

BEST PRACTICES MANUAL

INTEGRATING PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Prepared and published by
Coalition Homes (affiliated with Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless)
and the Corporation for Supportive Housing



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ABOUT COALITION HOMES, INC.

Coalition Homes was incorporated in 2005 as the development and property management affiliate of Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH). Coalition Homes currently owns and manages 50 apartments and townhouses in all areas of the county, and recently acquired a five-floor office building in downtown Bethesda, Md. to redevelop into 32 units of single room occupancy (SRO).

MCCH has a lengthy track record of successful projects to serve the county's homeless population in coordination with various branches of county government, and increasingly will work through Coalition Homes because of the advantages of owning and having clear asset management authority over its own housing stock.

Coalition Homes has effectively leveraged the county's longstanding inclusionary zoning law to place special needs residents in luxurious condominium and townhouse communities which are primarily owner-occupied. It operates two HUD Section 811 projects devoted to housing for adults with chronic mental illness, and a project housing psychiatric rehab patients in conjunction with the mental health system. Rental assistance and case management for Coalition Homes' tenants are provided under long-term contracts from several distinct local, state, federal and private foundation funding sources.

ABOUT THE CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) is a national non-profit organization and Community Development Financial Institution that helps communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness. Founded in 1991, CSH advances its mission by providing advocacy, expertise, leadership, and financial resources to make it easier to create and operate supportive housing. CSH seeks to help create an expanded supply of supportive housing for people, including single adults, families with children, and young adults, who have extremely low-incomes, who have disabling conditions, and/or face other significant challenges that place them at on-going risk of homelessness. For information regarding CSH's current office locations, please see www.csh.org/contactus. For more information about CSH's consulting and training services, please see www.csh.org/CSHConsultingGroup or contact the CSH Consulting Group at consulting@csh.org.

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BEST PRACTICES MANUAL: INTEGRATING PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

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PURPOSE

In November 2008, Coalition Homes and Corporation for Supportive Housing brought together 70 leaders involved in supportive housing for a Forum discussing strengthening the integration of property management and supportive services.

Those attending included program directors, funders, asset managers, property managers, and housing specialists. Many worked with the homeless in Montgomery County, Maryland, but several nearby jurisdictions were also represented. Participants left the Forum with a keener sense that the two disciplines had much to learn about each other, and that the topic of a blended approach was worthy of further exploration.

This Best Practices Manual is inspired and informed by presentations and discussions at that conference, and also by a survey of several dozen leaders performed before the forum.

CSH publishes on-line toolkits, informational materials, manuals, and sample documents to help practitioners in supportive housing, and regularly updates those tools in part by working with local governments and organizations around the country. This Best Practices Manual represents an important addition to the resources that CSH has helped to make available to the supportive housing industry.

While Coalition Homes is associated with a longstanding service provider, the Forum was its first public event and symbolizes its growth into the role of a mission-driven, small development and property management company.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Coalition Homes wishes to thank the Freddie Mac Foundation for their generosity in providing financial support for both the implementation of the November 2008 Forum and for the preparation and publication of this Manual. Coalition Homes and CSH also appreciate the contributions of all of those presenters and facilitators at the November 2008 forum, including:

- Suzanne Wagner, Director of Housing Resource Center, Center for Urban Community Services, New York
- Donna Gallup, Executive Director of Start Easy Eagle Development, East Orange, New Jersey
- Janice Kimball, Director of Housing and Services for the Housing Authority of Salt Lake County, Utah
- Sharan London, Executive Director of Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless, Maryland
- Richard Leeds, President & CEO of AHC Management LLC in Arlington, Virginia

MATERIALS FROM THE NOVEMBER 2008 FORUM

Much of the information discussed at the November 2008 Forum has been incorporated into different Chapters of this Best Practices Manual. Materials and presentations used at the Forum can be accessed via the following links:

- [*Integrating Property Management and Social Services in Supportive Housing*](#) (Presentation by Suzanne Wagner of the Center for Urban Community Services)
- [*Tenant Selection Flow Chart*](#) (Center for Urban Community Services Document)
- [*Rent Arrears / Collection Flow Chart*](#) (Center for Urban Community Services Document)
- [*Tenant Screening and Selection Practices*](#) (Presentation by Matthew Doherty of the Corporation for Supportive Housing)
- [*Leases, Lease Enforcement, and Eviction Prevention Practices*](#) (Presentation by Matthew Doherty of the Corporation for Supportive Housing)
- [*Coordination of Property Management and Supportive Services in Supportive Housing Self Assessment Tool*](#) (Corporation for Supportive Housing Publication)
- [*Other Handouts from the Corporation for Supportive Housing*](#)

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND KEY PRINCIPLES

This Chapter provides a brief overview of the key principles and practices for implementing effective property management activities in supportive housing settings, highlighting the importance of effective coordination between property management and supportive services staff.

INTRODUCTION

Permanent supportive housing is a successful, cost-effective combination of affordable housing linked to supportive services that helps people live more stable, productive lives. A key practice in supportive housing is that supportive services staff — charged with advocating for tenants and linking them to essential services — work in partnership with property management staff to meet the needs of tenants. It is important to note that such coordination of activities with property management staff may not be appropriate for some tenant-based supportive housing initiatives in which the landlord/property manager may not be aware of the tenant’s service needs or participation in services programming. (Please see *Chapter 4: Defining and Coordinating Roles* for a further exploration of the issues related to different housing settings and models.)

While both roles are essential to the success of the supportive housing, the integration and coordination of supportive services activities with property management activities can be challenging. Many organizations that develop a new supportive housing project are inexperienced in the performance of property management responsibilities. Social services agencies often make the decision to develop supportive housing based upon their thorough understanding of the needs of their target populations. While such agencies will bring strengths to their provision of supportive services to their residents, assuming responsibility for property management often represents a very difficult cultural shift.

At the same time, delivering property management in a supportive housing setting can present new challenges even for experienced housing development organizations. Property management in for-profit housing is a “bottom-line” proposition - management provides basic services to tenants as specified in the lease while keeping expenses contained so that the property still generates a profit for the owner. Property management within the context of supportive housing is more complex and can be thought of as being responsible for a “double bottom-line” - maintaining safe, clean, cost-effective properties while also partnering with supportive services staff to help ensure that at-risk and formerly homeless tenants are able to remain living in the housing successfully.

Effectively coordinating supportive services and property management functions requires careful planning, including clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures, and communication and confidentiality guidelines, among other considerations. Shared staff “buy-in” regarding the mission and philosophy of the supportive housing is critical. To be successful, supportive housing operators must strike a balance among competing objectives — the cost of operating the housing, the safety and well-being of the tenant community, and the needs of individual tenants. Without careful planning and coordination, staff may find themselves caught off guard and unprepared to deal with the tensions that may arise as a result of these sometimes divergent but equally important goals.

THREE KEY PRINCIPLES

It is critical that the project sponsor and all team members understand the specialized nature of property management in supportive housing. Traditional property management practices may come into conflict with the principles of supportive housing. For example, traditional property management practices may require

screening out some of the tenants that the sponsor has targeted to serve, or may have more stringent enforcement practices when it comes to lease violations.

In supportive housing, the property management role must be carefully integrated into the supportive housing team. Whether the property management function is filled by the project sponsor or contracted to another organization, it is essential that the property management agent be *mission-driven*, while at the same time effectively manage the physical assets of the project.

The following Key Principles describe essential components necessary for the successful integration of Property Management and Supportive Services activities:

Principle 1: Property Management Supports Mission-Driven Housing

- All partners, including property management, must have a shared commitment to the success of the community and each of the tenants that resides in the building.
- All partners must have a shared commitment to coordinated communication between social services, property management and tenant organizations.

Principle 2: Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

- Commitment to clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.
- Establishment of ongoing forum(s) for talking about and re-negotiating roles and responsibilities.

Principle 3: Recognize Overlap and Built-In Tension Between Roles

- Respect for the different roles of social service provider, property manager, owner and tenant council; each is necessary and important for a well-managed supportive housing program.
- Acknowledgment and productive use of the built-in tension between these roles/functions.

STRATEGIES FOR PUTTING KEY PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

Building on the foundation of mission-driven property management services, the following written documents and management practices will support the implementation of the Key Principles, on an ongoing basis:

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or contract spells out the role and commitment of each partner and makes it a condition of continued participation in the supportive housing program.
 - MOU identifies which organization is working for the owner to provide property management services.
 - MOU identifies which issues and problems the owner, social service provider, tenant council and property manager resolve together and the processes to be followed.
- A Guiding Principle statement spells out the approach to the working relationship among all partners.
 - Example: We show respect for all individuals. We believe that all individuals can and want to contribute to their fullest potential. Differences are valued. We inspire and enable people to achieve high expectations, standards and challenging goals. We are honest with people about their performance.

- Careful selection, training, support and supervision of property management staff ensures staff knowledge of tenants' special needs and issues and encourages staff to develop solutions that are effective for each tenant.
- Careful selection, training, support and supervision of social service staff ensures effective individual advocacy within the overall mission of maintaining the building and assists staff to develop an understanding of property management responsibilities and procedures.
- Written job descriptions clearly delineate roles and emphasize collaborative problem-solving with other staff.
- Established ways of communicating roles, responsibilities and procedures to tenants are in place.
- The owner/sponsor must have a regular schedule for meetings with the tenant council, social service provider and property managers.
- Social service staff and property management staff are given parallel status and authority and report to the same level within the owner/sponsor organization, etc.
- A written procedure is in place for resolving disagreements between the various stakeholders, in which the disagreement moves up the organizational ladder until consensus or a veto is rendered.



Want more information?

Please see the [Understanding Supportive Housing](#) and the [Introduction to Property Management in Supportive Housing](#) sections of CSH's [Toolkit for the Development and Operation of Supportive Housing](#) (www.csh.org/toolkit2) for access to a wide variety of resources related to supportive housing models and property management practices.

CHAPTER 2: CSH'S SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Organizations wishing to gain a deeper understanding of supportive housing models, and the practices that help assure the quality of supportive housing, will find the materials included within this chapter especially helpful.

DEFINING THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) developed *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* through dialogue with supportive housing tenants, providers, funders, and other stakeholders – and through involvement in successful supportive housing projects around the country. The *Dimensions of Quality* are intended to provide a common framework for the supportive housing industry and to allow developers, property managers, service providers, and funders to assess the quality of supportive housing units and to make sound investments in quality supportive housing.

While all of the Dimensions include Indicators of Quality relevant for property management staff and supportive services staff, issues of coordination and integration of efforts and activities are especially highlighted within: Dimension #1: Administration, Management and Coordination; Dimension #4: Supportive Services Design and Delivery; and Dimension #5: Property Management and Asset Management Activities. The *Seven Dimensions* are defined as follows:

Dimension #1: Administration, Management, and Coordination: All involved organizations follow standard and required administrative and management practices, and coordinate their activities in order to ensure the best outcomes for tenants.

Dimension #2: Physical Environment: The design, construction, appearance, physical integrity, and maintenance of the housing units provide an environment that is attractive, sustainable, functional, appropriate for the surrounding community, and conducive to tenants' stability.

Dimension #3: Access to Housing and Services: Initial and continued access to the housing opportunities and supportive services is not restricted by unnecessary criteria, rules, services requirements, or other barriers.

Dimension #4: Supportive Services Design and Delivery: The design and delivery of supportive services facilitate access to a comprehensive array of services, are tenant-focused, effectively address tenants' needs, and foster tenants' housing stability and independence.

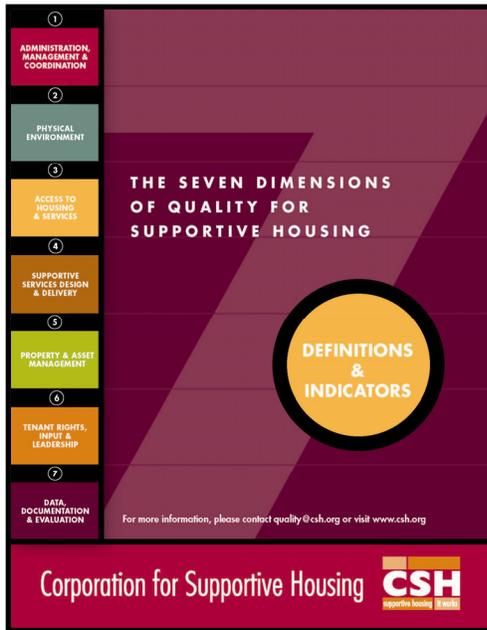
Dimension #5: Property Management and Asset Management: Property management activities support the mission and goals of the housing and foster tenants' housing stability and independence, and appropriate asset management strategies sustain the physical and financial viability of the housing asset.

Dimension #6: Tenant Rights, Input, and Leadership: Tenant rights are protected within consistently-enforced policies and procedures, tenants are provided with meaningful input and leadership opportunities, and staff - tenant relationships are characterized by respect and trust.

Dimension #7: Data, Documentation, and Evaluation: All involved organizations reliably capture accurate and meaningful data regarding the effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of their activities, and use this data to facilitate, and improve, the performance of those activities on an ongoing basis.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS REGARDING THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY

CSH has created the following three publications – all available at www.csh.org/dimensionsofquality - to assist organizations to understand and implement the *Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*:



The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing: Definitions and Indicators

In addition to providing descriptions of the defining elements of supportive housing units, recognizing the range of housing settings, models, and approaches to service delivery, this document contains Definitions, Key Indicators of Quality and Additional Indicators of Quality for each of the *Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*.

