creative Advocacy Approaches

- Character letters from trusted or respected third parties
- Advocacy letters explaining past rental, credit, or criminal problems

Offer Individualized Landlord Incentives and Protections As Needed

- Master leasing or co-leasing (time-limited and/or ongoing)
- Protective payee services
- Increased security deposits

Summary of Community Strategies to Overcome Housing Attainment Barriers

Develop Marketing Tools

- Web-based, affordable housing locators
- Certificated tenant education programs
- Targeted advertisements in local papers or apartment owner association publications

Address Financial Barriers Due to Rental Start-Up Costs

- Utilize mainstream resources (EFSP, ESG, HOME, TANF EA)
- Create alternative, non-traditional funding sources for security deposits and other move-in costs

Offer Individualized Landlord Incentives and Protections As Needed

- Master leasing or co-leasing (time-limited and/or ongoing)
- Paid broker's/realtor's fees
- Landlord bonuses
- Advance rent payments
- Quarterly payments
- Rent guarantees (time-limited)
- Wear and tear guarantees (time-limited)
- Eviction/unlawful detainer guarantees (time-limited)

Provide Temporary Rental Assistance

- Maximize mainstream resources like HOME and TANF
- Reallocate existing resources
- Leverage resources from community stakeholders
- Engage faith communities
- Create new public revenue streams through new or existing taxes and fees

Target Permanent Housing Resources

- Identify the highest risk, highest barrier households
- De-link shelter/housing status and permanent subsidies
- Adopt "progressive engagement" approaches

Maintaining Relationships & Facilitating Housing Stability

Once a homeless individual or family is re-housed, the real work begins, not just in terms of assisting the client to stabilize in their new housing but also in terms of meeting the needs of the landlord. The commitments made while outreaching and recruiting property owners need to be maintained after lease signing and move-in. Check-in calls to landlords and property managers, home visits to clients, and other promised services must occur within stated time frames. When providers keep their commitments not just to individual clients, but also to landlords, tenancies and relationships are more likely to remain stable and positive.

It is important to establish two-way communication with landlords early on so that trust can develop and deepen over time. Checking in with property owners during good times, and not just when issues emerge, helps to build rapport and reinforces the view of the landlord as a customer whose needs are being attended to. In addition, open, consistent communication makes it more likely that landlords will call upon the provider when problems arise and before they escalate to the point of jeopardizing a client's housing.

Some rapid re-housing providers go so far as to establish formal protocols and tools with property owners for early warning systems. In these systems, certain events, such as a client's falling behind on rent payments, trigger calls to

case managers for intervention purposes.²¹ These warning systems are not unlike the successful model of property management and resident services that often exists in permanent supportive housing and other types of affordable housing for homeless and low-income populations.

Recognizing Landlord Contributions

Integral to relationship maintenance with landlords is recognizing their contributions to the program.

Recognition can be as simple as sending thank you or birthday cards from staff and clients to more elaborate measures as hosting owner appreciation breakfasts at which partners receive plaques or other types of recognition.

Another way to recognize landlords is to have a landlord spotlight in monthly or quarterly community newsletters or emails, not unlike client "success stories" often featured in these communications. Or, programs can identify a "landlord of the year" and acknowledge those individuals during annual fundraisers, community newsletters, and/or annual reports. Remember, friendly competition among peers can provide good motivation!

A little schmoozing can also go a long way towards ensuring positive

²¹ For sample communication tools and protocols, see http://www.hudhre.info/housingsearch/Landlord-Tenant-Case%20Manager%20Communication%20Agreementv2_Aug06.doc OR <http://www.pahousingchoices.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/pdf-of-Dauphin-protocol.pdf>.

relationships. Beyond Shelter's and HomeStart's housing specialists have been known on occasion to take their favorite landlords to lunch!

recognize the invaluable contributions of community partners to the program.

One final piece of relationship maintenance involves eliciting feedback from community partners for quality assurance purposes. Just as many retail and other for-profit businesses conduct customer service surveys, it is important for re-housing providers to seek feedback from landlords on their experiences with the program.

On a semi-annual or annual basis, service providers and/or lead agencies for Continuums can survey landlords via mail, telephone, or email questionnaire, or in-person focus groups, to find out what is working and what could be improved. More established re-housing programs may only need to conduct such surveys every two years or so.

This feedback loop not only provides valuable information for program refinement purposes, but it also signals to landlord partners the value the program places on ensuring their needs are being heard and met.

As one veteran housing specialist at Beyond Shelter once said, landlords are like elephants. They never forget the good or the bad. Since memories do not fade and word travels fast, it is incumbent upon re-housing providers to continually provide a personal touch at all times, whether following up after a client moves in to their new home, intervening to address concerns raised by landlords, or searching for ways to

Building Upon Success: Expanding the Role of Partnering Landlords

While continuing to recruit new landlords, successful rapid re-housing providers always seek to expand the role of property owners and management companies already partnering with the program.

At a minimum, these partners should be approached about providing additional housing opportunities to clients. Many landlords own multiple properties and are often open to making additional units available to the program. Management companies, by definition, also have control over numerous properties.

It is important to keep in mind that property owners and managers who have had positive experiences with the program are often amenable to renting to households with greater barriers. Be aware, however, that over-concentrating clients in individual buildings generally leads to various problems and should be avoided.

Landlords who have demonstrated a significant investment in or support of the program can be approached about contributing in other ways. For example, they could sit on program advisory boards to provide input on new initiatives, such as the development of a certificated tenant education program. Or they could help to organize, and participate in, landlord focus groups. Both information-gathering strategies can be particularly helpful during the early stages of program development and implementation, or when programs

are considering expanding their services to households with greater housing barriers. Landlords who are influential or prominent community members can also be approached about serving on agency boards.

In addition, landlord partners can serve as a valuable referral source to the program. Property owners always know other owners, whether through membership in local associations or other means. Housing specialists should notify these partners that the program is continually looking for new landlord referrals and rental opportunities. Just as many jobs are found through word of mouth, the same is true for housing opportunities.

There are other, more formal ways to involve landlord partners in recruitment efforts, including as follows:

- 1) They can be involved in supporting orientations for fellow owners at the program's offices (perhaps over breakfast or lunch). For starters, partners can be asked to help turn out prospects for these events. During the events, they can play an active role, including by offering first-hand testimony about the benefits of the program for owners and their positive experiences. Peer testimonials can be a very powerful "sales" tool, particularly when coming

from landlords who had at first been skeptical of the program.

