



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES

RAPID RE-HOUSING POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Office of Homeless Services Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing team:

Roberta Cancellier, Deputy Director of Housing, Office of Homeless Services

Email: Roberta.cancellier@phila.gov

Phone: 215-686-7105

Fax: 215-686-7126

Leticia Devonish, Director of Rapid Re-Housing, Office of Homeless Services

Email: Leticia.Devonish@phila.gov

Phone: 215-686-7176

Fax: 215-686-7126

Yolanda Feaster, Program Manager –Lead Rapid Re-housing

Email: yolanda.feaster@phila.gov

Phone: 215-686-6753

RAPID RE-HOUSING GOALS:

1. Reduce the length of time program participants spend homeless.

Rapid Re-housing must reduce the amount of time individuals and families spend homeless. The way the Rapid Re-housing program impacts how much time a household spends homeless is the speed with which the program is able to identify and help household's access appropriate housing options. Activities that contribute to the performance of this outcome are recruiting landlords to have access to units and finding units that are in communities and neighborhoods that program households would like to live.

- Households receiving Rapid Re-housing assistance should move into permanent housing in an average of 45 days or less.

2. Permanent housing success rates

Households should exit the Rapid Re-housing program to permanent housing in the community with or without a housing subsidy.

- At least 80% of households exiting the Rapid Re-housing program should exit to permanent housing.

3. Reduce return to homelessness

Reduce the number of households returning to homelessness following an exit from the Rapid Re-housing program. The Rapid Re-housing program can impact the success of a household in remaining housed through the combination of securing appropriate housing and effective case management and services.

- At least 85% of households exiting the Rapid Re-housing program to permanent housing should not become homeless again within a year.

I. Program Guidelines

The Rapid Re-housing program is an intervention designed to assist households quickly exit homelessness, return to housing in the community of their choice, and not become homeless in the near term. There are currently three Rapid Re-housing programs that vary in eligibility and services provided. The goals of the Rapid Re-housing program are to reduce the time households are homeless, move households quickly into permanent housing, and to reduce the number of households returning to homelessness once their assistance ends.

The Rapid Re-housing program is a Housing First intervention, meaning households will not be screened out for assistance based on criteria that assumes to predict successful outcomes, such as income, employment, criminal history, mental health history, medical history or evidence of “motivation”. The Rapid Re-housing program will provide financial assistance and housing stabilization services to approved households in an effort to prevent their return to homelessness.

Based on need, approved Rapid Re-housing households are eligible to receive financial assistance up to 24 months to cover rent, security deposits, utility deposits and/or moving costs. Households will receive assistance locating, applying for, and securing affordable housing units. All households receiving more than one month’s rent will receive housing stabilization services. Housing stabilization services may include housing retention activities, budget counseling, and referrals/linkages to social service organizations located in the household’s neighborhood of choice. Each Rapid Re-housing provider must enter all Rapid Re-housing household’s intake and service/linkage information in HMIS.

Target Population

The target population consists of households that were referred from McKinney and City-funded Emergency Housing, Department of Behavioral Health Housing, Family Service Provider Network or living on the street and referred by a street outreach worker/team or victims fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence. Rapid Re-housing funds will not be used to provide Transitional Housing clients on-going rental assistance, see below response from HUD:

***HUD cautions recipients against using Rapid Re-housing funds as a way of regularly exiting a person from transitional housing to permanent housing. Rapid Re-housing is a model for helping people move from the streets or shelter to permanent housing - it was not intended for people**

exiting transitional housing. Additionally, transitional housing providers are supposed to have program designs that successfully exit people and should not be using rapid re-housing - another form of temporary assistance - as a regular part the program design.

Rapid Re-housing funds can be used to provide security deposits to Transitional Housing clients moving to permanent housing.

What Can Rapid Re-housing funds be used for?

Rapid Re-housing funds can be used for the following activities:

Financial Assistance - Financial assistance can include:

- a. Rental Assistance
 - 1) Short-term (1 to 3 months) rental assistance
 - 2) Medium-term (4 to 24 months) rental assistance
- b. Security Deposits

Additional Guidelines Regarding Financial Assistance:

- c. Financial assistance provided in more than one category (i.e. rental arrearage and utility arrearage) for the same month will be considered one month of financial assistance.
- d. Approved households will be eligible to receive up to 24 months subsidized rental assistance. Households are required to contribute 30% of their monthly income towards their rent. The Rapid Re-housing provider will subsidize the household's remaining rental portion with Rapid Re-housing funds
- e. The maximum amount of rental assistance a household can receive over a 24 month period of time is **\$33,600 (or \$1,400 per month)**.
- f. All financial assistance must be approved by a Rapid Re-housing provider agency Supervisor or Program Manager.

II. Rapid Re-housing applications



The Office of Homeless Services (OHS) will serve as a Clearinghouse for all Rapid Re-housing applications. OHS staff will screen Rapid Re-housing applications to ensure the applicant meets the program's eligibility criteria. All approved Rapid Re-housing applications are electronically sent to Rapid Re-housing provider agencies. Rapid Re-housing provider agencies will accept applications five days a week. The Rapid Re-housing Housing Stabilization Specialist (HSS) will schedule and interview households within 10 business days of receiving the Rapid Re-housing application from OHS. If the volume of applications for the Rapid Re-housing program is high, providers may elect to hold group orientation sessions to minimize unnecessary delays in providing assistance. Rapid Re-housing provider agencies should prepare handouts that list the required documents a household needs to bring to their Rapid Re-housing intake appointment. To flexibly serve heads of households who are employed or seeking employment, Rapid Re-housing provider agencies should arrange to have daytime, evening, and weekend hours for scheduled appointments.