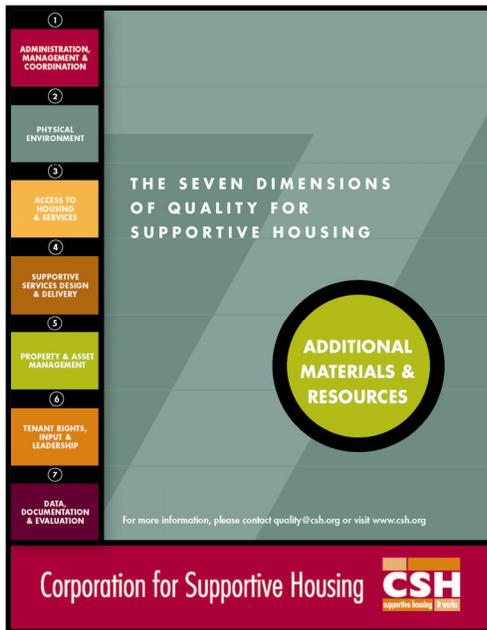
This document also contains substantial discussion of the applicability of the Dimensions to scattered-site, master-leased or tenant-based supportive housing units, and identifies staff development topics that can help to support the achievement of quality for each Dimension.

The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing: Quality Assessment Tools

These *Quality Assessment Tools* are designed to allow organizations to assess alignment with CSH's *Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*. The Tools review the Dimensions and Indicators of Quality in a “workbook” format with plenty of space for notes, to allow organizations to implement an organized assessment - of either existing supportive housing units or plans for new units.

The Tools utilize a simple rating scale for all Indicators to allow organizations to identify areas where quality improvement may be needed. The Tools also provide guidance regarding the materials that organizations should review while completing these assessments. The Tools can be used individually to assess alignment with specific Dimensions, or can be used in combination to create a comprehensive assessment.





The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing: Additional Materials and Resources

Organizations are encouraged to consult this document for links to publications, training materials, and other tools and resources that can help foster the quality of supportive housing.

Also included in this resource is a *Supportive Housing Quality Improvement Action Plan Form*, in both printable and electronic (fill-able) formats. This tool can be used to create concrete plans for addressing quality-related issues identified during the Quality Assessment process.



Want more information?

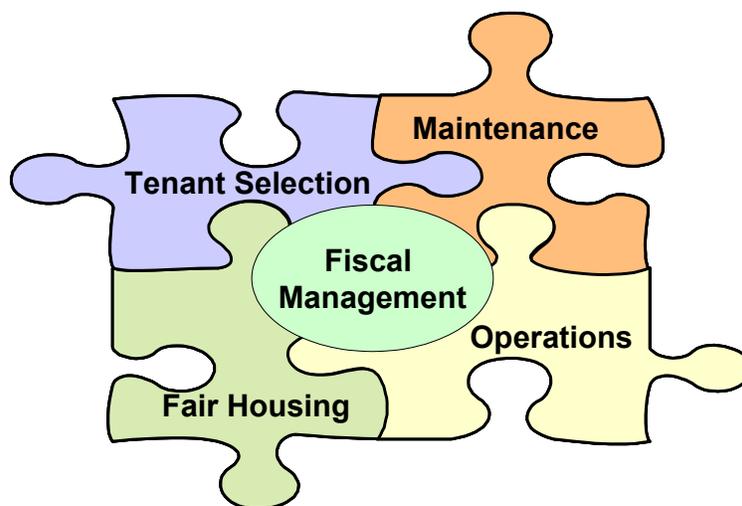
For information regarding these materials, or regarding how CSH can assist your organization or community in implementing the *Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* tools and concepts, please see www.csh.org/DimensionsofQuality or contact CSH at quality@csh.org.

CHAPTER 3: MISSION-DRIVEN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

This Chapter reviews the core responsibilities of property management staff in supportive housing, who must sustain a focus on a “double bottom-line” and a commitment to implementing practices that support the mission of the supportive housing opportunities being provided. In addition, this Chapter considers advantages and disadvantages of different forms and strategies for the provision of the property management services.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STAFF

In high-quality supportive housing, property management activities support the mission and goals of the housing and foster tenants’ housing stability and independence, and appropriate asset management strategies sustain the physical and financial viability of the housing asset. As illustrated in the image below, and as in all types of housing, property management staff in supportive housing have lead responsibility for ensuring the effective operations of the housing, the performance of maintenance activities to sustain the quality of the living environment, the performance of tenant screening and selection protocols, and assuring compliance with fair housing laws and regulations – and must perform all of those roles while also ensuring that sound financial practices are implemented and the housing stays within budget.



Property management in for-profit housing can be seen as a “bottom-line” proposition - management provides basic services to tenants as specified in the lease while keeping expenses contained so that the property generates a profit for the owner. Property management within the context of supportive housing is more complex and can be thought of as being responsible for a “double bottom-line” - maintaining safe, clean, cost-effective properties while also partnering with supportive services staff to help ensure that at-risk and formerly homeless tenants are able to remain living in the housing successfully.

Balancing a commitment to that “double bottom-line” requires the consistent implementation of activities, and enforcement of policies, in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and funders’ requirements, while also recognizing many goals that are shared with supportive services staff, such as supporting tenants’ housing stability and helping to provide resolutions to tenants’ concerns.



Want more information?

For more information regarding the performance of property management activities in supportive housing, see the [Housing Operations](#) section of CSH's [Toolkit for Developing and Operating Supportive Housing](#) (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2operations), which includes subsections focused on: Introduction to Property Management in Supportive Housing; Tenant Screening, Selection, and Move-In; Leases, Lease Enforcement, and Rent Collection; Reasonable Accommodations in Supportive Housing Operations; Safety and Security; and Maintaining the Physical Plant. Please also see CSH's [Supportive Housing Property Management Operations Manual](#) (available at www.csh.org/publications).

MISSION-DRIVEN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

As described in the Key Principles in Chapter 1, the mission-driven nature of property management in supportive housing is a necessary foundation for the successful integration and coordination of property management and supportive services activities. Practices through which a commitment to mission-driven property management may be demonstrated include:

- Property management work closely with the project owner to ensure it can carry out its policies and objectives.
- Prior to lease-up, property management work with owners and the supportive service staff to tailor the lease, house rules, and operations to fulfill the owner's objectives.
- The lease prohibits criminal activity (including the use and sale of illegal drugs) but management does not interfere with a tenant's activities in the confines of their apartment as long as it does not impinge upon the other tenants' peaceful enjoyment of the premises or do physical harm to the property.
- While maintenance, rent collection and financial management of the building is largely property management's responsibility, certain tasks are taken on more collaboratively with the owner and/or service partner, such as tenant selection and screening, move-in and orientation, and crisis management.
- Property management will provide support if tenants wish to establish a council as a means of addressing issues related to house rules, access to common areas and safety concerns.
- Property management staff is committed to providing support to tenants as they establish independence and achieve a level of economic self-sufficiency by considering them as preferred candidates for site-related jobs.
- Tenant hospitalizations and in-patient treatment programs will be permitted up to 90 days (contingent upon continuing rental subsidies and rent payments) without termination of the lease agreement. After consultation with the tenant's physician, the 90-day time period may be extended so long as provisions are made to ensure timely rent payments.

- Tenant screening follows a specific procedure and is conducted jointly with the primary service provider.
- Tenant selection is decided jointly by property management and the primary service provider in accordance with written tenant selection criteria.
- Crisis management regarding property issues requires immediate response from the managing agent with notification to the owners.
- If the crisis involves a tenant, the supportive services staff takes the lead and works with other supportive service providers to address the issue with the tenant.
- Staff agrees to a philosophy of quality control that includes the following tenets:
 - Recognition that all staff is responsible.
 - Quality comes from proper staff supervision.
 - Clarity regarding procedures is accomplished with well-established protocols and staff supervision.
 - Audits are conducted to maintain proper oversight.
- Occupancy record keeping is the responsibility of the property manager—the supportive service staff maintains other records relating to tenant’s use of supportive services.
- House rules:
 - Focus on preserving the physical integrity of the building and ensure the peaceful enjoyment of the premises for all tenants.
 - Are reviewed with all tenants at time of move-in.
 - May be adjusted with adequate notice.
 - Are reviewed periodically with tenants and the supportive service staff for suggested revisions.
- Evictions are reserved for:
 - Nonpayment of rent.
 - Causing serious physical harm to self, staff or others.
 - Pursuing a criminal activity on the premises.
- For other repeated infractions, sanctions other than eviction will be tried first, including such options as:
 - Arbitration.
 - Crisis intervention.
 - Referral to alternative housing.

FORMS OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The role of the property manager for supportive housing units may be filled through a variety of approaches, including:

- The project sponsor/owner provides the property management services directly;
- The project sponsor/owner contracts with an outside agency for the provision of the property management services; or

- The project sponsor leases units from owner(s) who provides the property management services

In deciding which approach to use, a project sponsor should take into consideration its organizational mission, its capacity and experience, its resources, and its objectives in operating the project. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, all of which should be considered carefully in deciding which form of property management to use. In determining who will provide the property management services, special attention should be paid to making a choice that will help ensure that “mission-driven” property management is achieved.

Project Sponsor Provides Property Management:

In this approach the non-profit project sponsor either owns or leases the units, and elects to provide their own property management.

Advantages

- The owner has direct control over property management and can ensure that property management follows the core guiding principles of the organization.
- This approach allows for streamlined operations – there is no need for ongoing communication and coordination between the owner and an outside property manager.
- If the owner has adequate organizational capacity, it can be more cost effective to provide in-house property management rather than to contract for this service.

Disadvantages

- A high level of expertise and experience with property management is critical. It can be difficult for a smaller organization to develop adequate capacity to provide its own property management.
- If the sponsor is also providing supportive services, it can be difficult to wear both hats. Clear organizational differentiation between the support services department and property management department is essential, as are very clear written policies outlining roles and responsibilities for each department.

Project Sponsor Contracts for Outside Property Management Services:

In this approach the non-profit project sponsor either owns or leases the units, and contracts for property management services from an outside organization. This approach includes the scenario where a sponsor operating a scattered site program contracts with an outside organization to locate and master lease units and provide property management services to those units.

Advantages

- For sponsors with limited experience in property management, this approach ensures that the property will be professionally managed, without putting a strain on the sponsor’s organizational capacity.
- When property management is functionally separated from supportive services, it is much easier to maintain clarity about roles and responsibilities.

Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to find a property management company or agent that understands supportive housing and is willing to make adjustments to its traditional property management practices.
- If the property management agent does not understand the mission of supportive housing, they

may screen out tenants the sponsor wishes to serve and may engage in more stringent enforcement practices in response to lease violations than the sponsor wishes.

- It can be more expensive to contract for property management services than to provide them in-house. Careful analysis of the project's operating budget by someone highly experienced in supportive housing operations is a pre-requisite for choosing this approach.

Project Sponsor Leases Units From Owner Who Provides Property Management:

There are two possible versions of this scenario. In one, the sponsor arranges to lease units either in a single building or in scattered sites and assumes responsibility for tenant selection, but the property owner continues to own and manage the housing. In the other variation, the sponsor's clients lease units directly from the landlord or landlords, sometimes with assistance in the housing search process from the sponsor or from another organization.

Advantages

- This can be a very cost effective way for the sponsor to ensure the property management function is being performed, since the landlords retain responsibility for all property management services.
- This approach allows the sponsor to functionally separate property management from supportive services. It is particularly effective for sponsors who are primarily supportive service providers.

Disadvantages

- This approach requires that the sponsor either seeks out landlords who understand supportive housing or works to educate landlords about supportive housing models.
- If the landlord does not understand and adopt the mission of the supportive housing project, there will be ongoing tension regarding lease enforcement, as the landlord may wish to engage in more stringent lease enforcement practices than is appropriate in a supportive housing context.
- In programs where the tenant holds a lease directly with the landlord, it can become very time-consuming and distracting for the sponsor to mediate disputes between the tenant and landlord.



Want more information?

In the fall of 2008, REDF, CSH, and Enterprise Community Partners engaged VIVA Consulting to conduct a study on best practices in the management of supportive housing. VIVA conducted a survey and a series of interviews with providers from across the country to ask about a range of business practices and recommendations, including staffing, hiring and retention, and the relationship between property management and resident services. An area of special focus was the creation of job opportunities for supportive housing residents in property management.

To read the findings of this study, please see [**Supportive Housing Property Management: Business Practices and Resident Employment Study**](#) or see the study's [**Executive Summary**](#).

(These documents can be accessed at www.csh.org/publications.)

CHAPTER 4: DEFINING AND COORDINATING ROLES

This Chapter provides an overview of the key roles and responsibilities of property management and supportive services staff and explores areas of overlap and shared responsibilities in supportive housing operations. In addition, this Chapter provides guidance regarding best practices for effectively coordinating those roles and responsibilities, including special considerations for such coordination in scattered-site, master leased, and tenant-based supportive housing programs.

