



# EMERGENCY HOUSING VOUCHERS

## Supporting Households through the Housing Search Process

*July 26, 2022*

This resource is prepared by technical assistance providers and intended only to provide guidance. The contents of this presentation, when based on statutory or regulatory authority or law, do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This presentation is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.





# Session Format

- This session is being recorded. Recording will be shared on the [HUD EHV site](http://www.hud.gov/ehv) at [www.hud.gov/ehv](http://www.hud.gov/ehv)
- All participants are muted. If you are having trouble connecting your computer audio, you can call in using the following information:
  - +1 312 626 6799
  - Webinar ID: 879 0823 0856
- Please submit questions for HUD or presenters in the Q&A box
- Use the Chat feature to share thoughts/experiences on EHV implementation in your community



# Sessions at a Glance

Date	Topic	Facilitator
June 14 <sup>th</sup>	System level approaches to landlord and unit engagement including assessing local market	TAC
June 28 <sup>th</sup>	Landlord financial incentives	Homebase
July 12 <sup>th</sup>	Marketing, outreach and retention strategies	CSH
July 26 <sup>th</sup>	Supporting households through the housing search process	TAC



# Purpose for Today's Session

## **Supporting households through the housing search process:**

1. Understand how to assess and respond to housing preferences and barriers
2. Discuss how to prepare the household
3. Learn ways to find units and leverage existing resources for housing search



# Housing Search Models to Consider

**Housing Search Assistance is required under the EHV program and can be staffed internally or contracted out to a third party provider.**

## Specialized Roles

- The role of supporting the household in the housing search process is separate from the role of identifying units and engaging with landlords.
- Staff in each role have a specialized expertise. For example, staff supporting households could be peer supports with lived experience of homelessness while staff identifying units may have real estate experience.

## Single Role

- When specialized roles are not possible, programs may have staff playing both roles of supporting the household and identifying units.



# Assessing and Responding to Housing Barriers



# Assessing Housing Barriers

## Tenant Screening Barriers



Barriers to ***obtaining*** housing

## Housing Retention Barriers



Barriers to ***sustaining*** housing



# Tenant Screening Barriers

## What do you assess?



- Income and employment history
- Credit history: Unpaid bills (or late payments), court judgments, especially if debts are rental arrears to prior landlord(s)
- Criminal history
- Past housing experiences: Rent paid on time? Lease violation notices? Conflict with landlord or other tenants? Damage to the unit?
- Landlord references





# Tenant Screening Barriers

## How will you use this information?

- To match the tenant with a landlord who will accept that person's profile—this means knowing your landlord partner's screening criteria
- To understand what support you can provide households to mitigate these barriers, such as obtaining character references, credit repair, sealing a criminal record, etc.
- To negotiate additional incentives for the landlord (security deposit, more frequent check-ins, lease signing bonus, etc.) if the person “appears” too risky for the landlord's tolerance level



# Housing Retention Barriers

## What do you assess?

- Patterns in a person's history that have resulted in housing crisis or housing AND could recur and jeopardize new housing: non-payment of rent, lease violations, property damage, conflict with other tenants, poor landlord references
- DO NOT assess characteristics, such as poverty or a disability, unless they have a clear relationship to past housing instability
- DO NOT make assumptions; look at facts





# Housing Retention Barriers

## How will you use this information?

- Review the Tenant Screening information to see if there are any repeated situations associated with housing loss.
- Interviews with the client (about the TSB report—the details)
- Observations, over time, during home visits; you can't identify everything initially
- Contacts with the landlord, both routine check-ins and call-backs due to problems



# Acknowledging Trauma

- Households receiving EHV's may have experienced traumas that can impact their engagement in the housing search process, especially when re-visiting housing barriers. For example:
  - Racial discrimination when looking for apartments in the past
  - Evictions leading to housing instability and homelessness
  - Criminal backgrounds
  - Financial hardship
- Housing search while experiencing housing instability may cause a stress response



# Acknowledging Trauma

- Use a trauma-informed approach throughout the housing search process
- This may look like:
  - Creating a safe, private space when exploring housing barriers
  - Intentionally building rapport by remaining non-judgmental and avoiding shaming
  - Providing a more intensive level of support when households are struggling to engage; staff taking on more of the housing search work
  - Fostering household choice



# Housing Preferences

## Understanding the Household's Needs and Preferences

- Which neighborhoods would the household be open to living in?
- What are their transportation needs?
- What community-based or natural supports do they need access to?
- Do they need any special accommodations in their unit?
- Are they interested in shared housing?



