

Implementing a Homeless Preference in Multifamily Housing: An Overview for Continuums of Care and Service Providers

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PRESENTER: Welcome to today's presentation, Implementing a Homeless Preference in Multifamily Housing: An Overview for Continuums of Care and Homeless Service Providers.

The HUD multifamily homeless preference can provide additional apartment housing to help your local community end homelessness. Today, we will share how continuums of care, or CoCs, and service providers, can partner with multifamily property owners and agents, and HUD staff, to implement the homeless preference. CoCs and service providers can play a key role in the success of the multifamily homeless preference. HUD encourages CoCs and service providers to work with HUD multifamily property owners and agents and HUD staff to promote the homeless preference in your community. CoCs and service providers can help recruit owners and agents to adopt the preference by designing a referral and service package that they can depend on.

Opening Doors is the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. It calls for the strength and alignment of federal, state, local, and private resources, including multifamily housing. The goal of the multifamily homeless preference is to encourage HUD multifamily housing to be part of the solution to homelessness in local communities across the country.

There are helpful tools on the HUD exchange website for CoCs, service providers and property owners and agents who wish to implement the homeless preference. The HUD notice on the preference provides guidance on how to implement the homeless preference at properties. Opening Doors Through Multifamily Housing: A Toolkit for Implementing a Homeless Preference provides a step-by-step planning

guide and templates for launching the preference in local communities.

The multifamily homeless preference applies specifically to HUD multifamily housing. Let's talk about the characteristics of HUD multifamily housing. HUD multifamily housing is privately owned housing that receives rental subsidy from HUD. A property owner might own one property or multiple properties. Prospective renters apply to each property separately. Multifamily housing includes subsidized apartment housing for individuals, families, elders, and people with disabilities. A property may serve one or more sub-populations.

For properties with deeply subsidized apartments, the resident rent contribution is 30% of adjusted monthly income. HUD project-based assistance pays the rest of the rent to the property owner. Applicants for subsidized apartments must meet income and other eligibility criteria. Multifamily property owners and agents screen households for suitability, just like any other private property owner might. Now let's walk through how the multifamily homeless preference works at properties. The HUD multifamily homeless preference is an optional, owner-adopted preference that applies to privately owned HUD-assisted multifamily housing with project-based rental subsidy. The homeless preference impacts the order in which applicants are selected from the waiting list, allowing homeless families and individuals to move quickly to the top of the list. Because multifamily properties are generally occupied, apartments for the homeless preference become available only upon turnover.

Not all properties have waiting lists. If there is no waiting list, a preference isn't needed. Vacancies at a property can be filled quickly with eligible homeless applicants referred by service providers

Household eligibility and screening criteria remain the same for homeless applicants. The homeless preference gives choices and flexibility to property owners and agents to encourage them to sign up their properties for the preference. Property owners

and agents may choose which properties are a good fit for the preference. Owners and agents may choose which homeless population to serve-- for example, veterans or families. Owners and agents select the rate of the preference for each property-- for example, owners can choose to fill every other available apartment with a homeless household, or every third one that becomes available.

Owners and agents are urged to partner with local homeless service providers, who can refer applicants for available apartments, and provide supportive services for families and individuals once they move in.

CoCs and service providers play a key role by recruiting owners and agents to adopt the preference, and then working with owners and agents and HUD staff to sustain the initiative. A well-designed referral and services package that is simple for property owners and agents to use and depend on will help convince them to adopt the preference.

Communities with multifamily homeless preferences have developed referral and services best practices for both parts of the housing process-- the housing placement phase, and the post-placement tenancy phase.

Let's start with the best practices for the housing placement phase. Use coordinated entry or an existing housing referral process to make referrals for the homeless preference. Make sure the referral process is simple for owners. Provide owners and agents with one number to call to report available apartments for service providers to fill. Providing swift referrals within a set, agreed-upon number of days insures that households move into housing quickly and the property owners don't lose money on vacant apartments.

Helping households to identify and overcome barriers ahead of time increases their likelihood of admission. Accompany households to appointments at the property. This helps the property manager in the homeless household to move through the

application process as smoothly as possible. Helping households prepare their housing eligibility documentation before an apartment becomes available helps the process move more quickly. Examples of eligibility documentation may include photo identification and proof of income and assets.

Have funds available to assist households with moving costs. This will ensure that the needs of the property are met, and that the household has a smooth transition to housing.

Now let's walk through the best practices for supportive post-placement services after a homeless family or individual has moved to housing. Leverage existing services, such as Rapid Re-Housing or Supportive Services for Veteran Families, also known as SSVF, to provide post-placement case management services. Provide owners and agents with one number to call in case a household is struggling with its tenancy.

Schedule periodic check-ins with participating properties to remind property managers to send you information about available apartments and to check in on existing tenancies billed through the homeless preference. Establish a contingency fund for households that fall behind on rent or utilities.

If your CoC is interested in implementing the homeless preference, here is a planning roadmap to get you started. Use the Toolkit for Implementing a Homeless Preference to guide your planning process. The toolkit includes a planning flow chart, best practices, and template documents. Then you may want to assemble a planning team with CoC and service provider representatives, local HUD field office staff, and property owners and management agents.

Identify the HUD multifamily properties in your community and find out if any CoC members have existing relationships with the owners and agents to assist your owner outreach efforts. Determine what services are easily available for homeless

households at the time of move-in, such as Rapid Re-Housing or SSVF.

Decide which homeless sub-populations to target based on the services available and types of multifamily properties in the area. Set up a referral process that is fast and efficient for owners and homeless households. Create an outreach strategy to recruit property owners and agents to adopt the preference. Communities have used a variety of outreach approaches, including owner outreach events for targeted groups, and meeting one-on-one with the owners and agents.

Once the preference is established, cultivate ongoing relationships between property owners and agents, the CoC, and service providers, so that challenges can be addressed and adjustments made over time. When you are ready to get started, use the toolkit for implementing a homeless preference, to guide your efforts, and reach out to HUD to connect with the HUD staff, who can support your local effort.

Thank you for listening and learning about how the multifamily homeless preference can be a tool in your community's effort to end homelessness.

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Adopt the Homeless Preference at Your Properties

For more information:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/multifamily-housing-owners-managers/>

Questions? Ready to adopt the preference?

Contact your HUD Account Executive or email HUD at MFHP@hud.gov