DEFINING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles of the Property Manager and Asset Manager

While the property management and asset management roles in supportive housing projects are closely related and interdependent, it is important to understand the distinctions between these two roles:

- **The Property Manager:** The Property Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the property, including maintenance, tenant screening, leasing, rent collection, fiscal management, funder compliance reporting, and other responsibilities. In some cases this is the developer, in other cases a co-developer or the service provider, or a professional management agent (nonprofit or for-profit) selected by the project owner, and if appropriate, the service provider. In all cases, the Property Manager must have demonstrated skills and experience in the management of affordable housing, and preferably will have experience in housing serving the project's target population. The experience of the Property Manager may be a factor in the scoring of the project's applications for financing. Further, the earlier the Property Manager is identified for the project, the better the developer can take advantage of their experience and expertise in project design and operating cost estimates.
- **The Asset Manager:** The Asset Manager's primary responsibilities begin once the property is occupied. The Asset Manager acts as a financial manager for the completed development, overseeing the property management activities to ensure that the tenant occupancy levels remain high and the project performs well financially. The Asset Manager also reports information about the development to funders, in compliance with regulations associated with housing funding programs. Often, the Property Manager assumes the role of asset management in addition to their other duties.

Roles of Supportive Services Staff

There are many different staffing patterns used in supportive housing programs across the country, and the staffing required will depend upon a variety of factors, including the number of units, the populations served, the goals of the program, and the services available within local community. Depending upon the intensity of service needs anticipated among the tenants, the ratio of direct supportive service staff to tenants typically ranges between 1:10 and 1:25. The following list of positions includes common staff titles and definitions of roles found within supportive housing programs:

- **Program Directors/Supervisors:** Oversee program development, implementation, coordination and evaluation; provide regular supervision to direct service staff; orient new staff to program mission, goals, policies and procedures; coordinate site coverage; ensure that the development and implementation of service plans are consistent with program goals and of maximum benefit to tenants; monitor and evaluate staff performance; coordinate supportive services with building management services; develop and modify policies and procedures; identify problems related to resources and personnel management; oversee production of internal and external reports; oversee compliance with funders.

- **Case Managers / Service Coordinators:** Provide direct services to tenants; develop and implement individual service plans; assist tenants in identifying and achieving personal goals; facilitate groups and activities; teach and/or assist tenants in developing ADL, communication and self-advocacy skills; facilitate the development of tenant council and other community building activities; make referrals to community-based services; assist tenants in accessing and maintaining entitlements/benefits; advocate for needed services; and assist tenants in meeting the obligations of tenancy.
- **Substance Abuse / Mental Illness Chemical Abuse (MICA) Specialists:** May not be assigned their own case load but instead may run groups related to substance use and work directly with tenants who have issues with use; oversee recovery readiness services; provide relapse prevention and recovery planning services; provide individual counseling; facilitate methadone maintenance services; educate staff and tenants about approaches to managing substance use, such as stages of change and harm reduction; organize sober recreational activities.
- **Residential Aides:** Assist Case Managers in carrying out their responsibilities; provide support and direct assistance to tenants; assist/train tenants in the skills of daily living; escort to appointments.
- **Recreation Specialists:** Run groups and arrange for various activities on- and off-site, including music, art, or exercise classes; may work individually with tenants needing assistance socializing or reducing isolation; plan events and celebrations; identify recreational opportunities in the neighborhood and surrounding community.
- **Activities of Daily Living (ADL) Specialists:** Assist and teach tenants basic living skills, such as budgeting, cooking, personal hygiene and self-care, housekeeping activities, use of public transportation, and use of other community services.
- **Peer Counselors:** Typically staff who have had life experiences similar to the tenants of the supportive housing program (e.g., homelessness, mental illness, substance use, HIV); provide support and direct assistance; teach advocacy skills; help tenants apply principles of self-help programs.
- **Vocational Counselors:** Also called Career Counselors or Employment Specialists, these staff conduct vocational/educational assessments and assist tenants in developing career plans; work with Case Managers to integrate vocational plans into general service plans; identify obstacles to maintaining employment and provide ongoing assistance in minimizing the negative impact of these obstacles to success.
- **Job Developers:** Establish relationships with businesses in the community to help secure jobs for program participants; Job Developers may also serve as liaisons between the residence and the job site and address problems and issues that come up regarding specific placements.

AREAS OF OVERLAP

While property management and supportive services staff have many responsibilities for which they are solely responsible, there are also many areas in which responsibilities are shared. Staff in every supportive housing setting should discuss and reach consensus on how these responsibilities will be delineated within their project, including discussing the confidential handling of information. The following table describes responsibilities that typically involve both supportive services and property management staff.

	Responsibilities of Supportive Services Staff	Responsibilities of Property Management Staff
Tenant Selection & Interviewing	Focus on service description during service interview	Focus on ability to pay rent during management interview
	Both Service Staff and Property Management conduct the tenant interview, focusing on characteristics of a good neighbor. Common concerns during screening processes: Who makes the final decision? How much information should be gathered during the service interview?	
Orientation of Incoming Tenants	Help tenants with concrete needs around the move in, such as unpacking, getting familiar with the building routine and location of laundry, neighborhood resources, staff locations and responsibilities	Orient tenants about building maintenance issues, fire drills, and tenant meetings
Rent Payment and Arrears	Provide tenants with assistance in paying their rent (e.g., budgeting, addressing cost of substance abuse, vocational services, etc.) Encourage payment plans.	Responsible for collecting rent and addressing issues of rent arrears through payment plans, etc.
Dealing with Nuisance and Disruptive Behaviors	House rules are generally developed jointly by Services and Management. Some basic rules may be developed by staff and tenant input to add to or revise these. All staff can help promote healthy cultural norms for the building; it is frequently Service staff members who help to structure these efforts.	
Procedures during Crises (e.g. psychiatric, medical, physical, fire)	Clear policies and procedures should be in place for dealing with disruptions. These should clearly spell out the chain of command in case of emergency, what information to provide to EMS, when to summon staff on call, etc.	
Tenant Grievance Procedures	Staff and tenants should be aware of systems for evaluating the program and the services provided. Management and Service staff generally works together, with Service staff alerting tenants to procedures through individual case management meetings or tenant meetings.	
Tenant Councils	Facilitate initial tenant meetings with the goal being to eventually have tenant run meetings.	Attend meeting when issues concern the building or maintenance. Hold quarterly management/tenant meetings.
Community Building	Many issues mentioned above involve aspects of community building. The tenants as well as management and service staffs are members of the building community and influence the culture of the community. Staff should be aware of trends in the community and plan strategies for positively influencing the culture.	
Safety and Security	Responsible for notifying property management regarding security breaches and safety hazards.	Responsible for ensuring building safety and security; for ongoing inspections and addressing safety/security issues that have been identified.

VARIETY OF HOUSING MODELS

Establishing a clear understanding of partners' roles and responsibilities is essential for good coordination among partners. However, specific roles and responsibilities – and practices for coordinating their activities on a day to day basis – will be greatly impacted by the specific housing model that is being implemented. Supportive services staff and property management staff may be working in partnership in a wide variety of supportive housing settings - there is no single model for supportive housing's design or for the strategies through which supportive housing opportunities are created. Appropriate housing settings may vary dramatically based on a range of factors, including tenants' preferences and needs, the type of housing stock and financing sources available, and the norms and history of a community's real estate market. Examples of successful supportive housing include units in all of the following settings:

- Apartment or single-room occupancy (SRO) buildings, or townhouses that mix units providing supportive housing with units providing other affordable housing opportunities;
- Apartment or SRO buildings, townhouses, or single-family homes that exclusively include units providing supportive housing;
- Scattered-site supportive housing units dispersed through a variety of housing settings;
- Rent-subsidized apartments leased in the open market, either through master leasing or through tenant-based subsidies; and
- Long-term set-asides of units within privately owned buildings.

It is important to remember that many housing developments include a mix of unit-types, including permanent supportive housing units, affordable housing units, "service-enriched" units and/or market-rate units. Already widely used in some communities, such "Integrated Housing" strategies can help integrate supportive housing tenants into the community, providing meaningful choices for tenants regarding their preferred living environments and reducing stigma.

Coordination among property management and service providers can be greatly facilitated by being based at the same site. However, good coordination can be achieved regardless of whether partners are located at the same location. This section discusses the specific roles and responsibilities of partners who are engaged in providing supportive housing opportunities in scattered sites or through master leasing or tenant-based strategies.

Scattered-Site Supportive Housing

Scattered-site supportive housing opportunities can be created through a variety of strategies – through master leasing strategies, through the negotiation of multiple set-aside agreements, through development activities in multiple locations (which may be in a variety of building types), or by assisting households (including households with tenant-based subsidies) to directly lease individual units from private landlords. Scattered site supportive housing strategies secure units in a variety of dispersed housing settings, including houses, within a duplex or small complex, or units within larger apartment buildings. Such units are integrated into community settings and sponsors typically avoid a concentration of more than a few such units at any one site. Scattered-site approaches present various advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages include:

- Easier to acquire already renovated properties.
- Integrates supportive housing tenants into the community, as opposed to having them clustered in a single project.
- Program sponsor usually does not need to engage property management services.

- May result in less community opposition than single site new developments.

Disadvantages include:

- No economies of scale in financing, management or service delivery.
- More complicated to secure and close financing or leases.
- Service provider must maintain good relationships with multiple landlords and property managers to ensure tenant access to units.
- Limited opportunities for provision of on-site supportive services.
- Engaging tenants may be harder since opportunities for informal interaction are limited.
- Difficult to organize “community building activities” and peer support networks.
- Greater potential for isolation and relapses or other crises may go undetected longer.
- Neighborhood conditions, such as drug activity, more likely to jeopardize tenants.
- Difficult to incorporate employment opportunities to build a culture of work.

Other considerations:

- Tenants still may require significant case management support.
- Need health-care and psychiatric consultants who will make home visits.
- Important for service team if the same property manager is used for all sites/locations (if possible).

Tenant Based Supportive Housing Initiatives

Tenant Based Supportive Housing includes housing programs through which participants receive access to rental subsidies (such as Housing Choice Vouchers/Section 8 or Shelter Plus Care subsidies) that they can use to rent a housing unit from private landlords who are eligible and willing to accept the rental subsidy. Services provided in tenant based supportive housing may be provided within a tenant’s home or in community locations that are convenient for the tenant.

Because landlords in these programs may not have experience providing supportive housing opportunities, services staff may need to educate such landlords about the services that they provide and the service needs of tenants. However, it is also possible that landlords in tenant-based supportive housing programs will not be aware that the tenant is eligible for or participating in supportive services. In these instances, services providers must maintain the confidentiality of the tenant’s protected health information, unless the tenant has given explicit, written permission for the service provider to disclose such information to the landlord.

Master Leased Supportive Housing

Master leasing is a model within which a supportive housing provider leases several units within a development, a floor within a building, an entire building/development, or units in a number of buildings from an owner(s) at market rates in order to provide supportive housing opportunities. The supportive housing provider then subleases the units to eligible tenants. Frequently, master leased units are also “scattered site” units. Master leasing can make it possible to secure units and provide supportive housing opportunities more quickly than housing development activities (whether new construction or acquisition/rehabilitation). Parties involved in executing a master lease generally include:

- *Housing sponsor:* The housing provider – usually a not-for-profit organization - who identifies units within a suitable building and engages in a lease for a substantial portion or entire building. The housing provider then subleases to individuals needing supportive housing.

- *Owner of the Building:* The owner has the ultimate long-term legal responsibility and control of the building.
- *Service provider(s):* The service provider leads the delivery of support services to residents. Service providers may be located on-site (sometimes an apartment is rented specifically for this purpose) or may deliver services by making visits to the tenants at the property.
- *Property Management:* The property manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the building.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Leasing Strategies

Most of the alternative models described above (other than scattered-site purchase) involve the leasing of housing units. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of leasing include:

Advantages include:

- Leasing units requires less technical expertise than development.
- Leasing units requires less up-front funding and staff resources than development.
- Opportunity to lease units that are integrated into the community and offer meaningful choices for tenants regarding their preferred living environments.
- Some landlords of leased units will provide or contract for property management services thereby relieving the program sponsor of these responsibilities.

Disadvantages include:

- Less control over quality of the operations and maintenance of the building.
- Less control over term of affordability.
- Building may not have appropriate program/community space and unit configuration may not be optimal.
- Harder to build effective relationship with landlord and property manager.
- In competitive real estate markets, it may be difficult to find landlords willing to master lease units.
- The most affordable units may be concentrated in a few neighborhoods, which may or may not be close to services.



Want more information?

See the CSH document ***Alternatives to Housing Development Activities*** (www.csh.org/toolkit2capacity), which provides a more detailed overview of issues for organizations to consider when evaluating the appropriateness of different strategies for creating supportive housing opportunities.

EFFECTIVELY COORDINATING ROLES – AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF STRATEGIES FOR SCATTERED-SITE, MASTER LEASED, OR TENANT-BASED SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

While the key issues in the coordination of property management and supportive services are not likely to vary widely across supportive housing types, the strategies through which these issues are addressed will vary depending upon the housing model being implemented. This section describes suggested approaches for addressing common issues of coordination between partners in scattered-site, master leased or tenant-based supportive housing initiatives.

Maintaining Communication

Regularly scheduled forums should be held at least monthly (and preferably more frequently) for supportive services and property management staff to discuss their roles, the coordination of their efforts, any current issues, and to address gaps in services and operations. However, in master leased or tenant-based supportive housing, property management staff may not be available for regularly scheduled meetings or may not see value in attending such meetings.