III. Role of the Housing Stabilization Specialist (HSS)



The HSS is assigned to assess the housing need of each household. The HSS, in conjunction with the head of household, develops the Rapid Re-housing plan with the goal to achieve housing stability for the family. The HSS should focus on assisting each household in obtaining and moving into a new housing unit. All households receiving more than one month of financial assistance are required to meet with their HSS at a minimum of once per month.

The HSS should be aware of barriers preventing households from securing housing. These barriers may include: criminal history, history of evictions or

non-renewal of leases, poor references from previous landlords and poor credit history. Barriers to retaining housing do not include every problem that could indirectly contribute to housing loss. Barriers are defined primarily by the direct impact they have had on the household's previous housing history – and the potential for affecting future housing. ***See pages 23–27 in Rapid Re-housing: Creating Programs that Work, The National Alliance to End Homelessness, July 2009, for more information.***

Intake/Reception Interview

1. The HSS should observe the head of household and family members during the intake process to observe signs of illness, lack of parenting skills, or disabilities.
2. The Rapid Re-housing household housing status must be verified by completing the Homeless Certification Form
3. After completing the HUD Entrance Assessment, the HSS must determine if a household is suitable for Rapid Re-housing program services. If the HSS determines a household does not qualify for Rapid Re-housing assistance, a reason for denial of services must be chosen and a note entered into HMIS detailing why the household was denied assistance. The HSS must provide each household with a copy of the Rapid Re-housing Appeal Process. If the household is eligible for Rapid Re-housing services it is recommended the staff person who completed the assessment certify the household's eligibility.

Determining the Financial Package of Assistance

1. Financial Information Screens includes income and expenses. It is critical for the HSS to obtain and record all household income on the appropriate HMIS screens. All household income must be 3rd party verified such as payroll stubs or award letters from SSI, SSDI, or unemployment insurance. All verified income documents must be dated within the last 30 days of receipt of the verification. If paystubs or benefit letters are not available, the provider agency may use HUD's form for third party income verification. With prior approval from OHS, HUD's form for Income Self-Declaration may be used to document a household with no income or income that is not substantiated with payroll, benefit or tax records.

2. All financial assistance provided to a Rapid Re-housing household must be approved by the Rapid Re-housing provider Supervisor or Program Manager.
3. Based on funding sources each household is limited to a maximum of 24 months of assistance. A household may receive a combination of financial assistance (rental assistance, security deposit, and utility arrearages) during the same month which will count as one month of assistance. Payment of arrears count towards the total amount of months of assistance.
4. The HSS must assist the head of household in developing a sustainable household budget prior to the ending of the lease. If housing costs exceed 30% of a household's monthly income, the household may need to locate a more affordable housing property or find ways to increase their household income. **Linkages/applications to subsidized housing must be provided to households needing 6 or more months of ongoing rental assistance, and for households with the inability to increase their income. The HSS must assess households needing 6 or more months of assistance to determine if the household needs additional rental assistance. If the HSS determines the household needs additional rental assistance an assessment must be conducted every 3 months (9th, 12th, 15th, 18th and 21st month) to confirm the rental assistance need.**
5. Households should be expected, but are not required, to contribute to move-in (moving, security deposit) costs. If a household has any liquid assets such as a savings account, the household should be asked to contribute 10% of their assets to any arrearages or move-in assistance.
6. Any household receiving rental assistance, including security deposits, must have a lease with the Head of Household named on the lease.
7. Security deposits should be negotiated with the landlord and must meet Rent Reasonable guidelines. If a unit is over the Rent Reasonable rate, then the HSS must provide justification for the request. Additionally, a lease addendum stating that the security deposit is to be returned to the client once the lease ends is required whenever this is not clearly stated in the lease.

8. All rental assistance payments must be provided directly to the Rapid Re-housing household's landlord. Prior to receiving any funding, landlords must provide a copy of the property renter's license and rental suitability certificate for the property. Landlords not in possession of the proper licensing will not be eligible to participate on the Rapid Re-housing program.
9. A Rapid Re-housing assisted unit may not be owned by a City Employee, the Rapid Re-housing provider, or any affiliated organization of the Rapid Re-housing provider agency.
10. All financial and housing stabilization assistance provided must be recorded as one-time payments (utility arrearages and security deposits) or on-going payments (ongoing rental or utility assistance). The HSS will submit all financial assistance requests to their Supervisor or Program Manager for approval
11. **After all approvals have been completed;** the HSS should inform their agency's accounting department that a check can be issued. **All payments must be made to third parties** such as landlords, utility companies, or storage companies. After the check is issued, the check number and the date the check was paid should be recorded in the client file and on the Schedule C, and a copy of the check should be made and submitted with the monthly invoice to avoid discrepancies and delays in payment/reimbursement for the financial assistance provide to the Rapid Re-housing household.

