



Orienting Tenants to their New Home

Many supportive housing tenants have been homeless, some for extended periods of time, residing in shelters or on the streets. It is important that the supportive housing owner assist new tenants in understanding the commitment they take on when signing a rental agreement.

Elements of the Orientation

The building manager should be the primary point of contact for the new tenant. The manager should explain to the new tenant what is expected of them, in relation to their compliance with the rental agreement and consistent with the supportive housing owner's goals and objectives. New Tenant Orientation in supportive housing should include:

- Careful review of the rental agreement, house rules, any lease addendum or informational notices (e.g., notice of right to reasonable accommodation). The applicant is not a tenant until s/he has paid the required rent and any security-deposit, and has signed all required paperwork. Only then can the property management representative release the unit key to the new tenant.
- A tour of the building, pointing out where various facilities are located, including, on-site support services staff and/or offices, laundry room, community rooms and other common areas.
- Prompt introduction of the new tenant to support services staff, so that the tenant is aware of the vital support services available, and so that the service team can encourage the new tenant to access support, services and resources.
- An explanation of the supportive housing owner's goals and objectives, with emphasis on opportunities for tenant involvement in decision-making through tenant-led groups and/or tenant leadership opportunities.

Supportive housing owners are generally committed to providing quality housing with voluntary support services. The better that tenants understand the housing owner's mission or business purpose, the better the opportunity for the property management and support services staff, and tenant-led groups, to gain the tenant's cooperation and involvement in the supportive housing community.

- The support services orientation should provide the incoming tenant(s) additional information about accessible and/or on-site support services and resources, and local resources (for example, shopping districts and recreational facilities).
- The orientation is also an opportunity for support services staff to help the tenant(s) prepare a self-sufficiency and/or case management plan. The self-sufficiency plan(s) should help the tenant(s) comply with the terms of the rental agreement, access the support services and resources the tenant household may need to manage a disability or life issue, and/or to gain or enhance independence and self-sufficiency.

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. This document has been adapted from CSH's *Supportive Housing Property Management Operations Manual*, which is available at www.csh.org/publications.