- **Recommendations:** Services providers may find that they need to do extensive outreach and relationship-building in order to build establish a pattern of communication that is pro-active, rather than limited to responding to crisis situations. Offering a 24-hour number that a property manager can call in case of a crisis or emergency is essential, as is ensuring services staff's availability to discuss non-emergency situations. Services staff should be as responsive to issues raised by property management staff as possible, and should also actively seek to maintain regular communications, whether through scheduled meetings, informal conversations, or a combination of both.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Although maintaining confidentiality must also be addressed in single-purpose supportive housing sites, the issue is more complex in master leased or tenant-based supportive housing, in which landlords and property managers may not be aware that tenants have disabilities and/or face other barriers to housing stability. In addition, landlords and property managers who are new to providing master leased or tenant-based supportive housing may not have yet developed an understanding of what information may and may not be legally and ethically shared.

- **Recommendations:** All supportive services staff must receive training on confidentiality and the security of tenant information, including what may and may not be shared with other staff, depending upon their roles. It will then be essential to discuss with individual tenants what they choose to share with their property manager and/or landlord regarding their specific services needs. In the event that a services provider is partnering with an organization or landlord who is not familiar with confidentiality rules, services staff must educate their partners about the limits on what information may and may not be shared.

Maintaining a Focus on Housing Stability

In high-quality supportive housing, supportive services and property management strategies include effective, coordinated approaches for addressing tenant issues resulting from substance use, relapse, and mental health crises, and focus on fostering housing stability. The goal of these coordinated approaches is to prevent evictions and to ensure that tenants facing eviction have access to necessary services and supports. However, in master leased or tenant-based supportive housing, landlords and property managers' primary concern may not be the housing stability of tenants.

- **Recommendations:** Choosing to partner with the right landlord and property management company (see Chapter 5: Selecting Partners) is a crucial first step towards being able to coordinate to support tenants' housing stability. However, in tight housing markets, choices regarding available partners may be limited and supportive services staff may need to advocate on tenants' behalf with property management staff, when necessary and appropriate, to help maintain tenants' housing stability.

Understanding Each Partner's Roles

Ideally, both services and property management staff will receive cross training to facilitate understanding of each others' responsibilities, which may be more easily arranged in single-site supportive housing settings. In scattered sites there may be fewer opportunities for formal trainings involving staff in both services and property management roles.

- **Recommendations:** When partners are not co-located, cross training opportunities may be harder to implement. However, partners can regularly meet to discuss roles, educate each other regarding their legal obligations and other requirements that impact their operations, and to troubleshoot role-related issues that may arise. It may be helpful to meet to review a list of responsibilities together (such as are described in the table earlier in this chapter), and to discuss each partner's accountabilities. However, "who does what" will necessarily be an ongoing discussion, rather than a one-time conversation. Creating or revising a Memorandum of Understanding may also assist partners to discuss and clarify their roles, and to reach agreement regarding each partners' responsibilities.

Achieving a Shared Understanding of the Tenants' Needs

In high-quality supportive housing, property management staff members can often identify tenants with unmet service needs and know when to connect tenants to services staff. However, property management staff who are new to supportive housing may not have the training and education needed to understand the service needs of the tenants. In addition, landlords and property management staff may not be aware of tenants' need for supportive services in master leased or tenant-based supportive housing.

- **Recommendations:** In the case of tenant-based supportive housing, in which perhaps only one or a few supportive housing tenants are housed by a given landlord, the nature of the education of the landlord and/or property manager will need to be approved by the tenant(s) to avoid violating the confidentiality of protected health information. However, supportive service providers can provide general information about the population(s) that they serve, the typical service needs of their clients (in general), the goals of their services programs, and the types of supports and assistance that they can provide to the landlord or property manager, as needed - such as helping a tenant create a rent-repayment plan, or helping to address tenant issues that might impact their housing stability.

Creating and Implementing Policies and Procedures that Meet the Needs of Tenants

In high-quality supportive housing, policies and procedures are crafted to ensure that they meet the needs of the tenants. For example, application processes are made as accessible as possible for people with special needs and policies pertaining to daily operations are written to support the housing stability of tenants. In tenant-based supportive housing or master leased projects where landlords may have little experience serving people with disabilities, policies and procedures may not include the accommodations that are appropriate for people with disabilities.

- **Recommendations:** Supportive services staff may need to advocate with the landlord or property manager, to ensure that persons with multiple barriers to housing stability can access and maintain housing. Advocating for tenant screening, application and selection criteria that facilitate access to housing for people with multiple barriers to housing stability will be important. Similarly, policies,

procedures, and house rules that pertain to ongoing maintenance of housing may need to be revised. Staff should educate landlords about tenancy rights when necessary, and continue to educate about tenants' services needs as appropriate. Services staff might also encourage landlords and property managers to gather input from tenants regarding their needs, in order to demonstrate that changes in policies and/or procedures are needed.

Ensuring Accountability

Some partners may not share a long-term commitment to the success of the supportive housing, perhaps because they are new to providing supportive housing and have yet to see the model be successful. However, each partner controls significant aspects of the operations that will help determine whether the supportive housing will be successful. For example, service organizations may not control the conditions of tenants' physical environments or be responsible for the performance of maintenance or replacement activities; therefore, they need to be able to rely on property managers and landlords to be accountable for performing these activities. Similarly, property managers and landlords need to be able to hold supportive services provider accountable for performing their responsibilities.

- **Recommendations:** Especially when working with new partners who do not have experience in supportive housing, it is important to put accountability measures in place. Thorough Memoranda of Understanding should be created and revisited at least annually. It is important that services staff have an understanding of the operating plans and procedures of all landlords and property management agents with whom they are working, and that they document commitments from landlords and property management agents within written agreements. In master leasing programs, the lease documents executed with the owner / landlord will likely be the primary tool for documenting responsibilities and accountability, and should be crafted carefully. It is recommended that organizations consider including the following approaches within master lease agreements:
 - Identifying contact persons for all parties and establishing expectations for communication and responsiveness.
 - Ensuring that agreements address when any planned rehabilitation will take place, whether the lessee can make alterations of the premises, including design modifications needed to meet the accessibility and service needs of tenants and, if so, who will pay for those alterations.
 - Providing incentives for landlords to invest in the major systems of buildings based upon the guaranteed rental income for the term of the master lease.
 - Specifying who will deliver maintenance services and ensure that these services are adequate and creating protocols for the leasing organization to report maintenance and repair needs.
 - Describing the actions that will be taken if the parties do not fulfill their responsibilities.



Want more information?

In order to foster further discussion and clarification about roles and areas where responsibilities overlap, organizations may wish to review the CSH document **Critical Situations During Building Operations Scenarios** (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2safety.)

This tool contains a list of scenarios that can be used in trainings or conversations with both property management and supportive services staff to discuss how staff would respond to each situation described, and how they would define and coordinate their roles.

CHAPTER 5: SELECTING PARTNERS

While some organizations choose to provide both property management services and supportive services from within their organization, many others find that partnering with an outside organization is necessary in order to bring the right combination of capacity, expertise, and resources to the supportive housing. This Chapter provides guidance regarding important questions to ask when considering potential partners.

SELECTING THE RIGHT PARTNERS

Whether seeking a partner to provide property management services or to provide supportive services, it is important to explore the following questions and issues with any organizations being considered for partnership.

The Organization's Mission and Goals:

- What do you think the goals of this program should be?
- What populations are you interested in serving and why? (e.g., singles, families, people with special needs)?
- What are the reasons you want/need to partner with another organization?

The Organization's Values and Philosophy

- Does your agency have a defined philosophical approach to services and/or property management in supportive housing?
- What motivates your organization to be involved in this partnership?

The Organization's Experience with Similar Projects

- How much experience does your organization have with projects of this type?
- What experience do you have working with a partner?

The Organization's Expectations for Tenant Behavior

- What kinds of behavior from tenants will be unacceptable to you (e.g., alcohol use, drug use, poor personal hygiene, noise disturbances)?
- What will you expect from tenants and what should they expect from you?
- How have you and/or how do you plan to involve tenants in activities?
- What are your expectations regarding house rules (e.g., guests, disruptive behavior)?
- What should the eviction criteria be?

The Organization's Management Style and Organizational Culture

- How would you describe your staff, staffing patterns, expertise, hours, and supervisory hierarchy?
- What decisions do you think should be made jointly between property management and supportive service teams?
- How does your agency handle conflicts in working relationships?
- How do you propose to handle tenant information sharing between your agency and staff from other agencies, including your partner?

The Organization's Vision for Collaboration

- What kinds of issues do you think your partner agency should be responsible for (e.g., house rules enforcement, evictions, staff hiring, etc.)

SELECTING A PROPERTY MANAGER

Many organizations that engage in supportive housing development activities do not possess in-house expertise in property management activities or determine that performing such activities is not a good fit for their organization. The following are some suggested questions for reviewing the qualifications and selecting a property management company for a planned or existing supportive housing project.

1. Does the management agent have previous management experience with subsidized or assisted housing?
2. What experience has the management agent had in participating in designing and developing housing?
3. Does the management agent have experience in working with people who were formerly homeless?
4. What is the management agent's philosophy of property management with regard to:
 - a. Asset management issues
 - b. Tenant relations and tenant involvement
 - c. Community relations
5. What is the management agent's experience working with a supportive services team in conjunction with property management staff?
6. What is the management agent's experience working with tenant councils and leadership groups?
7. Does the management agent understand and have experience complying with the project's funders' regulatory requirements associated with tenant leasing and occupancy?
8. What is the current size of the management agent's portfolio?
9. Will this project receive sufficient attention?
10. Does the management agent have a local office?
11. What is the staff turnover history within the management organization?
12. Do recent audits and financial statements for properties they manage indicate management competence?

Checking References

It is an important screening step to ask the management agent for a complete list of clients, to call at least 3 to 5 of the references from comparable projects, and to ask each of them the following questions:

1. How long has the management agent been engaged?
2. Have the management agent's property financial statements been independently audited? If yes, do these audits document financial competence? Have there been findings that would suggest a weakness within the management agent's capacity?
3. Has the management agent consistently operated the property within the annual operating budget? Has this been at the expense of any housing, maintenance or programming philosophy or priorities?
4. Has the management agent supplied sufficient staff to assume the expectations of the management contract? Has there been significant staff turn-over?
5. Was the management agent involved in initial occupancy and lease up activities? Did they meet initial time projections for total lease-up?
6. Did the management agent develop occupancy policies and practices? If yes, were these policies developed within a development team? Have these policies been revised? If yes, explain.
7. Have you found the management agent responsive to the mission and vision of the housing development?
8. Does the management agent's staff coordinate on a regular basis with the projects' services staff?

SELECTING A SERVICES PROVIDER

The following are some suggested questions for reviewing the qualifications and selecting a supportive services provider for a planned or existing supportive housing project.

1. Does the service provider have a history of providing this service for the supportive housing tenant profile? How long have they been serving this population and in what capacity?
2. Is it an established organization? If yes, does it have a reputation for excellence and respect from other service providers?
3. How does the organization define success with regard to their services?
4. Can they quantify and describe the outcomes of their services?
5. Does the service provider have experience in providing the service at a site other than one that is controlled by the service provider?
6. Does the service provider have the staff capacity to provide the services needed by supportive housing tenants? Are there services that are needed by the tenants that they can't provide?
7. Would they need to hire new staff or need to train current staff differently?
8. What is the organization's experience with staff turnover?
9. What is the organization's current financial health?
10. Is the total agency budget fully funded?
11. Does the organization share your values in how you define the quality of the relationship between service provider and tenant?
12. How does the organization define advocacy and the role of the service provider?
13. How does the provider evaluate and train staff in their philosophical principles?



Want more information?

For information regarding selecting partners for supportive housing activities, including criteria for selecting consultants, see the ***Building the Development Team*** section of CSH's ***Toolkit for Developing and Operating Supportive Housing*** (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2team.)

CHAPTER 6: ENSURING CONFIDENTIALITY

This Chapter summarizes necessary practices and policies for protecting the confidentiality of tenants' protected health information, discusses what information may and may not be shared, and suggests some strategies for addressing tenant issues while ensuring confidentiality.

GUIDANCE REGARDING CONFIDENTIALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Confidentiality and the protection of tenants' information are important issues for any supportive housing project. It is especially important in the context of a collaborative project, where cross-agency communication regarding tenants' housing challenges and service needs is encouraged and essential. Clinical staff, employment program staff, and housing program staff may share information on participants through communication logs, within service participant files, in databases and other shared forms of information. Healthcare services are often provided alongside employment and housing services, therefore, supportive housing staff must become conversant in all applicable privacy laws, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule. HIPAA rules address the use and disclosure of individuals' health information by an organization, and establish standards for individuals' rights to understand and control how their health information is used. The law is complicated and often misconstrued, and organizations need to devote adequate time to determining how it may, or may not, impact the organization and/or a collaborative project.

Although there are clear exceptions listed in the regulations, the HIPAA rules generally instruct that information about services provided to a participant and/or any identifying information about the participant may only be shared if the participant has given his or her consent in writing. Whenever possible, team members should encourage tenants to give consent for sharing of confidential information with partner organizations so that they can provide the necessary services in a coordinated manner. Obtaining tenants' consent to share information among staff employed by the same organization is generally not required.

As long as authorization forms are kept current, such forms can facilitate information sharing among various staff that serve the tenants of supportive housing. However, tenants must not be required to sign such authorizations, as this would be a violation of their rights. Further, tenants have the right to revoke an authorization at any time.

Some key information about ensuring confidentiality is summarized in the sections below; however, this brief summary does not capture the full range of comprehensive policies and procedures that organizations need to have in place to comply with HIPAA and other applicable local and state confidentiality laws. CSH recommends that organizations thoroughly research these laws and consult their legal counsel when necessary to ensure that organizational policies and procedures are in compliance with all applicable laws.