Housing Stabilization Activities



In addition to determining the financial package of assistance, the HSS should work with the household to develop a housing plan that addresses the social service needs of the household. The housing plan focus should be on activities

that assist households in retaining housing and include linkages/referrals to other agencies or departments that can address the household's needs. The HSS should use a strengths-based approach to empower households. The HSS must identify the inherent strengths of a household instead of diagnoses or deficits, and then build on those strengths to empower the household to succeed. The HSS should assist the household in focusing on housing retention and building support networks outside of the program. The HSS should connect the household with community resources and services options that will continue beyond participation in the Rapid Re-housing program.

Initial Assessment: An HSS will interview each household applying to receive financial assistance. During the initial interview, the HSS should pay attention to a combination of verbal and non-verbal information provided by members of the household. Each face to face or phone contact presents an opportunity for the HSS to identify and resolve a problem before it escalates into a crisis. The HSS should identify barriers that can prevent a household from obtaining and retaining housing. Typical barriers include: criminal history, housing history (eviction and non-renewal of lease), poor landlord references and poor credit history.

*The following information on Tenant Screening Barriers and Developing a Housing Stabilization Plan is adapted from **Rapid Re-housing: Creating Programs that Work**, The National Alliance to End Homelessness, July 2009*

Tenant Screening Barriers. Barriers to obtaining housing are also called Tenant Screening Barriers. These barriers refer to any problem that causes a landlord to deny a household's rental application. Client problems are a Tenant Screening Barrier if:

- a. A prospective landlord identifies the problem during the application and screening process, AND
- b. The landlord uses the problem as a reason to deny the application.

Landlords typically develop their own screening criteria to identify tenants who will likely not have problems connected to unpaid rent, property damage, eviction and conflict between tenants and/or neighbors. Their process usually includes a background check to determine if the prospective tenant had past problems, particularly in rental housing (evictions, late rent, lease violations, property damage, and court judgments for unpaid debt, excessive debt, and late payments) and past criminal history, particularly drug crimes and crimes against persons or property.

Through the assessment process, the HSS should identify the household's Tenant Screening Barriers. The interview can elicit much of the information, however, supplementing and/or confirming the facts through a public database or reference check can be extremely helpful. Some households may be unaware they have court judgments or may mistake a Notice to Vacate (the landlord simply will not renew the lease) for an Order to Evict (a much more serious action that could result in court-ordered loss of housing). The accuracy and depth of information provided in interviews will also depend upon whether the individual believes that being truthful will help rather than harm their chances of receiving decent housing. Staff must clarify the reason for the questions. Bottom line: if the staff knows in advance what the landlord will see, the staff can design better strategies to help consumers obtain housing.

Barriers to retaining housing do not include every problem that could indirectly contribute to housing loss. Barriers are defined primarily by the direct impact they have had on the household's previous housing history and the potential for affecting future housing. If a woman has lost her housing multiple times because her boyfriend moved in without the landlord's approval, the possibility of repeating that mistake is probably the most significant retention barrier for future housing stability. An extremely low-income family on public assistance who became homeless due to a financial crisis and subsequent inability to pay rent automatically has an income barrier and may have a budgeting problem that may be a barrier to housing stability.

A household may have become homeless multiple times due to several co-occurring problems such as lease violations, complaints by other tenants, property damage and late rent payments. This household may have several retention barriers: understanding their lease and landlord-tenants rights/responsibilities, conflict/anger management issues, budgeting and/or income problems and setting behavioral expectations for guests or children. The critical factor in assessing retention barriers to housing stability is the impact that a problem has on housing.

The function of a Rapid Re-housing program is to address the barriers that contribute to housing instability, while referring people to mainstream service systems for other service needs. Based upon the household's rental history, staff can construct a list of Retention Barriers which can be addressed in the housing plan. The following are some common scenarios for housing loss and the barriers that might be causing the housing problems:

Examples of Past Housing Problems	Possible Causes of Past & Future Problem
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	(Housing Retention Barriers)—confirmed through assessment
Lost housing twice due to non-payment of rent	Lacks sufficient income to afford rent (e.g., rent exceeds 50% of income) Lack of emergency reserves to cover unexpected financial demands Friends/relatives/others borrow or take money that should be used for rent Has no budget to control spending Spends income on alcohol/drugs
Lost housing due to “unauthorized tenant” moving into apartment: landlord issued warning and initiated eviction	Lacks understanding of lease requirements and legal consequences for allowing boyfriend/relative to move in Lacks communication/assertiveness to approach landlord regarding adding guest to lease as other tenant; or, if not possible, tell guest s/he cannot live there (and enforce decision)
Eviction due to “excessive traffic”— Alleged drug-dealing or commercial sexual activity in unit	Lacks ability to set limits with other household members or friends Lacks awareness of landlord-tenant rights/responsibilities Lacks alternative, legal means for securing income

Obtaining information related to tenant screening and retention barriers serves three critical functions:

- To decide whether to offer Rapid Re-housing to the household. Some combinations of serious housing barriers will require longer-term services or more expertise than the program can offer. The household may need to be referred to other resources that better meet their needs such as permanent Homeless Services or long-term intensive case management.
- To determine how difficult it will be to find a landlord who will rent to the tenant and the level of incentives the program may have to offer the landlord.
- To develop the household’s housing plan. Minimizing or eliminating barriers, especially retention barriers, is the focus of the Housing Plan. The Housing Plan outlines the level and intensity of Rapid Re-housing assistance required to obtain and retain housing.¹

Housing Plans must be created for each household that receives more than one month of rent or utility assistance. Housing plans should be developed collaboratively with the household and focus on action steps to assure barriers to securing and maintaining housing are addressed and resolved. The degree to which those barriers are likely to impede obtaining housing or undermine housing stability will determine the action steps and frequency of contact in the plan. Goals identified in the plan should be concrete, achievable and, where appropriate, tied to a specific timeframe. The household and program staff should each have specific assignments (action steps). To the maximum extent possible the housing plans should identify and utilize community resources to address financial and housing problems. The housing plan should also include the length of time the agency will work with the household.