- 2) They can write a “Dear Colleague” letter to prospective owners and/or serve as a listed reference in a “Dear Landlord” letter from the re-housing provider. Both letters can then be used for marketing and outreach efforts in general as well as for those targeted specifically to partnering landlords’ personal networks.
- 3) Landlord partners can also host house parties. Rather than raising funds for a cause, the purpose of this type of house party is to inform fellow property owners about the program, and enlist their participation.
- 4) To the extent that local landlord associations are not aware of, or are not actively involved in, supporting the re-housing program, partner landlords, particularly those who are association members, can help to spread the word. This could include co-presenting with program representatives at association meetings.

Since landlord recruitment is ultimately about relationship building, re-housing providers should always view participating landlords as a valuable resource for facilitating and expanding networking and outreach opportunities.

Conclusion

Recent reforms to federal homelessness policy through the HEARTH Act represent fundamental changes in how individual service providers and entire Continuums of Care will be expected to serve homeless populations. Rapid re-housing – one of the most significant of these changes – will require providers to more quickly assist homeless households to access rental housing, primarily in the private market.

The agencies and communities at the vanguard of systems change over the last 10-15 years have developed and refined tools, practices, and policies aimed squarely at addressing the housing barriers of homeless individuals and families and facilitating partnerships with private-market landlords and management companies. Providers and localities new to rapid re-housing can consider incorporating and adapting the approaches outlined in this brief as they refocus and redesign their efforts to end and prevent homelessness.

RELATED READING

Beyond Shelter. (May 1999). The Housing First Program for Homeless Families: Methodology Manual. Los Angeles: Author.

Cortes, K. and Rogers, S. (2010). Reentry Housing Options: The Policymakers' Guide. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center.

Diana T. Meyers and Associates, Inc. (n.d.). Ten Ways to Boost Housing Opportunities Working with Private Housing Providers. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Association for Area Agencies on Aging.

Diana T. Meyers and Associates, Inc. (March 2010). Housing and the Sequential Intercept Model: A How-To Guide for Planning for the Housing Needs of Individuals with Justice Involvement and Mental Illness. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Kelleher, T. (December 2006). Landlord Incentives and Protections: Encouraging Landlords to Rent to Recovering Substance Abusers. Olympia: Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (Department of Commerce).

Marr, M.D. Mitigating Apprehension about Section 8 Vouchers: The Positive Role of Housing Specialists in Search and Placement. *Housing Policy Debate*, 16(1), 2005.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. (March 2004). Housing First for Families: Research to Support the Development of a Housing First for Families Training Curriculum. Washington, DC: Author.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. (July 2009). Rapid Re-Housing: Creating Programs That Work. Washington, DC: Author.

One Family, Inc. (Fall 2006). Housing First: An Unprecedented Opportunity. Boston: Author.

Culhane, D. & Bryne, T. (2010). Ending Family Homelessness in Massachusetts: A New Approach for the Emergency Assistance Program. Boston: Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS

Beyond Shelter – Founded in 1988, the mission of Beyond Shelter is to develop systemic approaches to combat poverty and homelessness among families with children and enhance family economic security and well-being. Beyond Shelter pioneered the Housing First approach for homeless families as a response to rising family homelessness in the late 1980s and the inherent limitation of shelter-based approaches to address the fundamental need of homeless families for affordable, permanent housing. Since 1998, the agency's Housing First Program has re-housed more than 5,000 homeless families, with an estimated 85% housing retention rate. The agency's programs in Southern California serve as a "laboratory" for demonstration, research and evaluation, with information disseminated through the Institute for Research, Training and Technical Assistance.

Partnering for Change: The National Institute for Innovative Strategies to Combat Family Homelessness & Poverty – Founded in 2010, the mission of Partnering for Change is to collaborate with practitioners and researchers to develop and test innovative program models in order to improve the social and economic well-being of vulnerable families, and promote the dissemination of evidence-based approaches through education, training, advocacy and consulting to nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and grant makers. The organization provides a formal mechanism to bring research and practice together in order to test and refine new or existing program models and systems change approaches, fill knowledge gaps, and arm service providers, systems planners, grant makers, and policy makers with the tools and know-how to more effectively address family homelessness and poverty.

HomeStart, Inc. – Founded in 1994, the mission of HomeStart is to end and prevent homelessness in Greater Boston by assisting individuals in obtaining permanent housing and settling into the community, and by developing strategies to address systemic barriers to housing placement. The agency began in 1994 as a pilot project to provide housing search and placement assistance for homeless individuals staying in Boston area shelters; then it added follow-up services to assist people to retain housing; and next it initiated housing services to prevent homelessness. Along the way, the agency has taken on the challenge of securing and managing an array of housing tools from flexible rental funds to long-term housing subsidies that facilitate ending and preventing homelessness. One of the early pioneers of Housing First for homeless single adults, the agency has expanded its services over time to include other populations, including families with children and chronically homeless-disabled persons who have lived on the streets for years. Since 1994, HomeStart's Housing First services have assisted more than 4,000 homeless people to move to their own homes, with over 95% of participants remaining stably housed one year after placement.

Contact Information

Beyond Shelter
1200 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 600
Los Angeles, CA 90017
institute@beyondshelter.org
213-252-0772
www.beyondshelter.org

HomeStart, Inc
105 Chauncy Street, Suite 502
Boston, MA 02111
woodboyle@homestart.org
617-542-0338
www.homestartinc.org

Partnering for Change
1200 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 600
Los Angeles, CA 90017
ttull@partnering-for-change.org
213-596-4001
www.partnering-for-change.org