Want more information?

Please note that this chapter focuses on HIPAA Privacy and Confidentiality laws, and a good place to start for more information is to consult the HIPAA website of the Department of Health and Human Services, at:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/>.

WHAT INFORMATION MUST BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Protected Health Information – as defined in the HIPAA rules – is *individually identifiable information relating to the past, present or future physical or mental health or condition of an individual, provision of health care to an individual, or the past, present or future payment for health care provided to an individual*. Some local and state laws may also restrict the sharing of other information. In the event that local and state laws differ from the federal HIPAA laws, organizations must adhere to the most stringent law that applies to them.

Ensuring the privacy and security of tenants protected health information is an important compliance issue, but as a practical matter, maintaining confidentiality is essential to building trust between staff and tenants. A serious violation of trust can occur if tenants share private information with non-services team members such as desk clerks and then that information is reported to a services team member or if a tenant feels that their daily life in their home is being monitored. While such sharing of information may be *legally* allowable, unnecessary sharing of information can negatively impact the quality of the relationship between tenant and staff. Therefore, even staff who are authorized to access confidential information should refrain from sharing information unless there is a clear and necessary purpose for doing so.

Sharing of Non-Confidential Information

Some tenant information is not confidential; for example, behavior that is observed in public areas of the building is not confidential. In addition, some clear exceptions to tenants' right to confidentiality exist within the HIPAA regulations. According to the HIPAA regulations, protected health information may be disclosed without an authorization:

- To protect a child or impaired adult
- In an emergency circumstance
- To take action on an explicit threat
- In response to a court order
- For public health activities or purposes
- In response to a law enforcement officer's request for information for the purpose of locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, provided that the information is limited to the individual's: Name and address; date and place of birth; social security number; blood type and Rh factor; type of injury; date and time of treatment; date and time of death (if applicable), and; distinguishing physical characteristics, including height, weight, gender, race, hair and eye color, presence or absence of facial hair, scars and tattoos.

Brief Summary of Confidentiality Policies

To guide staff members in maintaining confidentiality, some general policies are listed below.

- Integrated services team members must communicate clearly with tenants regarding: the organization they work for, with whom they will share confidential information within their organization, and with whom they will not share information (unless written consent is obtained).
- Prospective tenants must be informed that if they are accepted into a building, the information that they provided during the screening interview will be shared with other support services staff from the same organization. They must also be informed that their written consent will be obtained prior to sharing the information with services team members from other agencies.
- Information obtained by services staff involved in the screening interview for initial tenancy must be considered confidential.

- All conversations between any of the staff members and tenants about individual tenant issues or problems must be held in a private setting and kept confidential.
- Private space for confidential meetings should be available at all times.
- Secure storage for electronic and written records that contain protected health information must be available at all times.
- Property Management records and supportive services records should be maintained separately.
- The sharing of information divulged by a tenant in private sessions should only be shared with other professionals involved with the treatment and support of the tenant and with the expressed written consent of the tenant.
- When a services team member requests the consent of a tenant to share information with staff from a different agency, the written consent form should be as specific as possible. Information sharing should be limited to what is necessary to plan for, and deliver, services to the tenant.
- Information obtained in a service relationship must not be used to impact an individual's employment or tenancy. Similarly, a problem that results in the termination of a tenant's employment must not be used to terminate his or her tenancy.
- Clear policies and procedures regarding the privacy and security of protected health information must be compliant with HIPAA, state and local laws
- All staff must receive training on privacy and confidentiality policies at orientation and on a regular basis thereafter.



Want more information?

For more information regarding additional HIPAA laws pertaining to the security of protected health information, see **Health Insurance Reform: Security Standards; Final Rule**, available at www.cms.hhs.gov/SecurityStandard/Downloads/securityfinalrule.pdf.

Addressing Tenant Issues While Ensuring Confidentiality

Sometimes non-services staff are able to identify that a tenant is in need of supportive services, or observe issues that may impact a tenant's housing stability. If a non-support services staff member observes a tenant's behavior that he or she believes indicates a problem or a need for services, recommended strategies for addressing the issue include:

- The staff member may offer to introduce the tenant to a services team member who could help the tenant.
- If the tenant's behavior occurs regularly in a public area, the staff member can ask a member of the services team to be present to observe the behavior.
- When a non-support staff member shares information with a services team member, information about an incident or problem should be limited to direct observation, not judgments, hearsay, rumor, or interpretations.
- Property management may report to a services team member a disruptive episode involving the tenant that occurred over the weekend or in the evening when the team members were not there.

Because of the nature of their role, information collected by property managers is generally not considered “protected health information” (see definition on the first page of this chapter)

- Tenants who are bothered by other tenants’ problem behaviors sometimes ask for information about how other tenants’ issues are being dealt with. Staff will need to assure tenants that issues are being addressed *without* sharing protected health information. Staff must consistently and ongoingly express to all tenants what information is confidential and what is not.
- In circumstances when tenants are having issues with other tenants, it may also be useful to review tenant and/or consumer rights statements and grievance procedures, to ensure that all involved parties clearly understand their rights.



Want more information?

See CSH’s publication *Between the Lines: A Question and Answer Guide on Legal Issues in Supportive Housing – National Edition*, available at www.csh.org/publications, for more information about maintaining the confidentiality of tenants protected health information.

CHAPTER 7: TENANT SCREENING AND SELECTION

This Chapter provides an overview of practices and protocols that can help ensure that applicants are “screened in” to supportive housing opportunities and have access to accommodations, services, and assistance to enable them to successfully access the housing.

“SCREENING IN” APPLICANTS FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Developing an effective intake process is one of the most important aspects of operating a successful supportive housing program – having as streamlined process as possible helps to reduce lease-up times and to reduce vacancy rates. In addition, property management and supportive services staff need to work together to “Screen In” those who will benefit from the housing opportunities being provided. In developing a screening a selection process that can “Screen In” the targeted populations, organizations should:

- Craft a process that is straightforward and easy to navigate;
- Ensure that the process is a good “fit” for the target population(s) and provides a realistic opportunity to access the housing opportunities;
- Consult with a qualified attorney in developing their intake procedures, policies, and forms; and
- Continuously evaluate the process – and if it isn’t working, change it.

The primary purpose of the selection and intake processes should be to ensure that applicants are eligible to live within the housing being provided. The screening process can also help staff to understand the likely service needs of the prospective tenants so that the service providers can be prepared to address those needs effectively and help tenants to sustain their housing. The screening process should not, however, require applicants to navigate a complicated assessment process, and information regarding applicants’ expected services needs should not be used as reasons to deny applicants access to the housing.

Before anyone meets with potential tenants, property management staff, services staff, and other team members should discuss and reach agreement regarding the following questions:

- Why do we screen?
- What do we hope to learn?
- What challenges might applicants face?
- How can we ensure we “screen in” those persons who need the housing?
- What challenges might tenants face after move-in?
- Who holds final decision making power regarding applicants’ acceptance or rejection?

Planning the Screening and Selection Process

In planning timely, effective, and efficient screening and selection processes for supportive housing units, the involved organizations should discuss each of the following elements of the process and determine the roles for property management staff and supportive services staff:

Outreach Strategies

- Sources for potential tenants
- Develop public relation materials describing the housing, neighborhood, services, and tenancy
- Conduct presentations to introduce the community and potential tenants to the housing

Criteria and Expectations for Tenants Regarding

- Lease agreement
- Allowing others peaceful enjoyment
- Health and safety hazards
- Issues related to criminal histories
- Rent payment
- Compliance with house rules
- Substance use

Application and Interview Protocols

- Forms and letters for: 1) confirmation of received applications; 2) steps in the process; 3) rejection or acceptance; and 4) the appeal process
- Schedule of process, including estimated time from interview to final decision to move-in
- Waiting list policies and protocols

Application Forms

- Application for housing
- Income verification
- Employment verification
- Required eligibility documentation
- References
- Housing history

Interview Process

- Steps in the interview process, including number of interviews
- Purpose of each interview
- Interviewing techniques and questions, and compliance with Fair Housing Laws
- Roles of people involved in each interview
- Forms for summarizing interview information

Consideration of Past Issues

- Credit problems
- Eviction history
- Involvement with criminal justice system
- Failure to pay rent

Move-in Paperwork and Orientation Procedures

- Lease
- House Rules
- An orientation package that might include:
 - Map of the neighborhood and public transportation
 - Information about services and events in the building
 - Information about where and when to pay rent, get mail, check messages, file work orders, etc.
 - A tenant “buddy” assignment to help answer questions
 - A walking tour of the building and/or neighborhood
 - A welcome package with household supplies

APPLICATION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

It is important to ensure that application and screening processes are not so long and complicated that people who need access to the housing opportunities will struggle to successfully navigate the processes. For most supportive housing, it is necessary to document income and other eligibility information, such as homelessness or disability status. Staff might also need back-up contact information, in case it is hard to find the applicant once his or her name gets to the top of the list, and requesting a release of information from the applicant early in the process can help to expedite the assembly of the verifications needed.

Tips for Eligibility Screening

It is important to make the screening process collaborative to ensure a successful process and move-in. Case managers making referrals to supportive housing should be expected to assist the applicant in gathering necessary documentation to help ensure a timely screening process. Homeless applicants might not have easy access to telephones or transportation, and applicants with disabilities may need reasonable accommodations or assistance.

Regulatory and funding compliance determine what documentation the applicant is required to provide to verify eligibility for the supportive housing. Examples of eligibility documentation the owner may be required to obtain and maintain in the tenant's file include:

- Verification of homelessness for housing targeted to homeless individuals
- Verification of a physical and/or mental health disability for housing targeted to persons with such disabilities
- Family composition
- Household income

The property manager is generally responsible for ensuring that applicants for housing have provided all necessary documents verifying eligibility. Supportive housing operators generally allow the applicant a liberal amount of time to gather the required eligibility verification, usually up to 30 days. If the applicant is unable to provide the required documentation within the time frame allowed by the housing owner, the designated staff representative should contact the next applicant on the wait list or the next eligible referral, and move the pending application either off or to the bottom of the wait list, as appropriate for regulatory and/or funder compliance and management procedure. Supportive housing operators must be careful to ensure that they fully analyze and comply with any regulatory agreements or funding sources that may have specific requirements for maintaining and managing waiting lists.

The Tenant Selection Flow Chart on the next page documents the protocols used by the Center for Urban Community Services (www.cucs.org), based in New York City, to screen applicants for supportive housing opportunities, including clearly defined roles for both property management and supportive services staff, and opportunities for tenants to access assistance and services.

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Tenant Selection Flow Chart
Provided by the Center for Urban Community Services (www.cucs.org)

Task	Actions by Property Management	Actions by Supportive Services
Outreach	<p>Prepare descriptive materials on project</p> <p>Notify Continuum of Care, local providers, advertise regarding available units</p>	<p>Train/educate all staff regarding project including eligibility criteria and project objectives</p> <p>Ensure that all outreach staff are knowledgeable regarding Supportive Housing model</p>
Application	<p>Distribute and collect applications for housing</p> <p>Assist applicants in completing applications</p> <p>Time/Date all applications received</p>	<p>Provide support/assistance in completing applications</p>
Information Gathering	<p>Verify information provided</p> <p>Obtain housing history reference, if possible</p> <p>Credit Check / Criminal Background Check</p>	<p>Obtain clinical information to verify that project will be able to address needs of potential tenant</p>
Assessment	<p>Determine whether there are any issues in applicant's background/history that would provide a cause for not offering housing.</p>	<p>Determine whether applicant (with support) will be able to live independently. Assess if issues that have interfered with housing in the past have been either addressed or support can be provided.</p>
Decision	<p>Participate in joint review</p> <p>Based on information provided and assessments conducted by property management and supportive services, decide whether to accept applicant.</p> <p>For accepted applicants, convey decision, arrange and coordinate move-in process</p> <p>For rejected applicants, convey information regarding decision to applicant, offer suggestions on other housing options, and review appeals process</p>	<p>Participate in joint review</p> <p>Follow-up with accepted tenants to offer support (as-needed) in move-in process</p>
Appeals Process	<p>Explain to applicant process for appealing decision: information must be provided that would mitigate grounds for admission having been denied</p> <p>Review additional/mitigating information provided by applicant</p> <p>Additional materials to be reviewed by staff not involved in initial admission decision or staff subordinate to those who made the initial decision</p> <p>Final decision on admission made</p>	<p>Offer assistance in compiling/preparing information to be used as basis for appeal of decision</p> <p>Participate in appeal process, review materials submitted, and confer with property management</p>



Want more information?

See CSH's document *[Sample Applicant Screening Protocol](#)* (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2screening), adapted from a sample procedure generously provided by the Community Housing Partnership of San Francisco, California. Housing providers should develop all screening procedures with the assistance of an attorney.

The Applicant Interview

It is important to ask the same questions of everyone interviewed as applicants. However, it is acceptable to ask follow up or clarifying questions based upon the responses to questions. For example, if an applicant indicates that they have been evicted for non-payment of rent, it would be appropriate to follow up with questions regarding why the person got behind in the rent, what remedies did they try to resolve the problem, have they attempted or completed restitution of the back rent, or other relevant questions. During the interview, it is important to impress upon the applicant that, if there have been difficulties in the past, it will not necessarily deny them access to supportive housing.