The housing plan should focus on the following barriers to obtain and maintain housing:

Barriers to Obtaining Housing:

Most homeless households have two major barriers to securing housing

1. **Financial Barriers** - They have very low incomes and little savings. This makes it difficult or impossible to pay housing start-up costs such as first month's rent, security deposit, application fee, or moving costs.
2. **Tenant Screening Barriers** - Low income households, especially those who have experienced homelessness, often have tenant screening barriers that result in landlords denying their applications for rental units. Poor credit histories, unpaid debt, late payments, and eviction for non-payment are common reasons landlords deny rental applications. Any additional barriers, such as a criminal history may further reduce a tenant's chances of securing decent housing.

The housing plan must include actions to overcome or minimize these two critical barriers to obtaining housing.

Financial barriers can be addressed by assuring that funds are available to pay housing startup costs that are beyond the reach of the homeless household. Sources of assistance can include mainstream public benefits, such as TANF or any other source of public or private funding. To assure the unit is not lost, funds must be immediately available when a household's tenant application is accepted.

Tenant Screening Barriers are more complex. Ideally, a household would work on repairing their credit history, establishing a new history of timely payments, and avoiding any criminal behavior. These are steps that take considerable time – steps that can be better achieved once in a stable living situation. The household needs to convince a landlord to rent to them. This is the role of the Rapid Re-housing provider. Landlords screen to minimize the risks of unpaid rent, property damage, police calls and conflict with other tenants.

Barriers to Maintaining Housing

Based upon their housing histories, Rapid Re-housing staff can identify recurring issues that have resulted in housing loss in the past. These situations may present a risk to maintaining housing in the future. Barriers often include:

- **Financial problems.** A lack of any emergency reserves to meet unexpected financial demands is common and often results in non-payment of rent. Lack of sufficient income, excess debt, a poorly-managed budget: all are frequent barriers to maintaining housing.
- **Lack of information about tenants' rights and responsibilities and expectations.** This includes lack of understanding regarding legal requirements in the lease, and failure to meet basic expectations for noise, care of the unit, and other behavioral norms.
- **Relationship problems.** Common problems include the behavior of guests who are noisy or cause damage, friends or relatives who move in without the landlord's permission, or who "borrow" the rent money.
- **Other personal problems that result in failure to pay the rent, properly care for the unit and interact positively with other tenants or the landlord.** A person with a developmental disability or traumatic brain injury, for example, may have special difficulty organizing and scheduling bill-paying or setting limits on guests' behaviors. A person experiencing domestic violence may have particular safety issues that must be addressed in her housing plan. The Rapid Re-housing Plan must include actions to overcome or minimize recurrent, significant barriers to retaining housing. Financial barriers can be addressed via employment, credit repair, and/or budgeting services. General landlord-tenant information, a specific review of the household's lease, and

coaching about behavioral expectations can help overcome lack of information about tenant responsibilities and expectations. Relationship problems may require a referral to a domestic violence program, counseling, communications skills training and/or coaching. Other problems may require professional assessment and/or professional services if the personal issues are affecting housing.

Below is a sample housing plan for a homeless mother with two elementary school-aged children. The housing plan separately addresses tenant screening barriers to obtaining housing and housing retention barriers to maintaining housing.

RAPID RE-HOUSING PLAN FOR EMILY
Part One: Plan to Get Housing
<p>Assessment of Tenant Screening Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing History: Public records check of eviction court filings; interview with Emily. Emily has been evicted twice for non-payment of rent. She knows that other tenants in her last two apartment buildings complained about her and her children, because the landlord told her. She didn't get all her security deposit back because her children broke a window and used markers on the walls. She doesn't think her landlord would give her a good reference. • Criminal History: Public records check of criminal history database; interview with Emily. Emily had two Driving under the Influence charges in 2006 and has a suspended driver's license. • Credit History: Interview with Emily; supplemented with free Credit Report from TransUnion—requested 8/13. Emily knows her credit report will show late or missing debt payments and too much debt. • Employment/Income: Interview with Emily, who also provided check stubs and a public assistance benefits award letter. Her income is about \$1,200/month from public assistance and part-time employment. She has no savings to pay for housing start-up costs.
<p>Plan: Housing Search</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Emily will review housing listings and investigate acceptable units on a daily basis. An acceptable unit for Emily is one within the same school district her children have been attending, so they don't have to change schools again. She believes she can afford \$600/month rent and utilities, which is sufficient for some one-bedroom apartments. If she has to pay higher rent, she will need to increase her income and will require a subsidy until she gets a better job or more hours. • Action Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rapid Re-housing program will provide Emily with a list of units whose landlords are cooperating with the Rapid Re-housing program. ○ Emily will call for vacancy information, location, rent and amenities and will

