



Scattered-Site Supportive Housing: Connecting Tenants with Rental Units

In a supportive housing model based on scattered-site leasing, apartments are identified and secured in buildings across a neighborhood or community. Landlords of these existing buildings lease units directly to tenants. In order for this model to succeed, there must be:

1. A primary service provider who ensures that tenants can access a comprehensive array of flexible and voluntary supportive services that support their ability to obtain and sustain stable housing.
2. Housing management staff who assist tenants in locating housing, understand their rights and responsibilities as tenants and serve as an ongoing liaison to the landlord.
3. Landlords who are willing to receive the rent subsidy associated with the supportive housing and accept tenants who may have poor credit, criminal backgrounds or previous evictions.

Step 1: Work with the Tenant to Develop a Housing Search Plan

In order to frame the housing search process, it is important to have a clear idea of the tenant's needs, desires and background with regard to housing.

Understanding Tenant Housing Needs and Desires

Before beginning the housing search process, it is important for housing management staff to have a detailed conversation with tenants about their housing needs and preferences. In doing so, it may be helpful to consider the following questions:

- What size unit is needed to accommodate the tenant's household size and composition?
- What location does the tenant need/want? Consider proximity to work, school, supportive services, and social supports like family and friends.
- Does the tenant's household have accessibility needs? Does the unit need to be on the ground floor? In an elevator building? Be wheelchair-accessible?
- Are there amenities such as laundry or workout facilities that are particularly important to tenants?

Manage Expectations and Be Clear about Funding Parameters

While encouraging tenants to think about the unit that best meets their needs, it is also important to be realistic about what the local market affords tenants, based on their desired rent and what is allowable based on their rent subsidy. It may be necessary for tenants to compromise with a smaller unit or one without all their desired features, while continuing to work toward a longer-term goal.

Tenant Background and Housing History

Housing management staff should have a clear understanding of issues in tenants' backgrounds that may concern potential landlords. Staff should assist tenants in accessing a free credit check or criminal background report.



Step 2: Searching for a Housing Unit

Many different avenues can be used to identify potential units of housing. Some are outlined in the list below. Housing management staff should encourage tenants to take an active role in the housing search process.

- Walking or driving through a targeted neighborhood to identify units for rent.
- Internet searches on websites such as www.craigslist.org.
- Existing landlords with a relationship with the service provider or housing management organization.
- Property management firms that may manage a number of different properties and have listings.
- State- or citywide housing location websites such as those provided by www.socialserve.com.
- Master-leased units that the service provider or housing management organization has contracted for directly with a landlord. These units are then sublet to tenants.

Step 3: Securing a Housing Unit

Advocating with Landlords to Participate in the Supportive Housing

Once a potential housing unit has been identified, it may be necessary to advocate for the landlord to accept the rent subsidy associated with the supportive housing. Since most scattered-site supportive housing includes a rental subsidy, you can offer the landlord the following benefits:

- A guarantee that the subsidy portion of the rent will be paid on time.
- A contact housing management staff person to call with questions or concerns (if the tenant has given permission).
- Tenants who are educated on being good neighbors and who are, in most cases, receiving support for any issues that might threaten their housing stability.
- The ability to quickly fill future units via free marketing through supportive housing partners.
- Depending on the subsidy source, the ability to receive payment for any damages in excess of the security deposit.

Applying for a Unit and Advocating for/with the Tenant

Once a tenant has identified a potential unit, housing management staff will work with them to complete the application and compile any supporting documents. Depending on this process and the landlord, it also may be helpful to provide character references from third parties such as religious leaders or employers or to demonstrate how the tenant has overcome personal challenges through:

- Financial education classes
- Substance-use treatment
- Mental health counseling
- Enrollment in school or obtaining employment

Housing management staff also may want to request that landlords consider waiving the credit or criminal background check, since the tenant is receiving rental assistance and support services.

Remember that clients must give their permission and sign a release of information in order for any service provider or housing management staff to share information with a potential landlord.

Step 4: Preparing for Move-In

Housing Inspection

Once a tenant has been approved for a housing unit, that unit needs to be inspected to ensure that meets Housing Quality Standards, which the Housing Choice Voucher program uses, or another similar inspection standard should be applied. In most cases, any identified issues should be addressed prior to move-in.

Reviewing and Signing the Lease

Housing management staff should carefully review the lease with the tenant prior to it being signed, making sure to note:

- The rental payment amount and due date.
- Utilities included and not included in the rent.
- Policies for requesting any needed repairs to the unit.
- The right to quiet enjoyment of the tenant and their neighbors.

Step 5: Maintaining Housing Stability and Landlord Relationships

To promote the ongoing housing stability of the tenant and maintain a positive relationship with the landlord, housing management and service provider staff should reach out to tenants regularly to ensure that they are receiving the necessary support. These staff also should communicate regularly to identify any potential issues at the earliest possible stage. The landlord should have up-to-date contact information, and any concerns raised should be addressed promptly. Service provider staff may advocate to landlords on behalf of tenants, but it is important for housing management staff to remain objective in any disputes and understand both the tenant and landlord points of view. This strategy helps to preserve the relationship with the landlord for existing tenants and future tenants.