

Chapter 4: Outreach, Engagement and Assessment

While some tenants may be eager to make the transition, the idea of leaving supportive housing to a new community with less supports may elicit strong fears and anxieties. For many tenants, their time in supportive housing may be the first time in a long time, if not ever in their lives, that they have experienced an extended period of housing stability. In order to motivate tenants and ensure successful transitions, programs need to employ robust outreach strategies to engage and embolden tenants making the transition. Many programs have used standardized assessment tools and processes to ensure tenants receive the support they need to be ready ó emotionally, mentally, financially and functionally - to move on. In creating an assessment process, it is important to keep in mind that the primary focus should be on tenant choice so as not to impede growth or the ability to accurately assess readiness. Those not meeting a particular threshold at the time of assessment should still be assisted in reaching a point of greater stability.

Outreach

Because supportive housing is not time-limited, one key to Moving On is the creation of motivation. Given some tenants' anxieties around leaving supportive housing, programs need to invest resources into educating and building awareness around Moving On and using outreach strategies to engage tenants in the opportunity. While programs should carefully assess tenants for 'readiness,' all tenants should be notified and given the opportunity to apply. Programs can use a variety of strategies to publicize and build interest in Moving On opportunities, including:

- Posting fliers in highly visible locations
- Hosting a community meeting on Moving On
- Conducting one-on-one outreach to tenants
- Using Moving On peers - those that have successfully moved on from supportive housing ó to talk about their experiences and engage tenants



Program staff should be trained in how to discuss the opportunity with tenants, in particular having strengths-based conversations, using motivational interviewing, helping people see their potential and describing program benefits/incentives. While some tenants may clearly show signs of readiness for moving on (low service use, steady income, good living skills), because of past trauma, isolation, hopelessness and disenfranchisement experienced by many prior to living in supportive housing, it may take several attempts and encouraging interactions before they can build the courage to explore this option.

Screening and Assessment

A primary goal of Moving On is to create a supported pathway to greater growth, economic mobility, community integration and *long-term* success for individuals in supportive housing who are stable and ready to take that next step. In order to ensure successful transitions, and avoid returns to homelessness or housing instability, it is critical that programs carefully assess tenants' readiness for transition and work with tenants to develop an appropriate timeline for moving on. Programs should develop a structured review process for identifying candidates for Moving On and providing them with robust transition supports.

Pre-Screening

Some programs may consider developing initial screening criteria to determine eligibility for transition. For example, depending on the kind of housing resources available (public housing units, Housing Choice Vouchers, private affordable housing units, etc.) - programs may need to screen individuals for felony convictions, sex offender status, credit scores, eviction history or other criteria that may bar them from certain housing resources. Some programs set specific screening criteria around housing stability (at least two years in housing), financial stability (no rent arrears in past 24 months) or rental history (in good standing with landlord, no property damage reported or eviction notices in past 24 months). However, in order to open the opportunity to as many people as possible and maximize choice, programs should limit pre-screening criteria and allow flexibility around these criteria on a case by case basis.

Assessment

A number of programs have utilized existing assessment tools (like the [VI-SPDAT](#), the [Arizona Self Sufficiency Matrix](#), the [Connecticut Supportive Housing Assessment](#) or other [acuity indices](#)) - to assess readiness and identify candidates for Moving On. Other programs, like those in [New York](#), [Chicago](#), [Detroit](#), [Ohio](#), and [San Diego](#) have used specific Moving On assessment tools that focus on key risk and protective factors for independent living. In addition to evaluating readiness, assessment tools should allow case managers to identify strengths and key areas of support that can then be used to inform pre-transition service planning. Once assessment forms are completed, they should be reviewed through a structured review process. Some programs that involve several coordinating organizations, like the programs in Detroit, MI and Atlanta, GA, involve a multi-agency review committee

that reviews all applications and tenant assessments and collaboratively approves candidates for transition, or a Moving On voucher.

While assessment tools vary, some key areas for assessing tenant capacity include:

- Emotional independence (interest and confidence in moving on)
- Financial Capacity (employment, income, savings, budgeting skills)
- Housing history (housing tenure, rent arrears, past evictions, neighbor/landlord relationships)
- Intensity of service use (need for on-site services)
- Health/behavioral health (substance use, mental health, medication management, treatment engagement, mobility)
- Connection to mainstream resources (rental supports if needed)
- Connection to family or other natural supports
- Community living skills (self-managing behavior; limit setting relating to drugs, etc.)
- Activities of daily living skills (ability to get meals; keep apartment clean; follow lease)
- Housing goals (location, size, affordability, live with family/friends)

While standardized assessments are critical tools to help programs evaluate various dimensions of tenant needs, strengths and functioning, they should not be the only means of assessing tenant readiness for moving on. These quantitative tools should be complimented by more in-depth, qualitative methods (e.g., interviews) for understanding tenants' motivation, confidence and emotional readiness. Also, keeping in mind that this process should promote tenant choice, for those that do not meet identified readiness criteria, these assessments should serve as an opportunity for case managers to continue working with each tenant to develop an individualized action plan to achieve their growth goals.

[Chapter 5: Preparing Tenants to Move On](#)