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Marr, M.D. (2005). Mitigating Apprehension about Section 8 Vouchers: The Positive Role of Housing Specialists in Search and Placement. *Housing Policy Debate*, 16(1), p.92.
- ⁱⁱ Burt, M. R., Aron, L.Y., Douglas, T., Valente, J., Lee, E., & Iwen, B. (December 1999). Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve. Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients. Washington, DC: Interagency Council on the Homeless.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Kelleher, T. (December 2006). Landlord Incentives and Protections: Encouraging Landlords to Rent to Recovering Substance Abusers. Olympia: Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (Department of Commerce).
- ^{iv} Diana T. Meyers and Associates, Inc. (March 2010). Housing and the Sequential Intercept Model: A How-To Guide for Planning for the Housing Needs of Individuals with Justice Involvement and Mental Illness, p. 36, 69. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.
- ^v E-mail communication to Ryan Macy-Hurley from Kay Moshier McDivitt, Director of Housing Counseling Programs, Tabor Community Services, November 2, 2006.
- ^{vi} Cortes, K. and Rogers, S. Reentry Housing Options: The Policymakers' Guide. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2010.
- ^{vii} DeCrappeo, M., Pelletiere, D., Crowley, S., & Teater, E. (April 2010). Out of Reach 2010. Washington, DC: National Low Income Housing Coalition. Available at www.nlihc.org.
- ^{viii} Sard, B. & Harrison, T. (February 2002). The Increasing Use of TANF and State Matching Funds to Provide Housing Assistance to Families Moving from Welfare to Work — 2001 Supplement. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Schott, L. (July 13, 2010). Using TANF Emergency Funds to Help Prevent and Address Family Homelessness. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- ^{ix} E-mail communication to Ryan Macy-Hurley from Diane Stern, Associate Commissioner, Housing and Homeless Services, Westchester County Department of Social Services, August 14, 2008.
- ^x Center for Community Change. (Fall 2007). Housing Trust Fund Project Newsletter. Washington, DC: Author. <http://www.communitychange.org/our-projects/htf/newsletters/Fall%202007%20HTFund%20newsletter.pdf>
- ^{xi} Turner, M. A. & Kingsley, G.T. (2008). Federal Programs for Addressing Low-Income Housing Needs: A Policy Primer. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- ^{xii} Betsy Benito, Chicago Department of Housing. July 27, 2006 Presentation at the NAEH 2006 Annual Conference on Ending Homelessness. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1251>
- ^{xiii} Culhane, D., Metraux, S., Park, J.M., Schretzman, M., & Valente, J. (2007). Testing a typology of family homelessness based on patterns of public shelter utilization in four U.S. jurisdictions: Implications for policy and program planning. *Housing Policy Debate*, 18(1), 1-28, p. 5.
- ^{xiv} National Alliance to End Homelessness. (July 2010). Ending Family Homelessness: Lessons From Communities. Washington, DC: Author, p.5.
- ^{xv} Culhane, D., Metraux, S., & Bryne, T. (June 2010). A Prevention-Centered Approach to Homelessness Assistance: A Paradigm Shift? Supplemental Document to the Federal Strategic Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness. Washington, DC: US Interagency Council on Homelessness, p. 20. Available at http://www.usich.gov/PDF/OpeningDoors/DennisCulhane_PrevCentApproHomelessnessAssist.pdf
- ^{xvi} Stephanie Brown, Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance. February 12, 2009 Presentation at the NAEH 2009 Annual Conference on Ending Family Homelessness.
- ^{xvii} U.S. Government Accountability Office. (June 2010). Homelessness: A Common Vocabulary Could Help Agencies to Collaborate and Collect More Consistent Data. Washington, DC: Author, p. 28.

WORKING WITH LANDLORDS IN HOUSING FIRST/ RAPID REHOUSING

Beyond Shelter
1200 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 600
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 252-0772



Training Objectives

- To gain an understanding of the elements and mechanics of developing an effective marketing plan for landlord outreach and recruitment
- To learn how to search for and find housing for your clients
- To learn methods for developing relationships with property owners and managers
- To gain knowledge of different strategies that can be used to address the housing barriers of your clients
- To learn methods and tips to keep landlords happy once your clients have been housed

Some Historical Perspective

- **Mid-1990s:** Only 20% of homeless families reported receiving help finding housing.

Source: National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients, 1999, Urban Institute

- **Early 1990s:** Homeless families spent an average of 37 hours per week trying to access basic necessities from various service providers.

Source: The Stanford Studies of Homeless Families, Children and Youth, 1991, Stanford Center for the Study of Families, Children, and Youth



Individual Barriers to Housing

- Credit History
- Income Source/Employment History
- Household Size/Composition
- No Rental History
- Lack of Move-In Funds
- Credit Check Fees
- Non-English Speaking
- Criminal History
- Poor Landlord References
- Discrimination
- Eviction History



The Housing Specialist

Housing search has become a specialization within the homeless services field. Increasing access for homeless persons to existing rental stock is essential to ending homelessness, because we cannot build our way out of the problem.



How Do Landlords Think?

Rental housing is a dollars and cents business. Landlords and management companies are in the business of reducing risk and maximizing return on investment.



Accordingly, rapid rehousing providers need to adopt a business oriented or market driven approach to recruiting and engaging property owners and management companies.



What are Owners' Wants & Concerns

- Four most common...
 - Rent paid on time
 - Someone to call
 - Property damage
 - Nuisance



In many ways, you are "selling a product" in the open market. You have to convince property owners that your "product" will meet their needs and address their concerns.



Marketing Programs to Landlords & Management Companies



Marketing The Program

Marketing the program is one of the best tools to use in developing a pool of landlords and management companies who are willing to rent directly to your clients.



Developing "Selling Points"

- Does the program pre-screen tenants?
- Do families receive tenant education?
- What type of case management support does the program offer? By whom and how is it offered?
- What is the program's or agency's history of success (i.e., accomplishments)?



Developing "Selling Points"

- What support will be offered to partnering landlords and management companies?
- Does the program differ from Section 8? If so, how?
- If Section 8, how does your program address common landlord concerns and needs?



"Selling Points" (Cont'd)

- What financial support exists for families who run into trouble?
- What sort of productive activities will families get involved in, or are already doing? (jobs, school, etc.)
- Will the program co-sign leases or master lease?
- How can the program help landlords to reduce costs, including fees to advertise vacancies?



MARKETING MATERIALS

- Agency brochures
- Program brochures
- One-page informational handouts or fact sheets
- Letters explaining the program or agency
- Business cards



MARKETING MATERIALS

- PowerPoint presentations
- Community newsletters
- Client success stories
- Media coverage of agency or program



MARKETING MATERIALS

- Testimonial letters from other landlords who have partnered with the program and benefitted from the experience
- Program videos and PSAs
 - Example: Project CATCH in Boise, Idaho
(Video and PSA available at:
www.cityofboise.org/CATCH/Videos/page33212.aspx)



Mechanics of Landlord Outreach



OUTREACH TO WHOM?

- Mom and pop landlords
- Large private landlords
- Property management companies
- Nonprofit housing developers
- Etc.



LANDLORD OUTREACH: WHERE & HOW?

