

Homeless System Response: High Acuity: Transition from Short-term to Long-term Subsidy

With the recent influx of Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program funding in jurisdictions across the country as a result of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, communities are choosing to target a wide range of households with rapid rehousing (RRH) assistance. Because RRH is time-limited, it has not always been viewed as a favorable intervention for higher-acuity individuals. However, national research tells us that there are no defining indicators for who will succeed in an RRH placement. Case managers and other support staff should employ a strengths-based approach, assuming that RRH participants will be successful in their housing placements. While some participants will achieve stability through the short-term financial assistance and case management, others may require a longer-term subsidy with more intensive supports. Through relationship building, housing stability planning, and goal setting, staff can help participants determine what level of support is best for their long-term housing stability.

Connecting Participants to a Long-term Subsidy

If an RRH participant will need more assistance than can be provided in RRH and has decided that they would like to pursue a long-term affordable housing opportunity, there are many ways to support this effort. It is essential that support staff are familiar with the affordable housing landscape in their local community. Work can be done at the individual program and broader system level to increase connections between RRH programs and long-term subsidies so as to prevent returns to homelessness or other negative outcomes. Staff should also be aware that there may be systemic barriers in place at the Continuum of Care (CoC) level that make moving from RRH to permanent supportive housing (PSH) and longer-term subsidies a challenge. Work with your local system to address these barriers to ensure this transition is possible. The table below provides a list of potential long-term affordable housing options to pursue. This list is not exhaustive but is meant to serve as a starting point as it is likely that affordable housing options vary widely from community to community.

Housing Type	Things to Know
<u>Continuum of Care (CoC) Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)</u>	This resource, dedicated to households experiencing homelessness, provides a long-term, deep subsidy paired with supportive services that last through the duration of tenancy/enrollment. Connect with the local CoC for information on how to access.
<u>Local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs)</u>	Identify the towns/cities in which the participant is interested in living and apply at the local PHAs. Opportunities may include federal/state-funded public housing, project-based Section 8, Moderate Rehabilitation (Mod Rehab) units, 811 Mainstream vouchers, and more. Some PHAs have preference or priority points for households experiencing homelessness.
<u>Housing Choice Voucher Program</u>	Commonly referred to as "Section 8 vouchers," this long-term subsidy often has a very long waitlist. That said, interested tenants should be encouraged to apply and secure a place on the list.
<u>Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program</u>	LIHTC properties often have units set aside that are lower rent or income-based. These properties often have very specific income eligibility criteria. In many communities, the units are offered via a housing lottery.
<u>Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA)</u>	This federally funded program offers project-based units with a deep subsidy to households in which at least one non-elderly member has a long-term disability. Section 811 PRA is currently available in 27 states.

DOs and DO NOTs of Integrating a Subsidized Housing Search into RRH Case Management.

DO:

- Focus on meeting the participant where they are and building a strong and trusting relationship with the goal of housing stability—build on their strengths and assets.
- Make sure the bulk of the administrative burden is carried by the staff and not the participant. Research what programs for which the participant could be eligible and what documents need to be completed to apply IF they say that is something they would like to pursue. A subsidized housing search can be made a part of the housing stability case management plan after the participant is stabilized in RRH.
- Address potential barriers such as criminal background or poor credit that may arise once the participant is actively searching for a subsidized housing opportunity. This may include some of the steps outlined below:
 - Become familiar with [HUD's guidance on the use of criminal records by providers of housing](#) and help the participant run their criminal background report and determine whether there is an opportunity to seal any part of the record. A local legal aid organization can be a great resource.
 - Support the participant in obtaining credit report(s) to determine whether there are any opportunities to engage in a debt repayment plan, build credit, etc.
 - Compile letters of reference from other people in the participant's network that may help to mitigate any criminal or credit issues that will not likely be resolved by the time the individual is screening for subsidized housing (e.g., a former landlord, an employer, a licensed medical physician, a substance use counselor, etc.)
- Make physical copies of each housing application and save them in your participant's case file for easy access. The wait times for units can be unpredictable and it is critical to keep records for future reference.

DO NOT:

- Assume that all program participants will need PSH or deeper interventions and lead them in that direction without the explicit want and need expressed by the participant themselves.
- Prioritize the work of planning for a transition or applying for subsidized housing opportunities until the participant's immediate needs have been met.

Connecting Participants to Ongoing Supports

RRH support staff may also find that some program participants are interested in pursuing a connection to longer-term supports, regardless of whether they transition to a long-term subsidy. These supports could include structured supportive services and ongoing case management as well as natural supports that come from community and relationship building.

Professional long-term supports may include case management that is funded through state or federal programs such as the Department of Mental Health, Department of Disability Services, Medicaid Tenancy Supports, or other resources that may be specific to individual communities. RRH case managers should become familiar with the local landscape of available resources for long-term supportive services and their eligibility criteria.

RRH staff should also find ways to incorporate the participant's personal network as a method of support wherever possible. Elevate the ways that networks can help participants deal with challenges and support them in dealing with conflict. Personal networks may include building community in their new neighborhood by getting to know neighbors and becoming involved in local activities. They may also include supporting participants in strengthening relationships with chosen friends or family.

Mitigating the Impact of Transitions

Housing stability case management should be delivered with the understanding that a transition from one housing type to another is both an opportunity and a source of anxiety for program participants. Case managers should take steps to mitigate any trauma and minimize negative impacts on participants. Some useful strategies may include building relationships with staff in long-term housing programs, centering the participant in all scheduling and decision-making, and working to engage the support networks of the participant to help them see the strengths and positive ways that their networks of chosen family and friends can be a stabilizing factor in their transitions in housing.