Want more information?

See CSH's document *[The Applicant Interview](#)* (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2screening) which addresses the types of issues typically covered in a prospective tenant interview, stressing the importance of tying all requests for information back to the candidate's ability to uphold the terms of tenancy.

Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodations in Tenant Selection Processes

Persons with disabilities are legally entitled to reasonable accommodations and reasonable modifications in order to have the full use and enjoyment of the housing opportunities being made available. It is extremely important for owners and operators of supportive housing to have clear, organized, and well-documented policies and procedures for receiving, considering and responding to such requests for accommodation, and for these policies and procedures to be clearly communicated to housing applicants and tenants.

In seeking to provide an accessible tenant screening and selection processes, for example, the housing interview location and process must be accessible to all applicants, including applicants with disabilities. Throughout the application and screening process, the housing provider is obligated by law to consider and offer reasonable accommodation to applicants who request it and who qualify. It should also be noted that some applicants or tenants may need accommodations to be made in the administration of these policies and procedures as well, such as assistance with completing forms or gathering necessary documentation.



Want more information?
See CSH's document [Reasonable Accommodations in Tenant Selection Processes](#) (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2accommodations.)

REJECTION CRITERIA AND APPEALS

Rejection criteria in supportive housing are generally determined by compliance with Fair Housing laws. Owners are prohibited from discriminating against any eligible applicant and eligibility criteria, as determined by the funding source(s). Rejection criteria should also reflect the housing provider's mission, values, and objectives. Poor credit, a negative housing history, and past drug use or criminal activity should not be automatic cause for rejection in supportive housing. Supportive housing operators should review any negative housing history, poor credit history, past drug use and/or criminal history with the applicant(s), exploring what action and/or effort the applicant(s) has made to address past behavior and history. Staff can ask the applicant to sign a Release of Information form enabling staff to verify the applicant's statements.

Following are examples of why the supportive housing owners reject applications for housing, or refuse to interview applicants for housing:

- The applicant is clearly under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In this situation, staff should be trained to end the interview as quickly as possible, and to inform the director of property management or designated representative immediately. The housing provider may allow the applicant to schedule a new interview.
- History of violence, such as documented violence towards former landlords or fellow tenants, conviction of hate crimes, or conviction of child abuse as a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse of a minor.
- Demonstrated inability to live in a diverse community (intolerance), as indicated by responses the applicant gives during applicant screening(s) and interview(s).
- The applicant is a registered sex offender. Applicants for federally subsidized housing who are registered sex offenders must be rejected, consistent with HUD regulations. (Other types of housing projects may allow for placement of registered sex offenders.)
- Making false statement(s) during the housing interview, and/or making false statement(s) on the housing application.

All rejected applicants should also be provided with an opportunity to request an appeal to the rejection, and the applicant has a right to request a reasonable accommodation of an exception to the rejection criteria developed for the supportive housing project.



Want more information?

See the following CSH documents (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2screening):

[Rejection Criteria for Supportive Housing](#)

[Sample Applicant Appeal Procedure](#)

MOVE-IN AND ORIENTATION PROCESSES

Moving into a new home – the events surrounding the move and the physical move itself - is a stressful time for anyone. In advance of the move itself, there are many things staff can do to help make the move as easy as possible for a new tenant. A range of services might be offered as part of the move-in process, and services and property management staff, should work together to determine what's most appropriate and feasible. Services that might be provided include:

- Provision of and/or access to relocation and/or move-in funds;
- A moving van and a mover;
- Help in obtaining necessities; and,
- Assistance with turning-on utilities, change of address notification, and voter registration.

Meeting with people who are approved for housing but not yet moved-in creates a great opportunity to support them in whatever needs/fears they may have and to market case management and/or other support services.



Want more information?

See the following CSH documents (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2screening):

[Move-In: Keys to Success](#)

[Sample Initial Move-In Tenant Questionnaire](#)

[Orienting Tenants to their New Home](#)

CHAPTER 8: LEASES AND HOUSE RULES

This Chapter includes a discussion of the practice of utilizing leases in supportive housing, provides guidance for addressing issues of substance abuse within the lease, and provides tips for creating effective House Rules as an addendum to the lease agreement.

THE LEASE AGREEMENT IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The lease is a legal document that formalizes the rights and responsibilities of both tenant and landlord. The execution of a lease between the housing provider and the tenant means that the tenant has a legal right to occupancy of the unit, and that the relationship between the housing provider and the tenant is governed by landlord-tenant law. The lease is what differentiates permanent housing from other types of residential programs, where program operators and clients do not have recourse to the legal system when resolving disputes. Just as the lease and its attachments (or *addenda*) communicate clear expectations for tenants regarding the terms of their occupancy and prescribe consequences when the terms are not observed, the lease also protects the tenant from arbitrary, unfair, or illegal actions by the landlord. It is therefore exceptionally important that any attempts to enforce the lease be carefully documented.

Within supportive housing, each tenant household should hold a lease granting the same rights as those granted to other lease-holders within the community, including the right to determine whether to participate in supportive services or not, with no limits on length of tenancy, as long as the terms and conditions of the lease or agreement are met. It is critically important that all tenants have an understanding of the terms and conditions of their lease, including both their rights and their responsibilities, and tenants with little experience with living independently or with histories of housing failures and/or evictions may need ongoing and consistent education regarding the expectations and skill-development training to assist them to meet those expectations.

The relationship between landlords and tenants is governed by federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and all supportive housing operators should ensure that they receive appropriate legal advice from attorneys experienced with landlord-tenant laws within their local community. It is also vitally important that the terms of leases are consistently applied and enforced with all tenant households, while a focus on providing tenants with opportunities and services that will enable them to be successful in retaining their housing is sustained. This topic is addressed in this Manual in *Chapter 9: Lease Enforcement and Eviction Prevention*.



Want more information?

The Montgomery County, MD Department of Housing and Community Affairs provides a wide variety of resources regarding landlord-tenant issues on their website (see www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hca), including:

- [Sample Multi-Family Dwelling Lease \(in English\)](#)
- [Contrato de Alquiler Para Residencias Multifamiliares \(Sample Multi-Family Dwelling Lease in Spanish\)](#)
- [Landlord-Tenant Handbook \(in English\)](#)
- [Manual Para Propietarios e Inquilinos \(Landlord Tenant Handbook in Spanish\)](#)

ADDRESSING ISSUES OF SUBSTANCE USE WITHIN THE LEASE

While all leases typically prohibit the use and distribution of illegal drugs on site, many supportive housing providers include an addendum of this type as part of their approach to working with people with substance use issues. The policy emphasizes standards of acceptable community behavior rather than the use or non-use of drugs and alcohol. This allows the tenant to speak openly about drug abuse and its concomitant issues to supportive services staff without fear of eviction. All such policies should be carefully tailored for each supportive housing project, and should receive appropriate review by legal counsel.



Want more information?

- See CSH's document [*Sample Policy on Drug and Alcohol Use*](#) (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2leases), which is based upon information adapted from a version of the Lyric Hotel's "Substance Use Policy" (San Francisco, CA), and the Direct Access to Housing's boilerplate lease addendum (San Francisco, CA).
- See CSH's document [*Substance Use/Abuse and the Lease*](#) (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2leases), which is adapted from CSH's publication [*Between the Lines: A Question and Answer Guide on Legal Issues in Supportive Housing – National Edition*](#) (prepared by the Law Offices of Goldfarb and Lipman, and available at www.csh.org/publications.) This document discusses the legal implications of substance abuse and the use of illegal drugs within a supportive housing development.

CREATING EFFECTIVE HOUSE RULES

In a supportive housing program, the House Rules is a document that sets forth how the community defines the behaviors associated with good tenancy and community. It is typically a part of, or an addendum to, the tenants' leases and compliance with the House Rules is a condition of tenancy. Crafting and enforcing a set of House Rules can be a complex and difficult process. Generally speaking, a supportive housing sponsor should establish rules that:

- Are specific, concrete and clearly related to the terms of the tenant's lease.
- Mirror the philosophy and intent of the supportive housing community.
- Create expectations that can reasonably be met by the tenants.
- Aid in building a supportive community of neighbors engaged and invested in each other's welfare.

Tips for Designing House Rules in Supportive Housing

- **Purpose of the House Rules:** When designing house rules, consider the intent behind the rules. Rules should have a clear purpose that can be understood by the community. Divisions are created when rules are perceived to be for the convenience or benefit of a few.
- **Enforceability:** How the rules will be enforced and the process for enforcing them is key. Consistency is necessary when enforcing rules in a building. Rules that cannot be uniformly enforced should be excluded from the list. If it is discovered that a rule is not enforceable, consider

other ways the same idea might be encouraged voluntarily.

- **Legality:** Rules have to be consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws.
- **Simplicity:** Having a few enforceable rules is far more effective than pages of rules that cannot be enforced or effectively communicated.
- **Tenant Input:** Experience has shown that there are several advantages to having tenants participate in developing the rules of their building. Tenants are then more likely to incorporate them into practice and to remind others to do the same. Rules can both reflect and help influence the culture and norms of a building. The process of holding meetings where tenants and staff can discuss house rules can be beneficial for community building and have therapeutic outcomes for tenants with special needs.
- **Development:** Rules can and should be changed to meet the needs of the tenants living in the building. It is essential to create a structure and a process to review and revise rules. Having a process in place for residents to file grievances and to appeal sanctions for rules violations ensures that the rights of residents are protected and that residents are confident that rules are fairly enforced.

Things to Do When Establishing House Rules:

- Establish rules relating to payment of rent and other fees, such as:
 - Rent is due on the first of the month.
 - Payment received after the fifth of the month will initiate a financial penalty of \$25 payable within 10 days.
 - Late payments will generate an automatic notice to support services staff.
- Establish rules relating to maintaining the unit and the property, such as:
 - Walls may not be painted or wallpapered without permission from management.
 - Visitors may stay up to seven consecutive nights, after which they must have property management and supportive service staff approval to remain in the unit.
 - Household income must be verified annually.
- Establish rules relating to tenancy behaviors that could interfere with the rights of others to health, safety or the peaceful enjoyment of the premises, such as:
 - Children may not play in the halls unsupervised.
 - Tenants may not tamper with the alarm systems or any building safety equipment.
 - Quiet hours must be observed between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- Develop a specific written policy on substance abuse, specifying what behaviors are prohibited in the building and in the tenant's unit. Focus as much as possible on the *behaviors* resulting from misuse of substances, rather than on the substance use itself.
- Develop clear written policies for how rules will be enforced.
 - What behaviors will generate a notice from property management?
 - How many notices will be provided to tenants on behavior issues?
 - What behaviors/issues will not be tolerated and will require immediate initiation of eviction proceedings?
- Explain all house rules to tenants during a preoccupancy conference and annually during their income recertification. Ensure the tenant understands their obligations as a leaseholder and also understands the community will support them in being responsible.

Things Not to Do When Establishing House Rules:

- Create rules that are legally unenforceable, vulnerable to legal disputes and inconsistent with the philosophy of supportive housing as an independent living environment. Such rules tend to fall into the category of institutional rules or program rules, such as:
 - Rules requiring the tenant's participation in services.
 - Rules prohibiting visitors of the opposite gender.
 - Rules requiring a tenant return to their unit by a particular time each night.
- Create rules that are so vague that neither tenants nor staff can understand what they mean. "Tenants must observe reasonable quiet hours" is open to a wide range of interpretation. "Loud television, music or other noise is not permitted between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m." is clear and concrete.
- Create rules that are excessively detailed, such as specifying the exact types of cleaning products tenants may use. Overwhelming tenants with written rules is counterproductive and enforcing excessively detailed policies will consume inordinate amounts of staff time.
- Create rules you have no intention of enforcing, or which are impossible to enforce.



Want more information?

See CSH's document [*Sample House Rules for Supportive Housing*](#) (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2leases), which, while not exhaustive, provides several sample house rules. Providers may choose to use this document to start and then consider what additional topics to address, depending upon the specifics of the housing project and upon input from tenants.

Tips for Starting a House Rules Committee

Supportive housing programs should provide regular opportunities for tenants, tenant councils, and/or other tenant-led organizations to provide input regarding all policies related to tenant and consumer rights, including leases and house rules. Many organizations assist tenants to organize a House Rules Committee that provides input and guidance regarding the House Rules. Organizations that choose to help develop such a Committee should:

- Define the purpose of the House Rules Committee in relation to the program mission.
- Discuss the process of involving residents in designing house rules with staff and allow an opportunity to question things such as: the clinical value of the process, the possible lack of staff expertise in this area, and the significant time commitment required to create an effective process.
- Not be too cautious in getting started. Allow resident partners to help to define the process.
- Create a flyer, translated into all relevant languages spoken by residents, stating the purpose of the Committee.
- Talk it up! Make sure that each resident feels personally invited and that their input is welcomed. Encourage people who have expressed dissatisfaction with house rules to attend.

CHAPTER 8: LEASES AND HOUSE RULES

- Invite the chairs of existing committees, groups or resident associations. Some examples may be a beautification committee, reading club, or recovery group.
- Offer refreshments at meetings whenever possible.
- Monitor the demographic composition of the first meeting. Are all racial, ethnic, genders, etc. represented? If not, discuss outreach efforts to diversify the group.
- Keep meetings focused on both the product (reviewing house rules) and the process (involving residents in making decisions about their homes).
- Identify which rules are not negotiable and why.