- Cold Calls
- Community Searches
- Networking
- Community Presentations
- Warm Hits (existing contacts)



Cold Calls: "Fingertip" Listings

- Websites
- Newspapers
- Yellow Pages
- Local Housing Authorities



Internet Listings

- To begin with:
 - www.craigslist.org
 - www.apartments.com
 - www.pennysaverusa.com
 - <http://housing.lacounty.gov>



Other Potential Internet Listings: "follow the money"

- HUD, Rental Help – listings by state (to locate local federally subsidized units)
 - http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/topics/rental_assistance/local
- To locate LIHTC properties (NOTE: may not be affordable to many of your clients)
 - <http://lihtc.huduser.org/>



"Follow the Money" (Cont'd)

- Local Housing Departments
- State Departments of Housing & Community Development - Finance Low and Very Low Income Properties
- State Housing Finance or Tax Credit Agencies



"Follow the Money" (Cont'd)

- **Neighborhood Stabilization Program**
 - NSP Awardees, as announced by HUD
 - <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/neighborhoodspg/>
 - 25% of NSP funds have to benefit households at or below 50% of AMI (though not necessarily renters)



Newspapers & Yellow Pages

- **Newspapers (National vs local, community papers; etc.)**
 - By law subsidized vacancies have to be advertised
 - Community papers better source for landlords willing to do Section 8 and/or other subsidies
 - All have websites
- **Yellow pages**
 - Listings of property management companies



Local Housing Authorities

PHAs maintain lists of property owners willing to accept Section 8. It's likely that some, if not many, of these owners would be open to renting to homeless households without Section 8.



Community Searches: "Pound the Pavement"

- "For rent" signs
- Buildings under construction
- Real estate offices or agents
 - often have listings of rental housing, and agents may own or have investors who invest in rental properties



Community Searches: "All Hands On Deck"

"Non-housing" staff should also assist with housing search in simple yet effective ways.

For example, these staff could note vacancies or new buildings under construction on their way into work, and inform their colleagues who are responsible for landlord outreach.



Networking

- Apartment Owner or Rental Housing Associations
- Nonprofit housing conferences
- Board members
- Donors – reach potential landlords through organizational appeals or newsletters



Networking

- Friends and relatives
- Fellow members of social, civic, and religious organizations or clubs (e.g., Rotary, Masons, Kiwanis)
- Your real estate agent
- Local chamber of commerce
- Informal opportunities: Always Be Thinking Housing!



Community Presentations

- Faith-based communities – churches, synagogues, etc. often own property or have members who are owners
 - Outreach to pastors, rabbis, etc. or to social action committees or similar groups operating within faith communities
- Local businesses



Community Events: Host Landlord Info Sessions

- Program orientations for prospective landlords
 - Breakfasts or luncheons at your program's office are a good draw
 - Provide informational packets and program overview
 - Testimonials from participating property owners as well as families/clients are helpful
 - Participating landlords and property managers can also answer any questions that potential landlords may have
 - Have a sign-in sheet for follow-up after the event



Warm Hits

- Owners/management companies already participating in your program
- Word of mouth (landlords know other landlords – ask for referrals)
- Owners with history of philanthropy, personal experience/knowledge



Strategies for Overcoming Housing Barriers



Common Housing Barriers

- The "anti-Section 8" landlord
- Poor credit
- Multiple evictions
- Teenage children, especially boys
- Criminal record
- Those with very limited resources and/or eligibility for certain types of financial assistance



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

- Explain how prospective tenant has taken responsibility for past mistakes and can demonstrate positive steps taken to resolve those issues
- Explain why because of supportive services past rent history will not necessarily predict future rental behavior



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- Lease addendums
 - E.g., Tabor Community Services in Lancaster, PA
 - States client's commitment to participate in Protective Payees Services program
 - States client's commitment to case management for one full year



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- Get a letter from your probation officer stating that you are complying with the terms of your probation
- Providing letters on family's behalf to explain damaging information or speak to family's progress/current efforts
- Be creative and stress the positives of the family – use report cards, sports awards, etc.



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- Present evidence that shows family's behavior or rental outcome (e.g., eviction) was in self-defense or the result of domestic violence
- Request a reasonable accommodation, if appropriate, for families with disabled members – i.e., poor credit, criminal history, evictions, etc. are due to the disability
 - Definition – a change in rule, policy, or practice to allow a person with a disability equal access to and enjoyment of a rental unit



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- Learn why landlords have reservations (e.g., about Section 8) by attending workshops at their conferences (e.g., Apartment Owner's Assoc.)
- Certificates of rehabilitation
 - Example: King County Washington Certificate of Rehabilitation Pilot Project



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- Payment agreements for rental and/or utility arrears
- Poor credit is not necessarily due to not paying rent on time in past – demonstrate history of on-time payments (rent ledger or letter from former landlord; cancelled checks or money orders)



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- Provide documentation from accounts in good standing (e.g., medical co-pays or premiums, car insurance payments, phone bills, storage facilities, shelter program fees, etc.)
- Offer (or stipulate) protective payee services
 - E.g., Tabor Community Services (Shelter to Independent Living Program) in Lancaster, PA



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- Tenant education programs with official certificates and/or letters of recommendation to landlords
 - Example: Oregon Second Chance Renter Rehabilitation Program <http://www.renterrehab.org/>
 - Example: United Way of King County Ready to Rent Program



Strategies for Overcoming Barriers (Cont'd)

- **Master leasing or co-leasing**
 - Example: Massachusetts Dept. of Transitional Assistance
- **Shared housing – but be careful with matching roommates!**
- **Negotiating rents, deposits (don't assume it can't be done, particularly now during a recession)**



Strategies (Cont'd): Financial Incentives

- **Additional deposits**
- **Quarterly payments or 3 months rent up front**
- **Wear and tear guarantees**
 - Example: City of Portland, Fresh Start Program
- **Eviction guarantees**
 - Example: Rapid Exit Program Hennepin County, Minnesota



Making the "Pitch" to Landlords



MAKING THE PITCH

- **What to say and how to say it (how to sell your "product")**
- **How to get to the "right person"**
- **When to bring clients**
- **Guidelines for follow-up**



To keep in mind when doing landlord outreach...

- Do not be afraid of rejection
- Be persistent
- Make things happen, don't wait for them to happen
- Keep a positive attitude
- Build relationships
- Expect success



Group Exercise



Exercise Questions

- What housing barriers does this family possess?
- What are the family's housing options, given the resources your agency possesses and those it can access from elsewhere?
- How should you target the housing search, given the family's situation (geography, neighborhood type, etc.)?
- What "selling points" or marketing angles does this family and your agency/program have?
- What new advocacy tools or landlord incentives/protections you've heard today could be used to assist the family?