<p>indicate that she is partnering with the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Emily will make an appointment to visit any vacancy that is acceptable.
<p>Plan: Application, Landlord Interview, and Leasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Emily will apply for available units that meet her criteria and budget and secure housing by September 1. • Action Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily will prepare for landlord interview by filling out a sample application so she will have all the necessary information available. o Emily will practice a landlord-tenant interview with Shirley from the Rapid Re-Housing program. o Emily will also sign a Release of Information so Shirley can talk to prospective landlord(s), but Shirley will not disclose any information about any of Emily's personal issues to the landlord. o Shirley will accompany Emily to landlord interview(s) and will promise the landlord the standard Rapid Re-housing follow-up services of six months, with home visits to Emily, response to landlord calls within one business day, and follow up to work with Emily and resolve any issues related to tenancy requirements or complaints.
<p>Plan: Financial Assistance for Housing Start-Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Emily will pay \$600 toward the cost of first month's rent, security deposit, application fees, moving costs, etc. The remainder of housing costs will be paid by a combination of public assistance benefits and other public and private resources. • Action Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Shirley will provide Emily with financial assistance application information and assist Emily in completing application forms. o Emily will submit an application for financial assistance. o When Emily has completed the application for assistance and been approved—funds will be available as soon as she has a signed lease.
<p>Part Two: Plan to Keep Housing</p>
<p>Housing Retention Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial: Emily's income is too low and she has no emergency reserves. • Tenancy information: Emily has never read a lease and doesn't know what the lease requires. At her previous apartment, she got into trouble and didn't understand why the landlord and other tenants were upset with her. • Relationships: Emily has had trouble saying "no" when her sister wants to borrow money and this has left Emily without enough money to pay the rent. • Other Issues: Emily used to drink heavily and thinks she lost control over her children during those years. She knows her children have caused damage and that they are so loud people complain about them, but she doesn't know how to respond to them.
<p>Plan: Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Emily will immediately seek to increase her income by increasing her earned income from work. Emily's goal is to increase her income by \$300/month. • Action Steps:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Emily will request more hours at work o Emily will ask her sister to watch the children after school if necessary (at least until she can find daycare). o Shirley will make a referral so Emily can meet with a financial counselor to look at ways to cut costs, make lower monthly payments and apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit. o Emily will begin saving \$10 from her paycheck every week and will open a savings account so she has money for emergencies. o Emily will review her new lease with Shirley and make a list of the things that could get her evicted. She will also enroll in Tenant Education Classes offered by ABC Social Services. o Rapid Re-housing program will pay up to \$200/month towards Emily's rent if the apartment costs more than \$600. The rent subsidy is temporary, until Emily can increase her job income. o Emily will meet with Shirley every month to discuss progress toward increasing her income.
<p>Plan: Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Emily will try to improve her relationship with her sister so that relationship issues don't interfere with her ability to keep her housing. • Action Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Shirley will help Emily practice what to say when her sister asks for a loan so Emily can keep her rent money. o If Emily's sister gets mad, Shirley will mediate (if Emily wants her to) and explain why Emily has to say no. o Emily, with Shirley's advice, will try to find ways her sister can get help with her budgeting, so she doesn't have to ask Emily for money.
<p>Plan: Other Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: Emily will work to address other issues that have affected her ability to keep her housing. • Action Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Shirley will help Emily find an AA support group in her new neighborhood o Emily will attend AA once a week and ask her sister to babysit while she attends. o Shirley will make a referral to the Community Child Guidance Center to get some help with managing her children's behavior.

I agree:

- To allow Shirley to visit my apartment every week the first month, then every two weeks for six months. I understand that the landlord is likely to approve my rental application because Shirley promised to work with me and the landlord to resolve any tenancy issues.
- To work on these goals and to discuss my progress when Shirley visits.
- To call Shirley whenever I'm having trouble with my apartment, landlord or other tenants.²

Emily Barr

Signature

Office of Homeless Services
Rapid Re-housing Policy and Procedures Manual
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See Chapter 5 in *Rapid Re-housing: Creating Programs that Work*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, July 2009.

Making Linkages to Other Services is a critical responsibility of the HSS. Each household receiving Rapid Re-housing service should have a minimum of four (Financial management/budgeting, Tenant Rights/responsibility course, Low-income utility assistance program, income enhancers [job fairs, employment agencies, benefits] and single head of household families should be referred to family court if they are not receiving child support) linkages/referrals to other services. The Office of Homeless Services recommends using www.connect211.org and www.phila.gov/311.org to access on-line resource guides of social services. The HSS across all of the Rapid Re-housing providers will be invited to meetings where they can share information about resources, and provider agencies with multiple programs should make sure the HSS is well informed about services provided by their own agency. Even though providers are expected to provide city-wide services, it's expected that provider agencies will make sure that their staff are fully informed about the network of social services that are available in the provider's geographic community. The HSS may strongly recommend that households follow through on service linkages/referrals or mandate that a household follow up with linkage/referrals and, if necessary, withhold financial assistance until a household complies. The longer the period of time that a HSS has to build a relationship with the household, the more likely it is that the household will follow through with linkages/referrals to other services. It is likely that new problems, issues, concerns may be identified as the HSS becomes more familiar with the household. Service linkage/referrals can be made at any time and should be documented in HMIS.

