

Shared Housing Tips & Strategies for Youth

By John Lawlor, The Connection

When introducing youth to the idea of “shared housing” or roommates, have visuals on hand illustrating the benefits.

- Show pictures of a 1br apartment (ex: \$700) versus a 2br apartment (ex: \$1,400) which is double the price. Then show pictures of a 2br apartment where their portion of monthly rent is below what they'd pay in a 1br unit, highlighting the difference in monthly expenses and benefit of a roommate.
- Take pictures of these units to show the difference in apartment quality and area of the city/town.
- Use printouts of crime maps to highlight the difference in level of safety of these 2 units.
- Show the difference in cost to them between a 1br or 2br/3br including how utilities and (typically) monthly rent costs are significantly lower in roommate scenarios.

“Matching” works best when it’s organic.

- Find ways to get homeless youth together in the same place so that they have a chance to meet, talk, and connect.
- As a service provider, don't get hung up on the concept of having a “matching system, survey, app, etc”.
- In Rapid Re-Housing, when apartment searching for multiple youth, have them see the apartments with you *together* so that they can meet. Schedule a viewing of a 2br with the youth to show them the difference in quality of apartment and area of town.

When engaging landlords...

- Stress that renting a 2-3br unit to 2-3 young adults will likely result in less wear-and-tear on their property compared to the families with young children that they're likely used to renting too.
- If possible, target landlords who own properties near colleges, as they're used to working with 2-3 young people renting together and are also familiar with common tenancy issues that might arise with the young adult age group.

When Rapidly Re-Housing youth together...

- Provide them with the same Case Manager (vs different Case Managers for each youth).
- Train staff on mediation techniques as this will become an essential service that helps maintain the “match” as disagreements arise.