Marketing a Supportive Housing Project

Marketing activities began when you sought information from your community in determining the extent of need for supportive housing. As you interviewed local service agencies, public resources and others in your effort to document the profile of your target population in your community, you were engaged in building community support and awareness of your project. As you begin to conduct your marketing efforts in earnest, it may be helpful to seek out these same resources as you promote opportunities for occupancy in your community.

CSH’s publication *Between the Lines* (available at [www.csh.org/publications](http://www.csh.org/publications)) provides some helpful information regarding legal issues involved in marketing your project:

- You can advertise for a specific population as long as your admission criteria does not violate fair housing laws. However, there are a number of caveats that make complying with the law complicated. As a result, many providers chose to advertise their projects through describing their facility and the program rather than advertising for a specific tenant profile.

- When affirmatively advertising your project, be sure to note that you will not discriminate based on the protected class distinctions. You can still select tenants based on your program intent, just do not ask questions or select based on protected class distinctions. See also Link to Legal Considerations During Screening and Intake

Implementation of Your Marketing Plan

By the time you are ready to implement your marketing plan, you have spent at least a year identifying, cultivating and refining relationships within your community among service providers, public agencies, the faith community, and especially among the public who will hopefully come to identify your project as a community asset. Some supportive housing providers report they try to achieve and maintain a low profile within the community. With the NIMBY reaction to affordable housing in general, and special needs affordable housing in particular, it is no wonder housing providers are busy “ducking their heads” under the turmoil they perceive. The purpose of the marketing plan is two-fold: to build community support and identify members of your targeted group for tenancy. The following may be helpful:

- Create a community advisory committee made up of influential community leaders who are willing to lead the charge for your supportive housing project.
  - Make sure they have all the information they need to support their defense.
  - Make sure the committee is operating with a stated marketing plan, and not off doing its own thing that could complicate your efforts.

Note: This document is included within the Housing Operations section of CSH’s Toolkit for Developing and Operating Supportive Housing, which is available at [www.csh.org/toolkit2](http://www.csh.org/toolkit2). This document has been adapted from CSH’s Family Matters: A Guide to Developing Family Supportive Housing, which is available at [www.csh.org/publications](http://www.csh.org/publications).
• Appoint a staff person to work with the committee leadership so that communication between staff and volunteers is open and effective.

• Create benchmark goals with respect to the number of applicants for interviews and timelines for tenant selection.

• Be sure your project is not over-marketed, resulting in significant numbers of people frustrated by their inability to access one of your units.

• Evaluate your efforts continuously. Change what isn’t working. Adapt to the needs of your community resources as they work to assist you in identifying potential applicants.

• Be sure to spread your relationships around. It may be important for your project to appear responsive to a wide service audience, rather than a select few sources who can refer applicants. (This may be different if you are working through a single referral source, such as a local shelter board or the local county shelter.)

Note: The attached Sample Marketing Plan has been provided by Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation of San Francisco, CA. All supportive housing providers should check all regulations of their funders and their governing bodies before implementing a marketing plan for their project.
SAMPLE MARKETING PLAN

The attached Sample Marketing Plan has been provided by Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation of San Francisco, CA. All supportive housing providers should check all regulations of their funders and their governing bodies before implementing a marketing plan for their project.

This Resident Selection Criteria & Marketing Plan addresses issues for a project whose funding includes Low Income Housing Tax Credits and Project-Based Section 8 and Shelter Plus Care subsidies, funding sources that will not be applicable for all supportive housing projects. This Plan includes descriptions of approaches to handling the following supportive housing management issues:

A. Affirmative Marketing and Community Outreach
B. Income and Other Eligibility Requirements
C. Application Procedure
D. Utilizing the Waiting List
E. Interview and Final Selection Process
F. Rejection and Appeal Process
G. Privacy Policy

Thank you to Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC) for use of this template.
RESIDENT SELECTION CRITERIA & MARKETING PLAN

Please read this document carefully. These are the standards by which your application for housing will be reviewed.