Keeping Landlords Happy



Maintaining Good Relationships

- Follow-up with property owner or agent
 - Call regularly, get feedback on rental situation
 - Don't just check in when things are going downhill
- Keep your commitments
 - Respond within the timeframes promised
 - Intervene/mediate when appropriate



Maintaining Good Relationships

- Operate with integrity and honesty
 - Deal directly and honestly with property owners to address problems or concerns
- Respond in a timely manner to landlord requests for assistance
- Ensure committed home visits and case management occurs (follow through on those "selling points")



Maintaining Good Relationships

- Keep open lines of communication, and create program tools and protocols to facilitate dialogue
 - For example, institute an "early warning" system with landlords
 - Sample communication tool: Hennepin County landlord-tenant-case manager communication agreement
- Think of the landlord as a sort of "client" whose needs and goals need to be met



Maintaining Relationships: Addressing Problems

- More frequent home visits and phone contact
- Reevaluate and adjust case plans
- Linkages with community-based resources and services, including rent-to-prevent eviction, detox, DV counseling, etc.
- Landlord-tenant mediation



Maintaining Good Relationships

- Keep in mind: sometimes relocating a client is best for all parties involved
- Relocation in this way can be a win-win: client doesn't have eviction on their record and landlord or management company may be willing to provide housing opportunities for other clients



Maintaining Good Relationships

- Consider hosting annual meetings with participating landlords to get feedback
- Or, send evaluation forms at the end of 6 months or 12 months in housing
- Send e-mail or snail mail newsletters to landlords keeping them up to date on program happenings, results, staffing, etc.

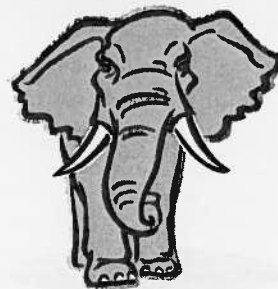


Maintaining Good Relationships

- Go the EXTRA MILE
 - Host owner appreciation events such as a breakfast; present plaques or certificates
 - Send thank you cards from staff and clients
 - Get to know something personal about the landlord i.e. birthday, favorite sports team and offer cards, souvenirs etc.
 - Recognize "landlord of the year" in agency newsletters and other ways
 - Be willing to "do favors" (e.g., to connect other tenants to services)



ALWAYS REMEMBER: Landlords are like elephants...they don't forget the good or the bad!



Practice Tips & Lessons Learned



Practice Tips

- Check the property status of prospective rental units/buildings due to the foreclosure crisis
 - <http://www.socialserve.com/inventory/LAFannieMae.html?ch=LAC>
- If tenant's residence is at risk of, or involved in, foreclosure: Renters in Foreclosure Toolkit
 - <http://www.nlihc.org/template/page.cfm?id=227>



Practice Tips

- Establish a confidentiality policy for the agency, which states what information is given out and how
- Obtain releases of information from clients for landlords and management companies
- Check up front geographic boundaries of specific streets and vacant rentals when housing assistance (e.g., HPRP, Section 8) is geographically restricted



Practice Tips

- For families in federally subsidized housing, or applying for such housing, inform yourselves of VAWA protections for domestic violence survivors
- NHLP has a good practice manual and toolkit for California advocates, but some information is also applicable to other states
 - [http://nhlp.org/files/NHLP Domestic Violence & Housing Manual.pdf](http://nhlp.org/files/NHLP%20Domestic%20Violence%20&%20Housing%20Manual.pdf)



Tips for Initial Meetings with Landlords

A housing interview is just like a job interview...key questions to cover (Don't take anything for granted!):

- What should you (ie, family) wear?
- How should you present yourself and your story?



Tips for Initial Meetings with Landlords

- Who will control the kids?
- Have we thoroughly prepared in order to avoid surprises?



Lessons Learned

- Be cautious about clustering multiple families (clients) in a single building
- Non-monetary incentives work with landlords
- 1:50 Houser: Family ratio is sufficient for agencies with case managers and housing specialists



Lessons Learned (Cont'd)

- Teamwork between housing specialists and case managers is key to success
- DO NOT make promises you cannot keep
- Understand the needs and wants of landlords



Lessons Learned (Cont'd)

- Document, Document, Document all communications with landlords
- Myth: landlords do not want to rent to homeless families or agencies serving them



Lessons Learned (Cont'd)

- Landlords' relaxing screening criteria (e.g., overlooking an eviction) for your clients but not for the general public is not a violation of federal or state fair housing laws, which only cover protected classes (race, gender, creed, etc.)
- Proof is in the pudding: landlords call us when they have vacancies.



New Lease for Homeless Families – Massachusetts

<http://www.onefamilyinc.org/Blog/2012/09/20/new-lease-for-homeless-families/>

[Main Site](#) [Welcome](#) [About One Family](#) [Blog](#) [Contact Us](#)





New Lease for Homeless Families

New Lease for Homeless Families

A Clearinghouse of Affordable Units

For Families Staying in State-Funded Shelters and Motels

SUMMARY

The Commonwealth faces a crisis. Across the state, over 2,000 families are living in shelters and over 1,700 families are staying in motels and hotels. The state is spending over \$40 million a year to house families in motels and hotels. The Patrick administration is developing a plan to dramatically reduce the number of homeless families. The community of affordable housing owners needs to be part of the solution.

With thousands of housing units across the state, affordable housing owners have a critical asset that can be tapped. Their affordable housing units paired with housing support services can end homelessness for many of the Commonwealth's families.

A group of affordable housing owners has come together to offer between 10% to 15% of their vacant units per year to families coming out of motels, hotels and shelters. The initial goal is to offer 200 or more units per year for two years for a total of 400 or more units.

The owners are creating a new not-for-profit organization called New Lease for Homeless Families (New Lease) that will connect the units to homeless families and partner with DHCD and non-profit service providers to support the families as they transition to permanent housing. With New Lease in place, there will be a structure to connect homeless families to affordable housing units over time.

[Click here to learn more about the New Lease program.](#)

Subscribe by Email

Enter your email to subscribe to future updates

Social Subscribe



Recent Posts

Off The Charts Blog: Reality Doesn't Match Rhetoric on Low-Income Program Spending

NAEH Blog: More than 1,000 Homeless Families Re-Housed with TANF Support

National Skills Coalition Webinar on the Fiscal Cliff

The New York Times: Fight for the Housing Trust Fund

Wicked Local: Coalition to Push for Khan's Bill to Help Teens, Low-Income Get Careers

Archives

January 2013

December 2012

November 2012

October 2012

September 2012

August 2012

July 2012

June 2012

May 2012

New Lease for Homeless Families
A Clearinghouse of Affordable Units
For Families Staying in State-funded Shelters and Motels

SUMMARY

The Commonwealth faces a crisis. Across the state, over 2,000 families are living in shelters and over 1,700 families are staying in motels and hotels. The state is spending over \$40 million a year to house families in motels and hotels. The Patrick administration is developing a plan to dramatically reduce the number of homeless families. The community of affordable housing owners needs to be part of the solution.

With thousands of housing units across the state, affordable housing owners have a critical asset that can be tapped. Their affordable housing units paired with housing support services can end homelessness for many of the Commonwealth's families.

