



Move-In: Keys to Success

Moving into a new home — the surrounding events and the physical move itself — is a critical time. Moving usually comes with stress, a lot of hard work and a range of responses to change. This document is intended to offer those serving supportive housing tenants and their families a sketch of key issues specific to tenant move-in. The document will briefly explore what can be done in advance to ease the moving process, what the move-in might include and tips on how to support tenants during the critical period immediately following their move-in. The property or housing manager, working in collaboration with the supportive services provider, should perform these activities. Please keep in mind that while there are issues unique to particular housing and program models, many of the issues surrounding a move-in are the same.

Prior to the Move

In advance of the move, you can help the move go as easily as possible for a new tenant. Start by making a list of tools and resources needed for yourself and the tenant. While some things may be readily available, some may need to be created or purchased

A range of services might be offered as part of the move-in process. Services that might be provided include:

- Provision of and/or access to relocation and/or move-in funds
- A moving van and movers
- Help in obtaining necessities such as major appliances, beds, linens, toiletries and food
- Assistance with turning on utilities, change of address notification and voter registration

Meeting with people who are approved but not yet moved into housing creates a great opportunity to support them in their needs/fears and to market case management and/or other support services. Understanding the tenants, their needs and backgrounds as early as possible will help in successfully serving them.

When conducting a pre-occupancy meeting with the new tenant prior to move-in, it may be helpful to clarify what they can expect of the service provider(s) and property/housing management, and what will be expected of them. While there are pre-occupancy tasks to be handled around the lease and reasonable accommodations, it may not be ideal to combine those with this more casual meeting. Some things that might be covered in the meeting include:

Practical Resources

People will likely want to know what they'll need when they move in and where they can get it. You may want to provide tenants with an itemized list detailing what the service provider will supply (e.g., a bed, two cooking pots) and what they may need to get on their own (e.g., Internet access, grocery needs). Be as detailed as possible. The units may not be furnished and the tenant and service provider will need to secure needed items. Living in and having a sense of ownership may be new to the tenant or family.



Unit Inspection

It may be useful to clarify the process of unit readiness and inspection. Explain what's happening to the unit prior to move-in (e.g., new paint), and who will confirm that the unit is ready for occupancy. This will usually be a combination of the landlord and the subsidy provider such as the local housing authority. However, the subsidy provider must give final approval that the unit meets standards of decency, safety and cleanliness in order for them to pay the subsidy. The subsidy provider will inspect the unit prior to move-in. The service provider should communicate with the subsidy provider and ensure they have approved the unit. The service provider should request a confirmation document of the formal inspection from the subsidy provider, detailing the unit condition and contents. Prepare the tenant for that process now. Provide the tenant with copies of any available documentation.

Review of Terms of Lease

The service provider should review the terms of the lease with the tenant and landlord to ensure the following among all parties:

- An understanding that the tenant is responsible, upon move-in, to abide by the terms of the lease. This typically includes timely payment of rent, taking care of their unit and its surroundings, and not disturbing neighbors.
- An understanding that the tenant may be held accountable for the actions of everyone in the household and any guests.
- An understanding of what behavior can threaten one's housing, such as violence or threats, theft or destruction of property, causing serious health, fire or safety hazards, and engaging in illegal activities within unit.

Belongings

People who lose their home often put their belongings in storage. Determine whether assistance is needed in retrieving the items for move-in.

Services Orientation

As part of the move-in process, clarify with tenants some of the expectations that relate to services available to them. It may be useful to clarify the following among service staff and tenants:

- An understanding of what is reasonable to expect from their services provider (e.g., being treated respectfully and fairly, the timeframe that services staff will take to return a tenant phone call, and grievance procedures).
- An understanding of how often the service provider can be expected to make contact and in what forms (e.g., by telephone, in person, at community meetings).
- An understanding of what information is confidential. Establishing and maintaining this understanding is particularly important with private landlords of scattered-site units, since they are not familiar with health and privacy laws.
- An understanding that the service agencies and landlord are not responsible for the loss of personal property, and are not liable for personal injury that takes place in their new homes.
- Finally, schedule the date of move-in and when the tenant can meet with the service provider and landlord for the move-in inspection.

Walk-Through

On the day of move-in, the property manager or owner typically conducts a walk-through of the unit with the new tenant. The service provider should accompany the tenant on this walk-through. An inspection checklist that includes an itemized list of unit contents, any needed repairs and the general condition of the unit will aid this process. Both the tenant and the property manager or owner should sign an inspection confirmation. A copy of the signed lease and apartment keys can be provided at this time as well.

Welcome

Stability and information are welcome when someone moves. Ideally, a tenant's primary housing contacts (service provider and property/housing manager) will stop by during the move to say hello and ensure things are going well.

Move-In Packet

It can be helpful to provide the tenant a welcome packet that includes:

- A description of available services in the area with relevant contact information
- A calendar of any relevant community/services activities, including those geared to children and young people, if applicable
- A flyer about any service provider sponsored events
- A landlord and services policies and procedures; and independent living guidelines (detailed below)

Written Guide

Living in one's own, permanent unit also comes with a range of issues that may be new to a tenant. Some organizations provide tenants with information on independent living. If appropriate, a simple written guide is often helpful. The guide might focus on health and safety considerations, including:

- How to operate smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
- How to ask for help
- How and when to call 911
- How to evacuate the unit/building
- How to operate locks and lights
- How to get and use cleaning supplies, and how often to clean
- What to do if the toilet clogs
- Who takes the garbage out and to where
- Who repairs what; how to handle and prepare food in a safe manner
- How and when to teach one's children these sorts of things (if applicable)
- If pets are allowed
- Any other notable community, safety and health issues

Transportation

If a tenant has any belongings at another location (e.g., former unit, family, storage), they may need assistance transporting items to their new home — this may come in the form of a moving van, someone who can help carry things, or money to retrieve any possessions that may have been held due to unpaid storage fees.

It is usually helpful to tenants if the service provider reviews highlights of the moving and storage information in person. Keep in mind that too much information can be overwhelming — reviewing it in small pieces over the first few weeks, or at a check-in later in the month, may be most useful.