The purpose of the Resident Selection Criteria & Marketing Plan is to establish fair and equitable guidelines for selecting applicants to occupy housing units at (Project), located at (Project Address), in accordance with the requirements of (Funder Regulatory Agreements applicable to the project).

(Project Name) is owned by (ownership entity) and managed by (Management Entity).

Questions or requests for assistance regarding any aspect of the application process may be directed to (contact name) at (phone number).

A. AFFIRMATIVE MARKETING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

(Housing sponsor) promotes equal opportunities for safe and affordable housing to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, age, disability, HIV/AIDS status or place of residence.

Advertisement

Advertising/Announcement content will indicate where and when people can pick up applications for the waiting list and will provide as much information as feasible regarding the documents necessary to submit an application.

Notices will be sent to non-profit organizations and other agencies serving low-income individuals, disabled adults, and others. Announcements will be posted at (management entity’s offices), the lease-up office at (if different from management entity’s offices), at (the project), and at other buildings managed by (the management entity). For the initial rent up, ads will also appear in (local newspapers). Because of cost factors and because the homeless population is not effectively reached through commercial media, ads will not appear in local newspapers after initial marketing efforts.

Marketing Records

(Management Entity)’s Compliance Manager shall keep records of its activities in implementing the affirmative marketing plan, including records of advertisement and other community outreach efforts. Racial and ethnic characteristics of tenants will be maintained at the lease-up office and will be updated annually for the (funder/s).

Reasonable Accommodations

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145 Taylor Street, San Francisco, CA 94102 * (415) 358-3931 * FAX (415) 409-8636
(Management Entity) will apply the same screening criteria to all applicants. However, (Management Entity) is obligated to offer qualified applicants with disabilities additional consideration in the application of rules and practices, or services and structural alterations, if it will enable an otherwise eligible applicant or tenant with a disability an equal opportunity to access and enjoy the housing program. (Management Entity) is not, however, required to make a reasonable accommodation or physical modification if the accommodation or modification will cause a financial burden to the building or if it requires (Management Entity) to alter or change a basic component of the housing program.

After receiving third-party verification from a healthcare professional identified by the applicant that the applicant is disabled and requires the type of accommodation requested, (Management Entity) will make all efforts to supply the accommodation. If (Management Entity) finds that the accommodation requested is not reasonable, (Management Entity) will make all efforts to find an accommodation that is both effective and reasonable.

Reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities will be provided at all stages of the application, interview, selection and residency process. Reasonable accommodation includes adjustments to rules, policies, practices and procedures.

Questions or requests for assistance regarding any aspect of the application process may be directed to (contact) or other members of the lease-up staff at (phone).

Accessible Units

(The project) has (#) accessible units. In the event that an accessible unit designed to meet the special needs of persons with mobility impairments becomes available, preference will be given to a current tenant in the building who requires and has requested an accessible unit. (The project) also has accessible units designed for persons with hearing and visual impairments. Tenants or applicants may also request a modification to any unit in the building to accommodate special needs as a result of a disability.

In the event that no tenant is available for transfer, (Management Entity) will market to individuals with mobility impairment before filling an accessible unit with an individual who does not need its features. If all efforts do not result in finding such an applicant, the unit will be offered to the next eligible applicant on the waiting list. Should the unit be offered to an applicant or tenant who does not need its modifications, s/he will be required to initial the lease paragraph or addendum whereby they agree to transfer to a comparable non-accessible unit within the building should a tenant or applicant require an accessible unit. Failure to transfer as agreed shall be deemed non-compliance with the Lease and be cause for termination of the Lease.

Section 8 Units

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Revised 2/26/03
(Management Entity) Lease-Up Waiting List

(Management Entity) will establish and maintain a lease-up waiting list for (the project) through a lottery. Applicants must meet all program requirements before inclusion on the waiting list. (Management Entity) will utilize this waiting list for filling vacant units.

