

Access to Housing Protocol

Approved Feb 24, 2011

Purpose:

To outline the process Service Providers will use to help participants choose and secure housing.

Background:

Housing First creates a recovery oriented culture that puts consumer/tenant choice at the centre of all considerations with respect to the provision of housing and support services. It operates on the principle that all homeless individuals with mental illness should be offered the opportunity to live in permanent housing of varying types that is otherwise available to people without psychiatric disabilities. Rent supplements of up to \$600 per month are provided so that participants pay 30% or less of their income for housing if in the private market. Participants may also choose to dwell in social, supported or alternative housing.

If participants are choosing units outside of the available inventory, these are considered affordable if below 30% of income after the rent supplement. Available units should also meet criteria for quality established for this project by Toronto Social Housing Connections.

Service providers are expected to encourage participants to make housing choices that would best enable them to meet their recovery goals. In order to assist in the decision making process, an exploration of the participant's preferences and housing history can be effective; the following points of discussion should be considered:

- Encourage participants to reflect on their own strengths, and what sort of home would allow them to capitalize on those strengths
- Ask participants about the places they have lived in before, what they liked and didn't like about past residences
- Ask participants to tell the story of their last home and why they are not living there now
- Ask the participant what are some important features in their new housing situation
- Be entirely frank about price ranges, unit availability and any other choice constraints, as this assists clients to focus on what is most important to them

There may be times when interim housing may be necessary - See **Interim Housing Protocol**

Process:

The following is a list of steps for Service Providers:

1. Engage in the process outlined above, to the extent that the client is able/willing; use list of available housing as an engagement tool as appropriate
2. Complete the **Referral form** and **Housing Choices** form with participant, ensuring that 3 choices are included on the latter form.
3. Get copy of participant's **Status in Canada** (Birth Certificate, citizenship card, etc), participant's **proof of income** (stub or letter from income support worker).
4. Fax the above four things to Housing Connections.
5. Obtain **Consent** for income support worker.
6. Secure participant's **Eligibility letter** from Housing Connections by fax.
7. Look for available apartment with participant on Housing Connections website. If participant is interested in one of the available units continue with next steps. If participant does not like available units or any of the possible units in the approved buildings, skip to step #15.
8. Call Housing Connections staff to confirm apartment is still available and obtain contact information to arrange viewing of apartment with participant.
9. If participant is interested in apartment, help them fill out the landlord's application. Provide landlord with the **Eligibility letter**. The application will likely need copy of participant's Identification and/or proof of income.
10. Wait to hear back from the landlord if the application has been accepted or not. (Sometimes property managers will "approve" and Service provider will find out later that they were not authorized to do so.)
11. If participant is accepted by landlord, help participant complete and sign the **Intent to Rent** form and have the landlord complete the bottom, and fax to Housing Connections.
12. Obtain **Confirmation Form** by fax from Housing Connections, which they will send after they have received the **Intent to Rent**. This provides details of apartment, rental amounts, etc. Fax this letter to the income support worker.
13. Request funds from income support worker for participant to move in, if needed. (According to their **Confirmation Form**).
14. Arrange lease signing appointment with participant and landlord. If needed, bring necessary funds.

See Household Management Protocol

Working with Participants who Express Preference for Housing other than Inventory:

15. (from #4) Explore the reasons why participant is not interested in available units or buildings. Discuss the appropriate price range of what is possible in this Project. Discuss if participant is willing to take a bachelor unit, and if the participant is willing to wait in order to find a unit, within the price range, in a building or an area s/he is more interested in.
16. Offer to go with participant to view the outside of some of the apartment buildings that are available just in case s/he might decide to take a look at one of them.
17. Arrange with participant to look at possible buildings and available units in the three choices of location, and explore how much the units cost. Copy down phone numbers and addresses and send to Housing Connections staff.
18. Work closely with Housing Connections staff when approaching potential landlords and owners of buildings.
19. Once a unit has been found that has been approved by Housing Connections and participant is interested, go back to Step #6.