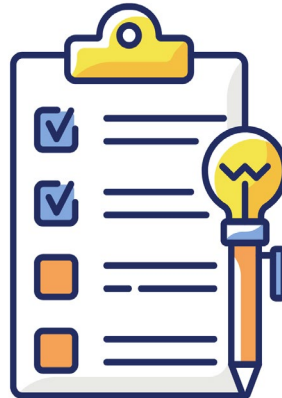
## Preparing the Household for Housing Search



# Individualized Housing Search Plan

## Developing Goals and Action Steps for Housing Search

- Based on the assessment of housing barriers and preferences, staff can work with households to develop an individualized housing search plan.
- The housing search plan can be used as a tool to outline the housing search process, clarify roles and responsibilities, and track progress towards housing.
- This plan should outline:
  - What the households will do vs. what the housing search staff will do
  - Immediate steps that can be taken to overcome tenant screening barriers
  - Type and intensity of support the household will need, which may change over time



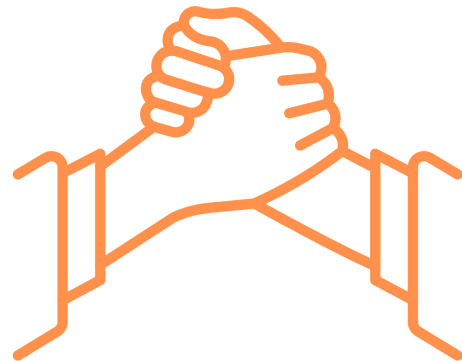




# Individualized Housing Search Plan

## Individualized Supports

- While some households may have recent experience undergoing housing search and feel confident in their ability to communicate with landlords, attend viewings, etc. other households may want more support along the way



## Housing search staff should be prepared to:

- Provide access to technology
- Identify potential units
- Facilitate landlord conversations
- Coordinate transportation to viewings
- Support with completing applications and other paperwork
- Attend viewings and lease-signings
- Review lease terms



# Communicating with Landlords

- Some households may need coaching on how to interact with landlords when they have a subsidy. Housing search staff can practice these conversations with households.
  - Similar to a job interview
  - Signaling respect – eye contact, language, handshake, etc.
  - Providing materials or talking points about the subsidy
  - Preparing responses if asked about tenant screening barriers
- Some households may need more intensive support when communicating with landlords. Staff should be ready to facilitate conversations.



# Other Practical Tips for Households with EHV

- Sign-up to receive immediate notifications on new listings on housing search sites and apps like Zillow, Trulia, Hotpads, etc.
- Keep track of all the units you've reached out about and follow up when you don't get a response
- Prepare a standard rental application to provide landlords or use as a reference for completing other rental applications
- Have rental applications submitted before a viewing when possible
- Prepare mitigating documentation before your search to reduce concerns about tenant screening barriers (e.g. character reference letters, explanation of tenant supports you'll be receiving, etc.)



# Managing Expectations

- With many housing markets returning to their pre-pandemic norms and communities continuing to experience a lack of affordable housing, it may be difficult to identify suitable units.
- Households should know what to expect from the housing market, including typical rent prices and how quickly the market moves.
- Given the limitations of the housing market, staff should facilitate conversations about next step housing vs. ideal housing.
- Having this information will help households make their own informed decisions about housing preferences and what supports they will need throughout the process.



## Finding Units and Leveraging Existing Resources



# Finding Units

## Leave no stone unturned!

- Coordination with system-level approaches in your CoC and community
- Outreaching to existing landlord contacts and continuing to build your partnerships
- Cold calling in response to listings on housing search sites (Zillow, Trulia, Hotpads, Rent.com, Apartments.com, etc.)
- Networking with groups like landlord associations, neighborhood associations, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- Identifying the affordable housing opportunities in your community that have preferences related to the EHV population
- Leveraging incentives and utilize marketing



# Leverage Existing Housing Search Supports

## Know what resources are available

- What housing search supports currently exist that households may be eligible for?
  - Housing search and navigations services through the CoC or ESG
  - Housing navigation supports in shelters and outreach teams
  - Housing counseling centers
- What supports are there to help overcome tenant screening barriers?
  - Legal services
  - Funds to clear rental or utility debts
  - Case management to support housing stabilization



**Q&A**





# Upcoming Office Hours

## Upcoming EHV Office Hours (Tuesdays at 3pm ET):

- Resuming August 9th – Serving Returning Citizens
- Go to the [HUD EHV site](http://www.hud.gov/ehv) at [www.hud.gov/ehv](http://www.hud.gov/ehv) for additional resources
  - Office hours schedule & recordings/materials
  - Updated EHV FAQs
  - EHV Mailing List Sign-up



# TA Providers

## **Technical Assistance Collaborative**

15 Court Square, 11th Fl.  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 266-5657

[tacinc.org](http://tacinc.org)

@TACIncBoston

## **Corporation for Supportive Housing**

61 Broadway, Ste. 2300  
New York, NY 10006  
(212) 986-2966

[csh.org](http://csh.org)

@CSHInfo

## **Homebase**

870 Market St #1228,  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 788-7961

[homebaseccc.org/](http://homebaseccc.org/)

@HomebaseCCC



**Thank You!**