A group of affordable housing owners has come together to offer between 10% to 15% of their vacant units per year to families coming out of motels, hotels and shelters. The initial goal is to offer 200 or more units per year for two years for a total of 400 or more units.

The owners are creating a new not-for-profit organization called New Lease for Homeless Families (New Lease) that will connect the units to homeless families and partner with DHCD and non-profit service providers to support the families as they transition to permanent housing. With New Lease in place, there will be a structure to connect homeless families to affordable housing units over time.

New Lease Organizational Structure and Start-Up

New Lease for Homeless Families will be a not-for-profit corporation with a mission of reducing family homelessness by providing apartments in affordable rental communities that match the needs of the families. New Lease will bring together private and non-profit property owners to work collaboratively with social service providers and state agencies to accomplish this mission.

New Lease will have a Board consisting of fifteen members, eight property owner or owner representatives and seven social service, governmental, or public interest members. In addition there will be several working groups comprised of staff from the property owner and service provider organizations and DHCD. These working groups will facilitate communication and collaboration between all partners and provide a structure to make recommendations for change.

The organization's two primary staff members will manage the clearinghouse of units, provide support to all collaborators around the social services, track data and outcomes and convene all stakeholders to identify challenges and best practices.

A Family Emergency Housing Fund will be available to support families who are struggling to maintain their tenancies for up to two years after their move-in date. The goal of the fund will be to provide a critical resource, and to preserve tenancies that have arrearages due to family emergencies and hardships.

The target start date for matching units and families is November 15, 2012. Between now and then New Lease will fundraise, hire staff, and set up the organizational operations.

CHAPA has agreed to be the fiscal sponsor of New Lease during the pilot year, so that the organization can focus on its task of matching homeless families to the available units while the not-for-profit structure is set-up.

HomeStart has agreed to provide technical assistance to New Lease during the first year. HomeStart was instrumental in creating the City of Boston's homeless set-aside effort called the Vacancy Clearinghouse. For the past 14 years, HomeStart has run the Vacancy Clearinghouse for the City of Boston—pairing homeless families and individuals with units in affordable developments across the city.

DHCD will be a key partner of New Lease. DHCD will provide guidance as to which areas of the state and which families to target. DHCD will provide support in getting the approval of the relevant supervisory agencies to change waiting list and application review procedures at the housing developments to support the filling of vacancies with homeless families. DHCD will also provide support to New Lease's efforts to partner with the DHCD contracted service providers.

The Families to be Served

All of the families participating in New Lease will be extremely low-income (ELI) and will come from the State's Emergency Assistance (EA) system of shelters, motels and hotels. The families will come from the four regions of the state with the greatest concentrations of family homelessness—Greater Boston, the South Shore, the North Shore and the Springfield area and will have been in shelter or motel for a certain length of time, to be determined by DHCD. Most families will have one or two children and need a two or three bedroom unit. Most families will not own a car so will need housing that is close to public transportation. The families will need a moderate level of housing support services after moving to housing.

The Housing Units

The apartments offered will be spread across the portfolios of multiple affordable property owners and will be concentrated in the same four geographic regions where there is the highest concentration of family homelessness. In order to commence operations, New Lease

will require commitments from owners/managers having approximately 15,000 affordable two bedroom or larger units in these geographic areas. From this stock, the owners are committing 10% to 15% of their vacant units or approximately 200+ apartments per year for two years for a total of 400 or more units to families coming out of motels, hotels and shelters. The units will be available upon turnover. The units will be in professionally managed buildings, many with a resident services coordinator on-site.

Affordability of the Housing Units

The majority of the units will have project-based section 8 subsidies attached for a deep level of affordability for the families. New Lease, with the approval of the relevant supervisory agencies, will propose waiting list and application review procedures that will facilitate the filling of vacancies. The owners have already started to work with DHCD and HUD on this effort. Most of the remainder of the units will have a mix of moderate subsidies including tax credits, HOME, Section 236s, etc. The hope is that DHCD will commit to layer shallow MRVP or Section 8 subsidies for the remainder of these moderate priced apartments in order to create the deep subsidies needed by the families. In certain cases this additional subsidy could be time restricted with the expectation that residents will be able to obtain section 8 assistance as vacancies occur in a development.

Partnership with Service Providers--Referrals for Units and Housing Support Services

The families moving from motel or shelter to a New Lease housing unit will be referred from and receive housing support services for a year from a DHCD contracted service provider. New Lease will work in partnership with a limited number of service providers in the four regions to ensure successful tenancies for the families. Partnership agreements will outline the expectations about the family referrals, level of services to be provided and property manager commitments.

An example of an expectation for the property managers is a commitment to promptly alert the service provider about non-payment of rent or lease violations. Examples of some expectations for the service providers might include being present at lease signings and responding promptly to any issues that arise with a tenancy.

During the start-up period of New Lease, the affordable owners will convene an advisory group of their property managers and resident service coordinators and staff from the service providers and DHCD to work out the details of the referral process, tenant screening practices and housing support services.

Marketing of Units, Referral Process for Families and Tenant Selection

The affordable housing owner staff will alert New Lease when a unit is available. New Lease will market the unit to the families working with the service provider partners. Given that most families in shelter or motel have been placed by the state in that location to keep them as

close as possible to their last residence, the units available through New Lease will be marketed to the families staying in motel or shelter in the region where the unit is located. While the goal is to fill the units as quickly as possible, New Lease will typically have a 60-90 day window to work with a property manager to fill an open unit.

When the service provider is alerted to a unit opening, they will assess which families are appropriate and interested in the unit and then help those families put together their application for the unit. Applications will then be sent to the New Lease staff by a deadline. There will be a quick turnaround time to get applications in—usually less than a week—so that the screening process can start promptly and a family can move out of shelter or motel quickly.

The New Lease staff will review applications from all the partner providers in a region for completeness and then enter the completed applications into a lottery through which three applications will be pulled and sent to the property manager for suitability screening and selection. The families selected will be notified that the property manager will contact them about the screening process. The New Lease staff will be in contact with the property manager and service providers during the screening process to provide support around any challenges that might slow the process.

In light of the challenges faced by homeless families, the affordable housing owners will change their usual tenant screening practices of requiring positive landlord references and credit scores. In lieu of these, New Lease, service providers, and managers will develop alternative approaches to evaluating the prospective resident's ability to comply with the lease terms.

Once a family has been selected for a unit, the hope is that the lease signing will be attended by the family, property manager, resident services coordinator and service provider so that everyone can meet each other, understand the expectations of the lease and celebrate the family moving into housing.

Families who applied for the unit but were not selected can opt to have their applications kept on file with New Lease for the next available opening at the same development so they do not have to fill out multiple applications. The owners will explore whether a universal application for New Lease units might be possible in order to further reduce the paperwork for families, service providers and New Lease staff.