CHAPTER 9: LEASE ENFORCEMENT AND EVICTION PREVENTION

This Chapter provides guidance for creating a focus on preventing evictions, addressing lease violations consistently, including failure to pay rent and violations related to substance use, and highlights the role of collaborative “housing retention conferences.” In addition, this Chapter provides guidance for implementing eviction processes when all other reasonable efforts have failed to resolve the issues.

A FOCUS ON PREVENTING EVICTIONS

All partners involved in supportive housing opportunities should be committed to providing quality affordable housing to extremely low-income, formerly homeless and disabled persons, to providing a foundation for their continued growth and success, and to helping tenants retain housing. While some evictions are inevitable in supportive housing, evictions represent a waste of valuable and scarce resources. For tenants, eviction can mean a return to homelessness; for the owner, evictions can mean expensive, contentious and time-consuming court proceedings. Money that could be better spent on supportive services or building operations is diverted to attorneys and court costs.

Before beginning legal action, managers and staff of the provider should consider whether there are alternatives satisfactory to the owner and to the tenant, and should keep in mind the following considerations:

- All property management policies and procedures – including those related to addressing lease violations - should be developed to support the underlying mission of the housing project.
- Evictions are a last resort, when all other attempts to resolve a situation have failed.
- By coordinating response to tenant behavior with support services staff, staff can provide opportunities for tenants to access services and assistance to correct lease violations.
- Policies, procedures, and coordinated approaches must recognize that issues of addiction and relapse will be challenges for some tenants, and that both are part of recovery.

However, when the supportive services staff and property management staff’s coordinated efforts fail and tenants repeatedly violate the terms of tenancy, property management staff should promptly – and consistently - exercise all legal rights up to and including termination of tenancy.



Want more information?

See Chapter 4 of this Manual, *Defining and Coordinating Roles* and/or see this [profile of the eviction prevention plans and practices of Deborah’s Place](#), a supportive housing provider in Chicago, IL (available via www.csh.org/toolkit.)

ADDRESSING LEASE VIOLATIONS

The lease is a legal document that formalizes the rights and responsibilities of both tenant and landlord. The execution of a lease between the housing provider and the tenant means that the tenant has a legal right to occupancy of the unit, and that the relationship between the housing provider and the tenant is governed by landlord-tenant law. The lease is what differentiates permanent housing from other types of

residential programs, where program operators and clients do not have recourse to the legal system when resolving disputes.

Responding Consistently

Just as the lease and its attachments (or *addenda*) communicate clear expectations for tenants regarding the terms of their occupancy and prescribe consequences when the terms are not observed, the lease also protects the tenant from arbitrary, unfair or illegal actions by the landlord. It is therefore exceptionally important that any attempts to enforce the lease be carefully documented and that the approach to addressing lease violations be consistent and fair. An important element of that consistency is a reliance on standardized approaches to notifying tenants of lease violations.



Want more information?

See [**Sample Lease Violation Policy and Notice**](#) (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2leases.) This document describes the importance of policies that require documentation of all lease violations to ensure that all tenants are being treated equally and includes a Sample Notice of Lease Violation to alert a tenant to the violation and provides an opportunity for him/her to clarify any misunderstandings regarding the lease.

Addressing Non-Payment of Rent

One of the most important requirements for tenants of supportive housing is the payment of rent as required under their leases. Effective collection of rent is also critically important to the financial sustainability of the housing. Addressing non-payment of rent quickly and consistently is critical to ensuring both that tenants have appropriate opportunities to address the lease violation and that the revenue required to operate the housing is collected.

Supportive housing operators generally adopt a somewhat different response to rent collection problems than other housing owners or landlords. Although it is critical that the importance of on-time rental payments be stressed to tenants, it is also understood that tenants of supportive housing have a number of unique problems that can impede their ability to meet their rental obligations. These can include family crises, medical emergencies, mental health challenges, or relapse to addictive behavior patterns. Although there is a fundamental requirement that tenants meet their rental obligations, supportive housing operators will often seek recourse through counseling or referral for supportive services or money management prior to commencing eviction proceedings.

Payment plans offer the tenant an opportunity to avoid legal action by consenting to pay a portion of past-due rent each month until fully repaid. Payment plans are sometimes offered in conjunction with money management services and training to prevent eviction for tenants with histories of non-payment. By assisting tenants to learn how to better manage their money, supportive housing providers can help tenants to develop skills critical to their ability to achieve housing stability.

The Rent Arrears / Collection Flow Chart on the next page documents the protocols used by the Center for Urban Community Services (www.cucs.org), based in New York City, to respond when tenants have not paid their rent, including clearly defined roles for both property management and supportive services staff, and opportunities for tenants to develop repayments plans and access services.



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Rent Arrears/Collection Flow Chart

Provided by the Center for Urban Community Services (www.cucs.org)

Calendar Date	Actions by Property Management	Actions by Supportive Services
1st of Month	Rent notices delivered to tenants by this date	
3rd of Month	Management prepares list of tenants with unpaid rent status	Services receives copy of unpaid rent roster
3rd to 7th of Month	Management tracks rent payments; notifies services of any payments	Services contacts all tenants in rent arrears, seeks to identify issues causing nonpayment
7th of Month	Late payment notice delivered to tenant; warning of late payment fee issued to tenant	Services seeks to engage tenant and assess situation Possible actions: 1. Assist in resolving benefit/entitlement issues 2. Address employment related issues 3. Provide assistance in accessing emergency payments 4. Help tenant to develop repayment plan 5. Services unable to engage tenant or unable to develop resolution 6. Services discusses alternative housing arrangements with tenant
14th of Month	Joint meeting with services Late fee notice issued to tenant Notification sent to agency attorney to commence dispossession action Tenant advised to seek legal assistance Services copied on all notifications	Joint meeting with Management Services pursues actions 1-6 identified above Services seeks to intervene, encouraging tenant to seek legal assistance and providing referral for legal help
21st of Month	Letter from agency attorney sent to tenant notifying of intent to seek dispossession	Copy of attorney letter sent to services Services continues to pursue possible resolutions 1-6 identified above Services seeks to identify alternative housing
28th of Month	Management through attorney has court summons issued for rent-delinquent tenant Repayment plan can no longer be entered into between management and tenant Court authorizes eviction or develops stipulated agreement between management and tenant	Services receives copy of court summons Services reviews court process with tenant and encourages tenant to obtain legal assistance if they haven't already Alternative housing options reviewed with tenant



Want more information?

See the following documents (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2leases):

[Policies Regarding Rent Receivables \(PDF\)](#)

[Guidelines for Rent Collection in Supportive Housing](#)

[Sample Notices Regarding Failure to Pay Rent](#)

[Sample Proof of Service](#)

[Sample Rent Payment Pledge](#)

LEASE ENFORCEMENT AND EVICTIONS RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE

This information is adapted from CSH's publication [Between the Lines: A Question and Answer Guide on Legal Issues in Supportive Housing – National Edition](#) (prepared by the Law Offices of Goldfarb and Lipman and available at www.csh.org/publications), and discusses the legal implications of substance abuse and the use of illegal drugs within a supportive housing development.

Question: May a housing provider evict for non-sobriety?

Answer: Evictions for non-sobriety may be difficult because alcoholism is a disability.

Generally, in standard rental housing a housing provider cannot impose sobriety conditions on tenants since alcoholism is a disability under the Fair Housing Act. However, if a housing provider is providing housing to recovering alcoholics, sobriety may be a reasonable condition to occupancy as part of the services the housing provider makes available to the residents. In such an instance the housing provider would have a compelling interest in maintaining an alcohol-free environment.

Caution should be exercised in evicting any residents solely for failure to abide by the sobriety rules, however. An alcoholic may be considered a disabled person entitled to a reasonable accommodation and this accommodation may require waiver of the sobriety rules. Housing providers could argue that waiver of a sobriety rule is a fundamental alteration in the nature of a clean and sober housing program, and therefore is not a reasonable accommodation, but at this time there are no reported cases on this issue. When making such an argument, a housing provider may need to offer an alternative accommodation such as permitting continued occupancy by a tenant who breaks a sobriety rule if he or she attends a rehabilitation program.

Some housing providers attempting to maintain sobriety policies include the sobriety rules in their lease or house rules, but do not evict for failure to comply with the rules, since such evictions are difficult and often fail. The success of such an eviction will most likely depend upon the vigor of the tenant's advocate and the judge's own inclinations regarding individual rights. Behavior problems that result from problems with alcohol may be grounds for eviction if these behavior problems interfere with other tenants' rights or affect the tenant's ability to meet the terms of tenancy.

Question: May a housing provider evict for illegal drug use?

Answer: Yes, however, evidence to support the claim may be difficult to get, thereby making it difficult to successfully evict a tenant for illegal drug use.

The use of illegal drugs should generally be sufficient grounds for eviction; however, it is advisable that leases contain a provision prohibiting the use of illegal drugs so the eviction is based on a lease violation. Most jurisdictions allow eviction for criminal activity, including illegal drug use. Housing providers should be prepared for the resident to assert the need for a reasonable accommodation in any eviction. Although it is difficult to think of what the reasonable accommodation would be in the instance where the housing provider has clear evidence of illegal drug use, providers should be prepared for creative defenses asserted by tenants who are being evicted for drug use. Housing providers may have difficulty obtaining convincing evidence of the tenant's drug use. Rarely will a tenant use drugs in front of staff and other tenants are often reluctant to testify against fellow residents. Evidence based on behavior may not be convincing or explained away by the tenant.

IMPLEMENTING “HOUSING RETENTION” CONFERENCES

Experienced supportive housing providers recognize the value of clear, coordinated communication from both property management staff and supportive services with a tenant who is at-risk of losing their housing. Many such providers feature formal, coordinated conferences (sometimes referred to as “housing retention” conferences) between a tenant and both property management and services staff, as a key intervention in response to lease violations. Such conferences focus on exploring the causes of the lease violation, communicating the potential consequences, identifying services that can assist the tenant to redress the violation, and determining clearly defined next steps for the tenant and the staff.

Sample Housing Retention Conference Guidelines and Policy

Note: These sample guidelines and policy have been generously provided by the Tenderloin Housing Clinic (www.thclinic.org) in San Francisco, California.

Housing Retention Conferences should be held when a tenant is in jeopardy of losing his/her housing, when several lease violations have occurred within a small time-frame, or when property management (PM) and/or support services (SS) believes it would be helpful to have a face-to-face meeting with a tenant to discuss issues related to the retention of their housing.

PM should first contact SS for convenient dates/times for the conference. When two separate appointments dates/times have been agreed upon, PM must send a written violation notice or a letter to the tenant in order to set up the conference. Every effort should be made to accommodate the tenants' schedule if he/she is unable to make the given appointment time.

PM should write a first draft of the Housing Retention Contract prior to the meeting. Contracts should be written in a professional manner using factual content. Personal statements and sentiments should be avoided. Once a draft has been written, it should be given to SS in order for them to input their ideas. Ideally, this should occur at least 24-hours prior to the conference.

All parties who plan to attend the conference should be listed in attendance on the contract. It is up to PM or SS to include their supervisors when appropriate. The Property Supervisor, Director of Property Management, Support Services Manager and/or Director of Support Services may attend at his/her discretion.

Only current behavioral issues and/or policy violations should be listed under the "Incidents" section of the contract. The date of the incident(s) should be listed, as well as the policy that was violated - use

exact language. The written notices of violations (write-ups) should be attached to the contract. This should be a one-line, factual recap of the violation.

Items in the "Resolution" section should be as concrete as possible and should revolve around policies that the tenant has been violating. For example, if the tenant continuously violates the check out time of the visitor policy, a resolution item should read, "(Tenant) agrees to observe all visitor policy rules, specifically the check-out time." If the tenant has a habit of coming to the lobby when intoxicated and engaging tenants and staff in conflict, a resolution item should read, "(Tenant) agrees that common areas of the property are shared space and he is required to maintain respect for all. John should stay out of the building or in his unit when he is intoxicated and should cease engaging tenants and staff in conflict." The last resolution should always read, "(Tenant) agrees that if these incidents occur again or if any egregious or repeated behavior that causes problems in the building occurs again, tenant will seek other housing within one week, or THC will seek eviction."

If PM and SS cannot agree on the terms of the contract, each party should contact his/her supervisor immediately for resolution.

PM and SS should meet briefly to discuss strategy for tone and style of the meeting. In the majority of cases, PM will lead the discussion during the conference. However, in some particularly contentious cases, it may be helpful for SS to lead the discussion. Each conference is different, but the tone of all conferences should be one of respect, discussion and resolution. PM and SS should be open to ideas from the tenant.

If a tenant refuses to sign the contract at the meeting, it should be made clear to the tenant that it is a change in his/her behavior that will help him/her to avoid eviction. If a tenant cannot maintain respect for all present at the meeting, it is at the discretion of PM or SS to end the meeting.



Want more information?

See **[Sample Housing Retention Conference Guidelines and Policy](#)** (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2leases) which includes a sample Housing Retention Contract from the Tenderloin Housing Clinic in San Francisco, California, and/or use the scenario described in **[Coordinated Responses to Inappropriate Behavior by a Tenant](#)** (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2safety) for property management and supportive services staff to plan how they will coordinate their efforts when tenants are engaging in disruptive behavior which could lead to lease violations.

EVICTION PROTOCOLS

For those situations in which eviction cannot be avoided, it is important to have clear protocols for how staff should proceed with evictions step-by-step, including important "checks and balances" to ensure appropriate preventive measures have been attempted and appropriate approvals by management have been secured. Once again, providers are cautioned that eviction is a difficult, often expensive and protracted process, and should be regarded as a last resort.