Housing Counseling may be provided by a HSS, qualified staff at the provider agency, staff at a subcontracting site, or another housing counseling provider. Housing Counseling services may include:

- a. Landlord and tenants rights and responsibilities counseling
- b. Assisting households in understanding leases
- c. Securing utilities
- d. Making moving arrangements
- e. Representative payee services for rent and utilities
- f. Mediation
- g. Financial counseling, including household budgeting, money management, accessing free credit reports, and resolving personal credit issues.

Monthly case management must be provided for all households that receive more than one month's rental assistance. Whenever possible, the HSS that provides the follow up should be the same staff person that completed the initial assessment with the household. Home visits are highly recommended in the following situations:

- a. Evidence of either physical or verbal abuse.
- b. Household has missed two or more follow up appointments.
- c. Rental checks have been returned. Household appears to have moved.
- d. Staff from agencies that are service referrals/linkages have notified the HSS of unsafe or high risk situations.

All contacts with members of the household, including office visits, e-mail, and home visits should be documented in client file. If a client misses one or more monthly case management meetings (without a legitimate reason) the provider agency must begin Termination process.

IV. Identifying and Inspecting Rental Properties



Housing Search and Inspection: Rapid Re-housing providers may utilize HSS or other staff to work with landlords to identify and inspect rental units. The housing search goal is to find housing for households quickly. HSS should assist households locate housing units that are desirable and sustainable. Housing units should be located in neighborhoods where the household wants to live and are safe. Housing units selected by Rapid Re-housing households must pass an inspection. Once a unit passes inspection, the approval is valid for 60-days. The provider agency should try to match households with units that match their needs and preferences. In determining an appropriate rental unit, the provider agency should take into consideration a household's rental history, neighborhood preferences, school preferences for children, history of domestic violence, as well as the household's capacity to sustain the housing once assistance ends.

The Rapid Re-housing provider should identify landlords/property managers that have a pool of units that are ready for occupancy. Eligible households must be provided with a minimum of 3 housing options by the Rapid Re-housing

provider. The Rapid Re-housing must record each unit offered to a household in HMIS, and whether or not the household accepted or rejected the housing unit. The HSS must inform the household of their ability to search for housing on their own. Households can take ownership of their housing search process and locate units on their own. The HSS must record each unit the household locates in HMIS, and each unit must pass inspection prior to assisting the household move into the unit.

Through outreach efforts and developing relationships with landlords, the Rapid Re-housing providers can help landlords recognize the benefits of renting to tenants who have access to supportive services. Knowing that rental and utility assistance is available, landlords can be confident that tenants will be able to keep up with the monthly rental payments while receiving assistance on the Rapid Re-housing program. The Rapid Re-housing provider must be responsive to landlords to preserve and develop those partnerships for the purposes of future housing placements. The Rapid Re-housing provider must provide the following support to landlords:

- a. Respond quickly (within one business day) to landlord calls about serious tenancy problems
- b. Seek to resolve conflicts around lease requirements, complaints by other tenants, and timely rent payments
- c. Negotiate move-out terms and assist household quickly locate and move into another unit without eviction.
- d. Provide landlord notice when a client's case will be closed and assistance ends

Rental rates must be at or below the Comparable Rents. Rapid Re-housing providers may request rent approval above comparable rents, in these cases the Rapid Re-housing provider must provide justification for this request (i.e. comparable rents to unit in neighborhood, unit newly renovated, amenities, etc.)

All rental units must have an initial inspection prior to household moving into a unit. The unit must be inspected annually if the household receives more than 12 months of rental assistance and remains in the same unit.

V. Lead Inspections

Lead inspections must comply with requirements of the Lead Based Paint Poisoning Act. The lead-based paint requirements are more stringent than the habitability standards and they apply to all housing assisted with Rapid Re-housing. In addition, the regulations apply to the unit and to common areas

servicing the unit when Rapid Re-housing assistance is provided to a unit in which a child under the age of 6 will be residing, unless it meets one of the following circumstances: it is a zero-bedroom or SRO –sized unit, or it is housing for the elderly and there are no children under the age of 6, or a lead-based paint inspection has been conducted in accordance with HUD regulations and found not to have lead based paint, or if the property has had all lead-based paint identified and removed in accordance with HUD regulations, or if it meets any of the other exemptions described in 24 CFR part 35.115(a).

Units must be inspected again if a new household assisted with Rapid Re-housing funds moves in, and the clock for periodic inspections is reset. Finally the owner must provide a notice to occupants if an evaluation and hazard reduction activities have taken place, in accordance with 24 CFR, part 35.125.

All housing inspectors who complete a lead inspection should take the on-line training course found at

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/training/visualassessment/h00101.htm>.

The training can be completed in 20 to 30 minutes and a training certification can be printed upon completion. Copies of training certificates for all staff who conduct lead inspections should be sent to OHS.