In the City of Boston, where the Vacancy Clearinghouse already exists to pair homeless families to affordable units, New Lease will work with HomeStart on how to best align the efforts of the Vacancy Clearinghouse and New Lease.

Communication & Training

One of the main functions of the New Lease staff will be to coordinate the communication and collaboration between the staff of the affordable housing owners, the staff of the service

providers and DHCD staff. New Lease will convene several working groups to facilitate communication and collaboration. The groups will meet quarterly in the first year.

- Regional working groups made up of the property managers, resident service coordinators and service provider staff from that region. These groups will allow the owner and service provider staff to get to know each other, work through any challenges, highlight best practices and suggest policy changes as they work together on the ground to support the families in maintaining stable tenancies.
- Statewide working group made up of the senior executives of the management companies and directors of resident services (where the position exists), the directors of the service provider organizations and key DHCD staff. This group will review the successes, challenges and policy recommendations brought by the regional groups and then work together to implement policy and procedural changes as appropriate.

At the start of this new effort, New Lease staff will provide training to property managers, resident service coordinators and the service providers about New Lease, how the referral process will work, coordinating services for the families and information about participating in the regional working groups. As there is staff turnover at the owner companies or service provider organizations New Lease staff will be available to train them about New Lease practices.

While owner staff and service provider staff will be asked to provide New Lease with updates about any successes or challenges as soon as possible, New Lease staff will be in touch with all partners once a month for status updates and input on any improvements that should be considered. If there is a family that is struggling with their tenancy, New Lease staff will be available to consult about additional services that could be offered, sharing property management ideas that could be helpful, etc.

Best Practices, Data Tracking and Outcomes

By working on a regular basis with the various affordable housing owners, non-profit service providers and DHCD, New Lease will be uniquely positioned to observe the best practices across these organizations and then to encourage the replication of the practices among the relevant parties.

From the start, New Lease will be committed to quality data tracking and outcome measurement. New Lease staff will work closely with owner and service provider staff to gather data. Some of the key outcome measurements will include:

- Number of units leased-up in a year period and subsidy & geographic information on those units
- The length of time to fill a unit from initial notice of opening to lease-up
- Housing retention rates at the one and two year marks
- The percentage of families paying rent on time

In addition to these quantitative outcomes, New Lease will set qualitative goals around quality communication and collaboration between all the partners.

The Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) has agreed to evaluate the data and outcomes for the pilot year and make recommendations for improvements going forward.

Organizational Funding

A total of \$950,000 over two years is needed to run New Lease as broken down below. Funding will come from owners, quasi-public agencies, foundations, and corporate donors.

Start Up Funding:	\$100,000
-------------------	-----------

Operating

For Two years	\$600,000
---------------	-----------

Family Emergency

Fund for Initial Two Years	\$250,000
----------------------------	-----------

CONCLUSION

New Lease for Homeless Families will connect 400 or more homeless families to affordable housing units provided by private and non-profit property owners over a two-year period. The infrastructure will then be in place to continue matching homeless families coming out of shelter to affordable housing units. This effort will be possible through close collaboration between the property owners and service providers. New Lease will be a vital partner in the State's efforts to reduce family homelessness.



Benefits for Landlords: Partnering with a Service Agency to Provide Services to Your Tenants Who Were Previously Homeless

Service agencies throughout Virginia assisting families and individuals experiencing homelessness seek partnerships with landlords. These partnerships can benefit you as a landlord because the service agency will provide services to tenants in your rental housing to help them be successful tenants and good neighbors. Temporary financial assistance and ongoing case management services are examples of the services an agency might provide. **Landlords are among the most important partners and resources for service agencies who are serving homeless clients who need housing, and as such, they are committed to helping you:**

- Find tenants and reduce vacancy rates;
- Ensure rent is paid on time;
- Keep renters in their units for the long term;
- Prevent costly evictions;
- Make sure tenants are good neighbors.

Questions and Answers

How do we ensure you will receive rent in a timely manner?

Most families receive time-limited financial assistance to help them to get back on their feet. Case management staff will develop with the family a plan for long-term income stability. The family will also receive budgeting and financial management education to help them remain good tenants and successfully manage their expenses.

How do we reduce your vacancy rate?

Without the need for costly advertising, service agencies can quickly connect you with renters in need of housing. When a unit becomes vacant, service agencies can match you with a family looking for housing.

How do we help you prevent evictions?

Service agencies want to help you avoid costly evictions. Case management staff regularly check-in with tenants and landlords to make sure they successfully meet the terms and rules of their lease. Assistance is always available to you from case management staff who will respond to any issue that may arise. You may call the service agency if you experience any challenges with the tenant and the service agency will respond as soon as possible.

How do we help you reduce turnover?

Our goal is for families to be permanently housed. By helping families develop plans for stable income and by helping you to avoid evictions, service agencies will help you to reduce expensive turnover and enable tenants to stay in their units for the long term.

How do we ensure that your rental units will be kept in good condition?

Case management staff will check in with families and will respond to issues should they arise. When doing case management visits, staff will check on the condition of the unit and respond appropriately.

How do we work with families who have members with special needs?

For families where there is a special need, service providers assist the tenant to receive necessary services to manage the issue.

How do we help you resolve any possible issues that may arise?

Service agencies work with families and landlords on an ongoing basis and do their best to proactively prevent issues from arising in the first place. If an issue does unfortunately arise, the landlord may call the service agency, who will meet with the family to resolve the issue.

How do we help you abide by fair housing laws?

Fair housing law in Virginia designates eight protected classes including race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status, and disability. Homeless populations are disproportionately made up of individuals and families who have previously faced unequal access to housing, so by serving homeless households, you can help further fair housing and prevent housing discrimination. To abide by fair housing laws, you must establish and abide by a written tenant selection process by which you will prioritize homeless households as part of an agreement with a service provider. This written process must include a means to determine proof of homelessness and need for services with supporting documentation. Proof of homelessness could be a statement from a case worker. You must select tenants

based on their status as homeless individuals and without regard for any of their protected characteristics. We will assist you in developing a written tenant selection process. As long as the process is well-documented, you are furthering fair housing by agreeing to select homeless individuals for tenancy.

Fair Housing advice provided by Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia.

How do you connect with a service provider?

If you know a service provider in your area that serves people experiencing homelessness, contact them directly.

For more information and to be connected to service providers who can enter an agreement with you to deliver services to those you agree to house, contact Jillian Fox, Director of Programs and Evaluation, 804-332-0560 or jill@vceh.org.