The waiting list will not be considered open to further applicants unless the property can be reasonably expected to move in said prospective applicants. Once the lease-up waiting list has been depleted, applications will be taken on first-come, first-served basis.

When applications are being taken at the property during normal operations, (Management Entity) will post announcements at the Main Office, the lease-up office, and at (The project). (Management Entity) will also send announcements to community agencies that serve the population in need of housing at (The project).

B. INCOME AND OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
In order to be eligible for a unit at (The project), the applicant's gross annual income cannot exceed the maximum Area Median Income (AMI) limits (See chart below):

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Revised 2/26/03
TCAC\(^1\) AND MOH\(^2\) Approved Maximum  
Area Median Income (AMI) Limits For  
San francisco  

Income limits by household size and program  

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\(^1\)Tax Credit Allocation Committee  
\(^2\)Mayor's Office on Housing  
Effective 2/10/2005

Fig. 1

The monthly rent for Shelter Plus Care units and units with project-based Section 8 assistance will be 30\% of adjusted monthly income. For the remaining units, the monthly rent for will be a flat
rate. The minimum income policy of (Management Entity) is that no household shall be accepted if its rent burden exceeds 50% of the household's gross monthly income.

C. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

During the period in which (The project)'s waiting list is open, applications will be available for applicants to pick up, fill out, and drop off at (location).

Applications will be accepted on (days) from (opening date) to (closing date), or until (#) eligible applications are received, between the hours of (opening time) and (closing time). Eligible applicants will be included in the lottery. A maximum of (#) eligible applications will be accepted. Mailed applications will be accepted until (opening date) or until the maximum number of applications are received. Applications will not be distributed or accepted at the (Management Entity) Main Office.

All applications must be complete (i.e., include name, income, assets, and a signature) and legible. Applications not filled out completely and/or legibly will not be considered for the waiting list until all information can be confirmed. Reasonable accommodation, such as alternative means of receiving or submitting applications, will be made for persons with disabilities.

During the dates/times that the lease-up site is open, (Management Entity) will staff the site to accept completed applications. Applicants will receive a lottery ticket and will be informed of the date and time of the lottery. The ticket number will be placed on the application. The “twin” ticket will be used by (Management Entity) for the lottery drawing.

Applications will be placed on the waiting list in the order that they are drawn in the lottery. The results of the lottery drawing will be posted at (location). Each eligible applicant will be selected for further processing in waitlist order.

Applicants will be considered conditionally eligible for housing based solely on statements given on the application form. Additional third party verifications will be required at the time of the interview. An applicant's position on the waiting list does not assure the applicant housing at (The project).

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Applicants must report all application information changes (i.e. family composition, income, assets, social security numbers, etc.), as this may have an impact on their eligibility.

Applicants will be contacted periodically in order to update the building’s waiting list. (Management Entity) will mail a notice to each person on the waiting list at the time of the update. Failure to respond to these updates will cause the applicant’s name to be removed from the waiting list.

It shall be the responsibility of each applicant on the waiting list to reconfirm their continuing interest in the building by visiting the (Management Entity) lease-up office, or by notifying the occupancy manager independently of any changes to their contact information.

D. UTILIZING THE (MANAGEMENT ENTITY) WAITING LIST
(The project) waiting list will follow the procedures outlined below when renting vacant units.

1. Interview times will be posted for each spot on the waiting list. Applicants will be able to determine when their interview is scheduled based on their placement on the waiting list.

2. A (Management Entity) representative will attempt to contact the applicants in writing and by phone to confirm the interview appointment.

3. At the interview, the applicant will be asked to fill out a tenant income certification questionnaire and begin the screening process.

4. If the applicant does not respond within ten (10) working days to the first offer to be interviewed, the applicant will be notified in writing of his/her removal from the waiting list. If the applicant replies to the notification but declines the interview and/or the unit, the applicant will be removed from the waiting list. Exceptions to this rule may be granted as a reasonable accommodation for applicants with a third-party verified disability.