VI. Closing and Re-opening Cases

Cases should be closed when the household is no longer going to be imminently homeless. In some cases, case management may continue after financial assistance ends, if requested by the household. For those requiring on-going support after exiting the Rapid re-housing program, the HSS should provide the household with a “warm handoff” to mainstream and community based services that will continue to assist the household. If a household only needs one-time assistance, a case should be closed on the last day of the month in which the assistance was provided. If ongoing monthly assistance is provided, the HSS should close the case after the last check has been issued still using the last day of month as the close out date. Households may return for services within 24 months of their first contact. If a household returns for additional assistance the HSS should enter any new information in HMIS and check HMIS to ensure the household is not currently receiving Rapid Re-housing services from another Rapid Re-housing provider. Household documentation of income, utility or rent arrearages, etc. needs to be current (within the last 30 days).

When closing a case, the HSS should use the HMIS Close-Out Screen and be sure to choose the appropriate housing option from the menu of choices for the destination question.

VII. Reporting

HUD requires OHS to file quarterly and annual reports on all Rapid Re-housing activities. All of the necessary information is included in HMIS, and OHS will check HMIS records against Schedule C (checks issued) of the monthly invoice submitted by provider agencies. Payments will not be processed until the HMIS record matches Schedule C. It is the responsibility of the provider agencies to ensure that all Rapid Re-housing staff is trained to use the HMIS Rapid Re-housing screens correctly and to follow up on any errors that were made in the assessment or tracking process.

VIII. HMIS - Client Confidentiality Rights

IX. Denial of Rapid Re-housing services and Appeal Process

If, after an assessment, the household is determined to be inappropriate for the Rapid Re-housing program the HSS must deny Rapid Re-housing services and record the appropriate reason and enter a case note in HMIS, and document the decision in the client's file. All Rapid Re-housing staff should be familiar with the Rapid Re-housing appeal process and be able to advise the client of appropriate steps if the client disagrees with the decision to deny Rapid Re-housing services or has a complaint about the services they have received.

When a Termination letter is sent to a client, a copy MUST be sent to OHS and the case manager.

Record Keeping and OHS Monitoring

In addition to entering client data in HMIS, providers must create hard-copy files that are organized by sections for each household. OHS staff will be closely monitoring each Rapid Re-housing provider; site visits and case file audits will be conducted quarterly at a minimum.

X. Policies and Procedures

HUD has a website, www.hudhre/info.org which posts "*Frequently Asked Questions*", updated forms, policies, and procedures. The Provider Agencies should keep abreast of new developments in the program by frequently checking

this website and participating in the monthly provider meetings where changes in policies and procedures are reviewed and discussed.

Continuum of Care (CoC) Rapid Re-housing program eligibility and allowable services

Eligible Participants/ Heads of Households:

- Must be 18 years of age or older.
- If not 18 years old, must provide documentation of legal emancipation.
- Participants lacking resources & support networks.
- Households requiring more than one month's financial assistance agree to work with and receive housing stabilization services.
- Household income must be at or below 30% AMI at 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th month of certification to continue to receive Rapid Re-Housing rental assistance.
- Households must be referred from an Emergency or Transitional Housing provider & may be defined as homeless under any of the four categories included in the Homeless Definition Final Rule:
 1. Literally Homeless (Category 1)
 2. Imminently losing their primary night-time residence (Category 2)
 3. Unaccompanied youth under age 25 years of age or families with children & youth who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition but who are defined as homeless under another Federal statute & meet additional specified criteria (Category 3)
 4. Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life threatening conditions (Category 4)

What Can Rapid Re-housing Funds Be Used For?

Rapid Re-housing funds can be used for the following activities:

Financial assistance:

(CoC Rapid Re-housing funds can be used for Tenant Based Rental Assistance *only*)

- Short-term rental assistance (up to 3 months)
- Medium-term rental assistance (4 to 24 months)

- Security Deposits, not to exceed two months of rent
- First and last month's rent
- Property damage

Supportive Services

- Rental Application Fees
- Moving Costs (assistance may be provided at a reasonable cost if relocating the household prevents homelessness. Moving cost assistance can be used for truck rental, hiring a moving company & short-term storage fees up to 3 months or until the program participant is housed, whichever is shorter. Obtain a minimum of 3 quotes prior to providing moving cost assistance. Maintain records in client files.)
- Utility Deposits (only after all other utility programs for low income residents have been exhausted)
- Case Management
- Child Care
- Education Services & Life Skills Training
- Employment Assistance & Job Training
- Food
- Housing Search & Counseling Services (mediation, credit repair)
- Legal Services
- Outpatient Health, Mental Health & Substance Abuse Treatment Services
- Outreach Services
- Transportation
- ***All CoC unit inspections must be completed using the Housing Quality Standards inspection form.**

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Rapid Re-housing eligibility and allowable services

Eligible Participants/ Heads of Households:

- Must be 18 years of age or older.
- If not 18 years old, must provide documentation of legal emancipation.
- No household income limits at intake, but household income must be at or below 30% AMI at 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th month to continue to receive Rapid Re-Housing rental assistance.
- Households requiring more than one month's financial assistance agree to work with and receive housing stabilization services.
- Households must be defined as homeless under any of the two categories included in the Homeless Definition Final Rule:
 1. Literally Homeless (Category 1)
 2. Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life threatening conditions (Category 4)

What Can ESG Funds Be Used For?