For example, the Tenderloin Housing Clinic (www.thclinic.org) in San Francisco, California provides the following general protocols and guidelines for their approach to evictions:

- With very few exceptions, evictions should *not* be done in haste. All other options should be explored before an eviction.
- Attention to detail is a requirement in all phases of an eviction.
- All tenants under eviction (or a potential candidate for an eviction) must appear on your manager's weekly report and you must obtain approval from the Director of Property Management before a Summons can be served in all cases of eviction.
- Across the board, evictions should be characterized by consistency, fairness and flexibility, and accuracy.

In addition, the Tenderloin Housing Clinic's protocols provide additional detailed guidance for evictions for non-payment for rent and evictions resulting from nuisance or problem behavior, providing staff with clear guidance regarding expectations for documentation, service of notices, opportunities for tenants facing eviction to resolve the problems and sustain their tenancy, and internal communication and reporting.



Want more information?

See **The Eviction Process in Supportive Housing** (available at www.csh.org/toolkit2leases) for a complete version of Tenderloin Housing Clinic's protocols and a sample "eviction request form."

IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL COUNSEL

Lease enforcement and managing eviction processes can pose significant legal challenges for organizations, and are subject to local Landlord – Tenant regulations. For these reasons, it is vitally important to have lease agreements and all policies, protocols, and forms related to service of notices of lease violations and eviction actions reviewed by an experienced attorney familiar with Landlord – Tenant laws. Further, organizations may need to retain the services of an attorney to help guide their actions when pursuing eviction of a tenant.

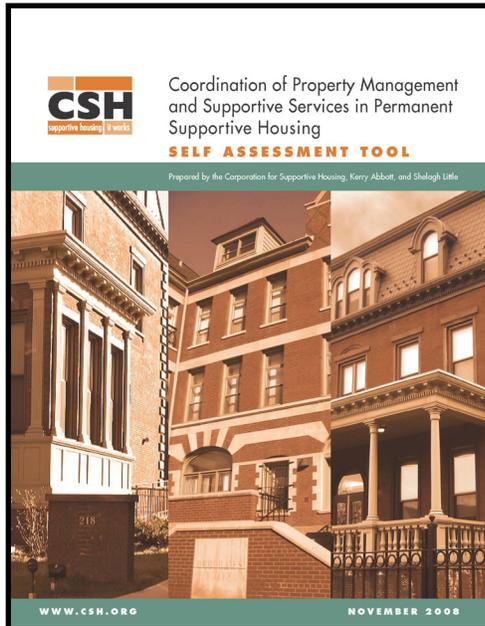


Want more information?

For information about eviction processes in Montgomery County, MD, please see page 36 of the **Landlord-Tenant Handbook (in English)** or **Manual Para Propietarios e Inquilinos (Landlord Tenant Handbook in Spanish)** provided by the Montgomery County, MD Department of Housing and Community Affairs on their website (see www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hca.)

CHAPTER 10: SELF ASSESSMENT OF THE COORDINATION OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

CSH'S SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL



The Coordination of Property Management and Supportive Services in Permanent Supportive Housing Self Assessment Tool

(This document can be accessed at www.csh.org/publications.)

While supportive housing providers are frequently evaluated by outside stakeholders, organizations may not have the opportunity to step back and assess their own performance and capacity. The Corporation for Supportive Housing created this Self Assessment Tool to allow the management and staff of supportive housing units to take a deeper look at the level of coordination between their property management and supportive services functions, and how this relationship impacts tenants as well as staff.

The self assessment process may offer new insight into the collaboration between property management and supportive services staff. Recognizing that property management and

supportive services have different and sometimes overlapping roles in supportive housing, this Tool aims to provide practical guidance on how staff can collaborate and coordinate their efforts more effectively. An organization may choose to conduct this self assessment at any stage, including:

- As part of the planning and development process for the creation of new supportive housing units;
- As a facet of an agency or department evaluation process,
- As part of an agency strategic planning process; or
- In response to feedback received from staff members, tenants, or outside stakeholders.

During the planning and development process, this Self Assessment Tool can be helpful in ensuring that the necessary groundwork for successful collaboration between property management and supportive services staff is in place. For supportive housing units already in operation, the assessment can prevent or troubleshoot some common pitfalls in the collaborative relationship between the property management and supportive service functions. An existing supportive housing provider may use this Tool to refine its policies and procedures or develop new systems, as needed.

SUGGESTED SELF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

CSH's Coordination Self Assessment Tool organizes guidance and questions for self assessment activities into three parts:

- Part 1: Organizational Self Assessment by Senior Management
- Part 2: Interviews and Focus Groups with Staff
- Part 3: Interviews and/or Focus Groups with Tenants

Part 1: Organizational Self Assessment by Senior Management

Part 1 of this Tool offers a series of questions for staff, highlighting critical elements of a well-coordinated relationship between property management and supportive services functions. The section includes guidance for property managers and service providers. The management team that oversees housing operations and services staff should conduct Part 1. Ideally, the most senior position(s) overseeing property management and supportive services will complete this section.

Parts 2 and 3: Interviews and/or Focus Groups with Staff and Tenants

Parts 2 and 3 of this Tool consist of guidelines for conducting interviews and/or focus groups with staff and tenants of supportive housing. If appropriate, staff and tenants may be solicited to respond to anonymous surveys or be interviewed by a third party facilitator. A third party facilitator may contribute to a more in-depth evaluation and generate additional recommendations for improving coordination, but this step is not essential for the completion of the self assessment process.



Want more information?

Listen to a [podcast of CSH's Hot Topics in Supportive Housing Audio-Conference](#) focused on the [Coordination of Property Management and Supportive Services in Permanent Supportive Housing Self Assessment Tool](#), available at www.csh.org/hottopics. This Audio-Conference provides an overview of the Self Assessment Tool and also highlights lessons learned by the Alameda Point Collaborative (www.apcollaborative.org) through implementing such a self assessment.

CHAPTER 11: LOCAL CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY #1: LEASING FROM LANDLORDS IN THE PRIVATE MARKET IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH) has led the drive for Housing First and for integrating supportive housing in neighborhoods throughout the county. MCCH's largest permanent housing program, the Partnership for Permanent Housing (PPH), primarily functions as a master leasing program placing formerly homeless individuals and families in apartments rented in the private sector throughout the county.

Montgomery County, once considered a national model for the affluent suburban lifestyle, is now highly stratified with serious challenges facing the low-income residents among its population of 931,000. According to a 2005 census update, 40.7% of renters had to spend over 30% of their income to afford housing in the jurisdiction that is Maryland's largest in population as well as geography.

The PPH program provides subsidized permanent housing and supportive services to 137 households, and has recently won a contract to add another 50 households using federal HOME funding. About a third of PPH households are single adults; the remainder are households that include children. Many of the single households have SSI, SSDI or a small Social Security benefit as their sole source of income; others may have a low-wage job in combination with food stamps or other minor public benefits. The households are below 30% of area median income.

PPH came into existence in 2003 as a collaborative effort between MCCH and three agencies of county government with rental assistance using 50 Housing Choice Vouchers and separate funding for supportive services. Due to the program's tremendous success, it has been expanded each fiscal year since 2006, and currently has subsidy for its almost 190 households from several distinct streams of federal, local, and even private foundation funding.

While the funding comes from different sources, the basis is a deep rental subsidy modeled on Section 8 plus funding for case management. With PPH as the local pilot program, about 200 other households will soon be housed and provided supportive services by agencies other than MCCH.

Landlords are paid street rent, up to Fair Market Rent plus 10%, and they sign a lease with MCCH which subleases to the client. The leasing arrangement was designed to reduce barriers for clients and it worked well; while some landlords refuse to participate, several corporate property managers with thousands of apartments in the area agreed to participate because the lease with MCCH was a guaranteed source of rental income.

However, as vacancy dropped across the market it became clear landlords have a very shallow buy-in with the program. While they might like the reliable rent of corporate leases covering several households at a given rental complex, they often are unprepared for even minor disruptions or behavioral problems. On-site property managers might not understand basic client confidentiality protocol. Finally, they might resent PPH staff intervention if maintenance issues are not addressed within a reasonable time.

PPH is primarily staffed by case managers having master's degrees in human services fields, reporting to MCCH's PPH program director who is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). Each case manager handles a client load of about 20 families; they may visit as frequently as once a week or only monthly for those households that have advanced in stability. Generally visits are conducted at the client's home.

PPH is currently adding 50 households funded by HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA). HOME-TBRA, unlike the other four rental assistance sources for PPH, requires the tenants to sign a lease directly with the landlord rather than a sublease with MCCH. Because an increasing number of private landlords now run credit and criminal background checks, or have a minimum income requirement despite the presence of subsidy, many clients will have difficulty finding housing even though MCCH is backing them up with rental assistance and case management.

“A lesson learned from PPH’s six years in operation is that we need to build relationships with landlords,” says PPH Program Director Anne Donohue. “We need to give them assurance that our supportive services will help the residents blend into the community, which is to everyone’s benefit. Now with TBRA that relationship-building is all the more important because property managers generally are going to run the background checks as part of their standard application process.”

Donohue points to the program’s record of rapid, effective responsiveness when a resident is late with utility payments, or exhibits behavior such as excessive visitors that raises unwelcome attention from neighbors. PPH will cover a resident’s debts and then arrange a payment plan, and the case manager may set a schedule of more frequent visits until behavioral problems are reduced. If a client moves-out with excessive damage, there are funding mechanisms to make the landlord whole. Case managers are trained to keep landlords informed as much as possible while protecting clients’ confidentiality.

While case managers do not have formal training on landlord-tenant law, they participate in a team meeting weekly to learn from their peers. “A wide range of experiences are discussed at the team meetings,” Donohue says. “Case managers learn quickly about strategies to increase housing stability for the clients.” The program has been fortunate to have minimal staff turnover, and good recruitment to meet the needs of its rapid expansion.

The program has also benefited from strong relations with the office of landlord-tenant affairs in county government. This landlord-tenant office has provided leverage to get landlords to resolve building maintenance problems and housing code issues, and helped staff interpret the finer points of lease enforcement.

While PPH is relatively new, its success and rapid growth demonstrate a political will by community leaders to integrate special needs housing throughout the county, with a standard rental lease and supportive services to enhance clients’ chances of housing success. The county government also has used multiple tools to integrate low-income people throughout the community; its inclusionary zoning law in the 1970s was one of the first in the nation, and it has used aggressive legal tactics to compel landlords to accept housing vouchers.

Continued success of the PPH program will require overcoming the challenges of placing more formerly-homeless households in more rental communities, and persuading more landlords that their interests and the goals of the program are not incompatible.

CASE STUDY #2: ARLINGTON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES CREATE SUPPORTIVE UNITS

Arlington County, Va. is using an unusually broad package of financial and zoning incentives to create a successful scattered site supportive housing model. Development financing and increased density are offered to developers who designate up to 10 rental units for residents who are then placed by the county office of Supportive Housing Services. Ongoing rental assistance and case management help ensure housing success.

The program has grown to house 94 single adults. Three dozen of those are with AHC Inc., a large, highly respected developer of affordable housing, but many other developers including several for-profits have also accepted loans and designated units for special needs residents.

Rental assistance comes from four different sources, including project-based Section 8 and HUD Supportive Housing Program funding. But Cindy Stevens, Supportive Housing Coordinator for the county, said the big milestone was winning County Council approval of a Section 8 look-alike funded by the county and covering 60 residents as part of the adoption of Housing First.

“This is a long-term commitment to greater stability and services for these residents,” Stevens said. “We’re very pleased at the number of developers participating and we feel the scattered site approach gives people more choice and makes more housing units available for this purpose in a shorter time given the dynamics of Arlington.”

Arlington is the most urbanized of six Virginia and Maryland suburbs contiguous to Washington, DC; its population of 209,000 represents a 10.5% increase since the 2000 census. Stevens said that while the county works by incentive rather than by mandate, its program has facilitated fast creation of supportive housing units because of the market’s rapid pace of housing development and redevelopment.

Among other placements, AHC has 20 supportive housing clients at Gates of Ballston, a 464-unit garden apartment complex that underwent a multimillion dollar historic renovation in 2006-07 and also is home to over 100 market-rate households.

Rick Leeds, President of AHC’s property management subsidiary, said the county’s supportive services definitely help special needs residents blend in and overcome issues. If a problem is encountered on a six-month unit inspection, property management conducts a re-inspection after 30 days, then issues a written “21-30 notice.”

“The resident has 21 days to cure the problem or 30 days to quit the lease,” Leeds says. “With the special needs residents, the 21-30 is the point where the case manager is notified and assists the resident in addressing the problem.”

One caution from the property management side is the possibility of vacancy problems if the placement staff move too slowly on leasing or if the tenant screening criteria are too narrowly crafted. If a property was developed with tax credits, vacancy can lead to the loss of tax credit equity.

Arlington primarily uses its own Human Services employees as the frontline staff on the scattered site program. Stevens emphasizes that both the rental assistance and the commitment to supportive services are permanent as envisioned by comprehensive Housing First plans the county government adopted in 2005 and 2006.

“The services are flexible to the needs of the individual, and a few will stabilize to the point they will no longer need it,” she said. “Most will continue to need occasional visits and links to other supportive services such as Meals on Wheels or medical clinics.”