LANDLORD-TENANT-CASE MANAGER COMMUNICATION AGREEMENT

About this tool: This communication agreement should be filled out and signed by the tenant, landlord and case manager with copies provided to the all parties to promote open communication. The form can easily be modified, but already includes those communication issues that frequently cause problems. Note that before this agreement is used, you may want to have your client sign an information release authorization form.

My goals are to:

- Fulfill my obligations as outlined in the lease
- Ensure rental payments are received on time
- Maintain the rental unit in good condition
- Help maintain a safe, pleasant and decent housing community

One way to achieve these goals is to help maintain a positive and communicative landlord-tenant-case manager relationship. Therefore, I will immediately inform the signors of this agreement (unless otherwise indicated), both verbally and in writing, if any of the following occurs (initial next to all that apply):

Landlord

_____ I have not received full rent by the 3rd day of the month.

_____ I have received a complaint that there is too much noise from the tenant's apartment.

_____ I have significant concerns about the condition of the tenant's unit. (Examples: Landlord has seen damage or received complaints about bad smells that could be related to garbage.)

_____ I think someone is living in the tenant's unit who is not named on the lease.

_____ I think someone in the tenant's unit may be doing something illegal.

_____ The behavior of someone living in or visiting the tenant's unit is causing other tenants to complain.

_____ Provide the tenant with 24 hours notice prior to entering the unit.

_____ Follow up / Respond quickly to inquiries and concerns.

_____ I see something that is a violation of the lease. Describe : _____

_____ Other: _____

Tenant

- _____ A rare, but serious emergency occurs that will impact my ability to pay rent on time
- _____ I will be away from the unit for an extended time period (Examples: 30, 60, 90 days)
- _____ Inform the landlord of maintenance issues
- _____ I observe or experience an issue or event that impacts the safety of the community
- _____ Follow up / Respond quickly to inquiries and concerns.

Case Manager and/or Housing Coordinator

- _____ Inform the landlord if I become aware of a situation that will impact the tenant's ability to pay rent on time
- _____ Inform the landlord if I become aware of a circumstance that will impact the tenant's occupancy of the unit (Examples: tenant is hospitalized for 60, 90 days)
- _____ I observe a maintenance issue
- _____ I observe or experience an issue or event that impacts the safety of the community
- _____ Participate in problem solving / trouble shooting only in the event that the tenant and landlord are unable to resolve an issue without my assistance
- _____ Follow up / Respond quickly to inquiries and concerns

Please contact me using any of the following:

	Phone	Phone 2 / Pager	Email	Address
Landlord Name:				
Tenant Name:				
Case Manager Name:				

(Signature of Landlord)

(Date)

(Signature of Tenant)

(Date)

(Signature of Caseworker)

(Date)

Landlords Are Critical Customers!
HUD Office of Public & Indian Housing

http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/wtw/resources/wtwnc_00/s3_wtw_vouchers.pdf

Landlords Are Critical Customers!

- Without the participation of good landlords, families will not succeed in leasing up and staying leased.
 - How well does your PHA treat landlords?
-

Landlord Outreach Objectives

Attract a special of Landlord:

- Owners of units near high employment areas
 - Owners of units near daycare, support services
 - Owners of units near public transportation
-

Landlord Outreach Objectives

Sell WtW Family to Landlord:

- Working or work ready
 - Prepared to succeed
 - PHA commitment to success of family as tenant and employee
-

Landlord Outreach Objectives:

Remove Existing Barriers to Attracting and Retaining Landlords

- Requires PHA commitment to make program "landlord friendly", guarantee a level of service, make administrative changes, and invest \$ and staff resources.
-

Remove Existing Barriers

Barrier:

“The PHA takes too long to approve the tenancy. It’s the inspection that is the problem. My unit stays vacant, and I lose money.”

Remove Existing Barriers

Solution:

- Revamp inspection process; shorten turnaround; raise performance requirements of inspectors
 - Pre-qualify unit to pass HQS
 - Educate on common fail HQS items
-

Remove Existing Barriers

Barrier:

“My checks never arrive on time.”

Solution:

- Evaluate and revise check-writing, HAP execution, rent change policies
 - Streamline corresponding procedures
 - Automate functions.
-

Remove Existing Barriers

Barrier:

“It’s easier to rent to someone off the street.”

Solution:

Well-managed, reliable referral service.
Landlord calls PHA when unit is available, and PHA immediately sends families to meet landlord.

Remove Existing Barriers

Barrier:

"If I have a problem or question, I can never reach anyone, and if I leave a message, it is never returned."

Remove Existing Barriers

Solutions:

- Ombudsman
 - Dedicated line for landlords
 - "Landlord Response Team"
 - Landlord Advisory Committee
 - Staff responsiveness factor in employee evaluation process
-

Remove Existing Barriers

Barrier:

"I'm tired of being treated inconsistently. Policies, procedures, and decisions differ from inspector to inspector, housing specialist to housing specialist."

Remove Existing Barriers

Solution:

Review and update policies and procedures, train staff, and enforce! Establish formal process for policy review/revision. Communicate changes to landlords.

Other Outreach Considerations

- Landlords listen to landlords. Recruit them to promote program.
 - Faith-based organizations are succeeding in selling the program.
 - WtW business partners can also sell program to landlords.
-

Why Help WtW Family Search?

- Help family secure stable, affordable housing as quickly as possible
 - Help family make informed decision regarding where to live
 - Cost Effective - administrative fee is not earned until family is leased.
 - Enables PHA to meet rigorous leasing schedule
-

Housing Search Tools for Success

- Link housing search and landlord outreach
 - Good administrative practices
 - Prepare family to search
 - Support family during search
-

Link Housing Search and Landlord Outreach

- Successful landlord outreach leads to successful housing searches.

Example: A referral service attracts landlords to the program *and* helps families find units more quickly.

Good Administrative Practices

- Dedicate trained staff to search assistance
 - Know your housing market
 - Know where jobs, transport, and day care centers are.
 - Consider needs of working families, e.g. weekend/evening briefings.
-

Prepare Family to Search

- Prepare/present high-quality briefing
 - Educate on fair housing rights
 - Provide unit and/or landlord listing
 - Provide housing search counseling so family will succeed in meeting WtW objectives
-

Support Family During Search

- Regular follow-up by PHA/partner
 - Accommodate for special needs
 - Help family secure \$\$ assistance
 - Security deposit
 - Actual cost of moving
 - Help family secure transportation assistance
 - Search for units
 - Get from new home to work
-

PHA Considerations

- Determine staff/partner resources to be dedicated to search assistance.
 - Develop strategy that maximizes staff/partner expertise.
 - You can't do everything. Consider cost of search assistance technique, family needs, and staff resources when developing strategy.
-