E. INTERVIEW AND FINAL SELECTION PROCESS
No adult applicant listed on the application will be admitted without a personal interview with (Management Entity) staff. Applicants will be asked to sign forms that will be sent out to verify the information given on their application, i.e., income and asset information, prior to any offer of a unit.

Intentionally providing false information is considered fraud and can result in severe penalties, including, but not limited to, loss of your housing unit.

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All information provided on the application will be verified. False, inaccurate or incomplete information may disqualify you. (Management Entity) will complete third party verifications for certification and verify that the applicant meets the minimum and maximum income guidelines.

(Management Entity) will use the following screening criteria when determining each applicant’s eligibility for residency at (The project).

1. Applicant must be income eligible as per the regulations of (funders), and other Funder Regulatory Agreements in place for the project.

2. Applicant's monthly income is above the minimum income allowed by program regulations and (Management Entity) policy.

3. Applicant's household must meet the property's occupancy standards: for regular units, Studio 1-2, One-bedroom 1-3, Two-bedroom 2-5, Three-bedroom 3-7; for Section 8 units, Studio 1-2, One-bedroom 1-4, Two-bedroom 2-6, Three-bedroom 3-8.

4. An eviction report will be obtained for each adult applicant at a fee of $____. Disqualification will result from either _ eviction(s) within the preceding (_) year(s) or _ evictions within the preceding (_) years.

5. Applicants cannot have a conviction in the last (_) years for a drug-related crime, in the last (_) for a violent crime, or be subject to a state sex offender lifetime registration requirement.

6. Applicant must have legal, current state or federal government-issued photo identification (Driver's License, California State ID, passport, etc.) Examples of unacceptable ID include: Muni cards, check cashing IDs, and other municipally or privately issued IDs.

7. Use of the unit as the primary place of residence. The tenant must intend to use the unit as his or her principal place of residence. Staff will ask the applicant if they will maintain any other residence during the period of their lease.

8. Applicant possession of a social security number or a written affidavit of possession of a social security number must be produced indicating the applicant has a valid social security number or proof of having a social security number for all household members 6 years or older. Additionally, household members under 6 years of age may be required to provide proof of having a social security number.

9. All income and assets will be verified by (Management Entity) via third party confirmation, i.e. verification form completed by employer, verification form completed by a financial institution, etc. In addition to the third party verification, applicants will be asked to submit at least six months consecutive paychecks, six months consecutive bank statements, a letter from Social Security and/or Public Assistance, etc.
10. Current and previous landlords will be contacted for information concerning the applicant's history of complying with lease requirements, payment records, destruction of property or interference with the rights of others, physical hazards or unhealthy or unsanitary conditions, or illegal activities. In cases where applicants do not have any previous landlord, or if no previous landlord is available, staff will request personal references from someone not related to the applicant, such as a counselor or caseworker.

11. Applicant's ability to live independently with or without assistance and to maintain housing in accordance with local health standards.

12. (If applicable) Applicant must not be a full-time student unless also participating in a federal Job Training Partnership Act program or similar state or local program, as required by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Once certification is completed, the General Manager will schedule an appointment for the applicant to pay the move-in costs and sign a lease agreement. The term of the lease shall commence for a period of one (1) year (and thereafter, on a month to month basis), until either party terminates the lease.

(Management Entity) may hold a unit for an applicant for up to (_) days upon provision of the security deposit or “promise to provide” from an agency participating in a rental/move-in assistance program.

If the applicant does not wish to rent an available unit, the applicant will be disqualified and his/her name will be removed from (The project) waiting list. Additionally, if an applicant fails to move in on the agreed date, his/her application will be removed from the waiting list and the unit will be offered to the next qualified applicant on the waiting list.

F. REJECTION AND APPEAL PROCESS

An applicant may be denied at any time if they have not met one or more of the Resident Selection Criteria. If an applicant is denied, s/he will be notified by a letter which will state the reason for denial. The applicant has ten (10) working days to submit a written appeal to contest their removal from the waiting list.