ESG funds can be used for the following activities:

Financial assistance:

- Rental Assistance
 1. Rental arrearages up to 6 months - months must be identified and notated in HMIS and on the Rent Arrearage Verification Form. Original copy of Rent Arrearage Verification form must be placed in the client's file
 2. Short-term (1 to 3 months) rental assistance
 3. Medium-term (4 to 24 months) rental assistance
- Utility Assistance
 1. Arrearages up to 6 months **only** if the utility arrearage is a barrier to the household moving into permanent housing. Utility arrearage months must be identified in HMIS and on the Utility Arrearage Oral Verification Form Original copy of Utility Arrearage Oral Verification form must be placed in the client's file.
 1. Utility Deposits (only after all other utility programs for low income residents have been exhausted)

2. Utility Payments (only after all other utility programs for low income residents have been exhausted)
- Moving cost assistance may be provided at a reasonable cost if relocating the household prevents homelessness. Moving cost assistance can be used for:
 1. Utility deposits (only after all other utility programs for low income residents have been exhausted).
 2. Utility payments (only after all other utility programs for low income residents have been exhausted).
- *Obtain a minimum of 3 quotes prior to providing moving cost assistance to a household.**

Additional Guidelines Regarding Financial Assistance:

- Financial assistance provided in more than one category (i.e. rental arrearage and utility arrearage) for the same month will be considered one month of financial assistance.
- Approved households will be eligible to receive up to 24 months subsidized rental assistance during a 3-year period of time. Households are required to contribute 30% of their monthly income towards their rent. Proof of income recertification required every 3 months. The Rapid Re-housing provider will subsidize the household's remaining rental portion with ESG funds.

***All ESG unit inspections must be completed using the Housing Suitability inspection form.**

Office of Homeless Services General Funds Rapid Re-housing eligibility and allowable services

Eligible Participants/ Heads of Households (Single Male):

- Must be 18 years of age or older.
- If not 18 years old, must provide documentation of legal emancipation.

- Minimum monthly income of \$600 at intake but may not be over 30% AMI at 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th month of recertification.
- Households requiring more than one month's financial assistance agree to work with and receive housing stabilization services.
- Households must be defined as homeless under any of the two categories included in the Homeless Definition Final Rule:
 1. Literally Homeless (Category 1)
 2. Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life threatening conditions (Category 4)

What Can General Funds Be Used For?

General Funds can be used for the following activities:

Financial Assistance - Financial assistance can include:

3. Security deposits
4. Short-term (1 to 3 months) rental assistance
5. Medium-term (4 to 12 months) rental assistance

***All ESG unit inspections must be completed using the Housing Suitability inspection form.**

HOME Rapid Re-housing eligibility and allowable services

Eligible Participants/ Heads of Households:

- Must be 18 years of age or older.
- If not 18 years old, must provide documentation of legal emancipation.

- No household income limits at intake, but household income must be at or below 30% AMI 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th month to continue to receive Rapid Re-housing rental assistance.
- Households requiring more than one month's financial assistance agree to work with and receive housing stabilization services.
- Households must be defined as homeless under any of the two categories included in the Homeless Definition Final Rule:
 1. Literally Homeless (Category 1)
 2. Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life threatening conditions (Category 4)

What Can HOME Funds Be Used For?

HOME Funds can be used for the following activities:

Financial Assistance - Financial assistance can include:

3. Security deposits
4. Short-term (1 to 3 months) rental assistance
5. Medium-term (4 to 24 months) rental assistance

***All HOME unit inspections must be completed using the Housing Quality Standards inspection form.**

List of Required Documents

(If applicable for a particular RRH program)

- Rapid Re-housing Homeless Certification
- Birth Certificate and Social Security Cards for everyone in the household
- Rapid Re-Housing Intake Appointment letter
- Rapid Re-housing Assistance Certification Form
- Staff Certification of Rapid Re-housing Eligibility
- Self-Certification for Persons Fleeing Domestic Violence
- Rapid Re-housing Case Management Agreement
- Project Entry Form
- Rapid Re-housing Client Housing Search Assessment Tool and Stabilization Plan
- Income Guidelines
 1. For CoC use the AMI
 2. For ESG use the AMI (at the annual recertification)
 3. For TANF use the FPIG
- Income Verification
- Self-Declaration of Income
- Instructions for Rent Reasonable Calculation
- Gross Income Resident Rent Calculation Spreadsheet
- Rapid Re-housing Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Rapid Re-Housing Lease Signing Notification Letter
- Rapid Re-housing Lease Addendum
- Security Deposit Addendum
- Rapid Re-housing Rental Arrearage Verification Form
- Utility Assistance Documentation of Arrears oral Verification
- Rapid Re-housing Units Offered Form
- Rapid Re-housing Conflict of Interest Form
- Appeal Process
- Rapid Re-housing Appeal Overturned Letter
- Rapid Re-housing Appeal Upheld Letter

- List of Required Documents for Clients
- Housing Quality Standards Inspection Form
- Housing Suitability Inspection Form
- List of Housing Counseling Agencies
- Rapid Re-housing Client Support Map
- Landlord Outreach Strategies Document
- Landlord Benefits Document
- Final Payment Notification
- Rapid Re-housing Monitoring Tool
- Rapid Re-housing Rental and Utility Assistance Agreement
- HMIS Administrator's Manual
- Project Exit Form
- Rapid Re-housing Policies and Procedures Q & A
- Rapid Re-housing Termination Letter
- Performance Measure