

### Chapter 7: Identifying Housing

In addition to affordability, the availability of attractive, safe, and convenient housing options are critical for drawing individuals to move on from supportive housing. Unfortunately, lack of affordable housing is a consistent challenge cited by many Moving On programs, especially in communities with tight rental markets. In the first New York Moving On initiative, 443 individuals who received vouchers were unable to move on in large part because of a shortage of affordable housing and landlord reluctance to rent<sup>1</sup>.

Motivating tenants to move out of single-site projects may be particularly challenging. Not only are tenants wary of giving up the convenience of on-site case management services, but these properties are usually well-maintained, include several building amenities (e.g. gyms, classes, computer access, 24/7 front door staff, on-site health clinics, laundry facilities, etc.) and are centrally located near many local amenities (public transportation, grocery stores, food pantries, health and social services).

Providing housing choice is critical to the success of Moving On programs so organizations need to be prepared to invest significant effort and resources to expand the housing options available to tenants.

#### Identifying and Supporting Needs and Preferences

Most tenants will need support in locating, securing and moving in to a new unit. This may include assistance with the housing search process, transportation/accompaniment to view housing units, preparing for/attending housing interviews, completing housing-related paperwork (income verification, housing applications, lease signings) and the physical moving process. During the initial assessment process, staff should work with tenants to identify his/her needs and preferences for housing and what kind of supports will be needed throughout the search process. Some important areas to assess in terms of housing needs and preferences include:

- Rent amount
- Housing size (studio, 1 bedroom, 2 bedrooms, Single Room Occupancy)
- Housing type (individual unit, group housing, sober housing, congregate housing, senior housing)
- Location and proximity to services/social networks (grocery stores, mental health services, schools/child care, public transportation, parks, laundromat, jobs, family/friends)
- Whether they want to live with roommates or reunite or form a family

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<sup>1</sup> See this resource for more information on the New York Moving on Program and outcomes  
<http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Moving-On-from-PSH.pdf>

- Building amenities (washer/dryer, 24 hour front desk, community space, group activities, gyms)
- Any special housing accessibility needs (ramps, shower bars, first floor units, etc.)
- Crime rate in the community and sense of safety

While it will be very difficult to satisfy all needs and preferences, programs should make every effort to maximize choice in housing options and help tenants find housing that they will be happy with over the long term. Given that one of the strongest predictors of post-transition housing stability is a tenant's satisfaction with their new home and neighborhood, it is important that tenants do not feel pressured or forced to accept housing that they do not like or don't meet critical needs. This is a major life transition for tenants so it is important that they feel ownership over the process and its outcome while at the same time being realistic as to what is available to them.

### **Strategies to Expand Housing Options**

#### Landlord Outreach and Incentives

Property damage, non-payment of rent, criminal activity, frequent police calls and evictions are all costly for landlords. As a result, landlords typically screen applicants carefully in order to minimize their risk. In communities with low vacancy rates, landlords can afford to be as selective as they wish. Many individuals in supportive housing face multiple barriers to housing - very low incomes, felony convictions, past evictions and poor credit - which is why Moving On programs need to incorporate a robust housing advocacy plan as part of their program to successfully house tenants. Landlord outreach and incentives can be helpful whether the landlord in question is a PHA, [mission driven owner](#), or market rate owner, and whether the subsidy is tenant or project-based.

Investing in housing locator services or focusing on developing relationships with mission-driven landlords can be essential in tight markets or if the provider does not have experience finding private rental apartments.

Programs can employ a number of strategies for engaging and broadening their network of friendly, socially-conscious landlords that are willing to rent their units to high-risk tenants. For example, the Moving On program in Los Angeles hosted a Landlord Roundtable, where they invited and aggressively recruited several local landlords to attend a lunch to discuss the initiative, highlighted the many benefits of renting to their tenants (e.g., case management services, crisis intervention, pre-screening of tenants, tenant education/preparation for independent living, reducing search costs, etc.) and asked for their partnership. HUD has produced [resources and materials](#) that can help programs cultivate relationships with landlords.

In addition to landlord outreach, programs in particularly tight housing markets may want to consider raising funds to offer modest financial incentives to persuade landlords. While we are not aware of any Moving On initiatives that have incorporated these incentives, other housing programs serving homeless individuals have tried this with some success. A landlord incentive program in [Colorado](#) offered participating landlords reimbursement for short-term vacancies and minor unit repairs when they rent their home or apartment to a low-income renter with a housing voucher. Similarly in New York, a [veteran](#) housing program offered landlords a bonus of \$1000 for each one year lease signed with a homeless veteran as well as a "Rental Guarantee Fund" of up to \$3,000 per year to cover potential damage to the apartment or rental arrears, if needed.

### **Alternative Paths to Moving On**

#### Transition in Place

Transitioning out of supportive housing does not always mean that individuals need to move to a new unit. Some programs that operate scattered-site supportive housing use a "Transition-in-Place" approach to Moving On where households remain in their units while the services "move on." Typically in these situations, a tenant's current housing subsidy, which may be funded through the CoC program, Shelter Plus Care (S+C) program, or the Supportive Housing Program (SHP), is replaced with a Housing Choice Voucher or some other type of rental assistance. This approach opens up supportive housing service capacity so that programs can serve new chronically homeless tenants that move in to other scattered-site units. Some examples of communities using this approach include the [Detroit Moving Up initiative](#) and [First Place for Youth](#) in San Francisco.

While tenant contribution is calculated much the same under the CoC Program, S+C Program, SHP, and the HCV program, there are some circumstances that may result in a person formerly served under one of these programs being required to pay more under the voucher program depending on PHA payment standards around fair market rent. PHAs and CoCs should consider this issue carefully when determining which individuals and families are best suited to remain stably housed after moving on. PHAs also have the discretion to set minimum rents, which may cause supportive housing residents with no income to pay a higher rent in the public housing or voucher programs. However, residents must be exempted from minimum rents under circumstances of hardship, defined at 24 C.F.R. § 5.630(b).

#### Family Reunification

In addition to moving into one's own unit, another common and important pathway to moving on from supportive housing is through family reunification. Many individuals that move into supportive

housing have been estranged from family members (children, parents, siblings, spouses/partners) due to past abuse, lifestyle choices, substance use issues or other life circumstances and seek to reunite. In some cases, parents in families involved with the child welfare system have been involuntarily separated from their children and look to supportive housing as a platform to work toward reunification. In such cases, programs work together with the tenant and his/her family members to develop a housing and transition plan that involves moving (back) into the residence of the family members.

### [Chapter 8: Aftercare Services](#)