In addition to the above screening mechanisms, applicants will be rejected for any of the following:

- The applicant does not attend the interview.
- The applicant exhibits blatant disrespect, disruptive or antisocial behavior toward (Management Entity) staff, other applicants or tenants.
- The applicant is witnessed by (Management Entity) staff to be involved in illegal activity.
- The applicant has a negative landlord recommendation. This may include failure to comply with the lease, poor payment history, poor housekeeping habits, crimes of violence to persons, destruction or theft of property, sales of narcotics, eviction for cause or other criminal acts which would adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare and quality of life of other tenants.
In consideration of situations of homelessness, lack of rental history is not in itself a reason for denial. If the applicant does not list previous landlords on their contact information on the application, then s/he will be contacted to provide these or to indicate that s/he does not have such a history. Once this information is provided by the applicant, (Management Entity) will continue to process the application.

- The applicant has a negative eviction history.
- The applicant has falsified any information on the application. This provision shall not be applied to minor mistakes that in fact produce no benefit to the applicant.
- The applicant’s income is above the maximum Area Median Income Limit.
- The applicant’s income is under the minimum allowed by program regulations and (Management Entity) policy.
- The applicant’s family composition does not meet the established occupancy standards.
- The applicant does not have a valid Social Security Number and or legal photo ID.
- The applicant does not meet other program regulated eligibility requirements or fails to provide any requested information.
- The applicant fails to update the application for the waiting list when requested.
- Other good cause.

If an applicant is rejected due to any of the above-listed reasons, the Occupancy Manager will send the applicant a denial letter, which specifies the reason for the denial.

The applicant has ten (10) days after the date of the denial letter to submit a written appeal to (Management Entity), either by contacting the Occupancy Manager, the Property Supervisor, Director of Property Management, or the Director of Tenant Services. An appeal must consist of documentation refuting the stated reason for rejecting the applicant.

If a denial letter is sent to an applicant, and no response or new evidence is received within ten (10) days, (Management Entity) will close the file permanently.

**Appeals**

Applicants have ten (10) working days to notify (Management Entity) in writing if they feel that their application was unfairly rejected. Management will consider any mitigating circumstances that the applicant feels would have an effect on their application and that would overcome or outweigh information already gathered in the resident screening process. Mitigating circumstances must be documented in the appeal, and must corroborate the reason(s) given by the applicant for the disqualifying circumstances.
(Management Entity) will notify the applicant of their final decision within ten (10) working days of receiving the applicant's written notice of appeal, unless further information or research is required to give full consideration to the appeal.

G. PRIVACY POLICY
It is the policy of (Management Entity) to guard the privacy of applicants as conferred by the Federal Privacy Act of 1974 and to ensure the protection of such applicants’ records maintained by (Management Entity).

Therefore, neither (Management Entity), nor its agents or employees shall disclose any personal information contained in its records to any person or agency unless the individual about whom information is requested shall give written consent to such disclosure.

This Privacy Policy in no way limits (Management Entity)’s ability to collect such information as it may need to determine eligibility, compute rent, or determine suitability for tenancy.

Consistent with the intent of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, any information obtained regarding a disability or disability status will be treated in a confidential manner.

H. GENERAL GUIDELINES
An applicant must complete and sign an application in order to be considered for admission for housing. An applicant will be processed and considered conditionally eligible for housing based solely on statements given on the application form.

The completion of an application and/or contact by (Management Entity) does not constitute the offering of a unit or acceptance of the applicant for housing. Formal determination of eligibility will be made when an appropriate unit is available.

As a condition of admission to any assisted unit, applicant shall execute any releases and consents authorizing any depository or private sources of income, or any federal, state, or local agency, to furnish or release to (Management Entity) such information as (Management Entity) and the applicable program regulations determine to be necessary.

Thank you to Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC) for use of this template.

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