

RAPID RE-HOUSING HANDBOOK

**A RESOURCE GUIDEBOOK FOR
RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAMS**

UPDATED 2022

POINT SOURCE YOUTH



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THE SPIRIT OF RAPID RE-HOUSING



THE WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, AND HOW OF RAPID RE-HOUSING



3.5
MILLION

YOUNG ADULTS
EXPERIENCE
HOMELESSNESS
EACH YEAR.

Youth homelessness is a major problem in the United States. According to a recent study by Chapin Hall¹ approximately 3.5 million young adults ages 18-25 experience a form of homelessness each year. This is a crisis that needs addressing.

Rapid Re-housing (RRH) is one of our favorite interventions for youth homelessness. **Why? Because it helps end youth homelessness quickly and it's cost-effective, youth-centered, and accessible.**

RRH is not business as usual in the youth housing world. It asks for creativity, flexibility, and the ability to sit with the uncomfortable feelings of — is this working? Can I do this? Should we even be doing this? We ask youth for these things in housing programs, and RRH asks it from providers and systems leaders as well.

Implementing a RRH program can be many things: exciting, scary, frustrating, “two steps forward, one step back,” eye-opening, and transformative. The list goes on. We know that right now in the United States, RRH is a key tool to ending youth homelessness. And by “ending youth homelessness,” we mean assuring that all young adults have a safe, secure, stable place to live that is theirs — their lease, in their name, with legal protections that belong to them.

This is huge! It's also hard. We at Point Source Youth are so excited to be on this journey together with you. **To kick off this handbook, we're answering the Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of RRH for youth.**



WHO IS RAPID RE-HOUSING FOR?

RRH is for young adults experiencing homelessness. If your program is funded by HUD, the young person has to meet the definition of literally homeless — meaning they're staying in a shelter or living on the streets — not couch surfing.²

Some communities may have additional criteria in place to prioritize RRH for young adults who need it most. This might include income limits or other targeting criteria.

RRH does not put any preconditions on young people seeking housing.

This means that RRH programs do not require young people to get a job, go back to school, abstain from drugs or alcohol, receive mental health treatment, resolve court cases, or anything else in order to qualify for the intervention.

WHAT IS RAPID RE-HOUSING?

- A solution to homelessness designed to help people **quickly end** their experience of homelessness and return to permanent housing.
- A **low-barrier** intervention offered without preconditions, following the Housing First Model (don't worry — we'll talk about this in a bit!).
- RRH focuses on **three core components**: housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and supportive services like case management.
- RRH offers many different **options for services and financial assistance**, so that each participant can receive the level of services they want and need.

WHERE IS RAPID RE-HOUSING BEING DONE WITH YOUNG ADULTS?

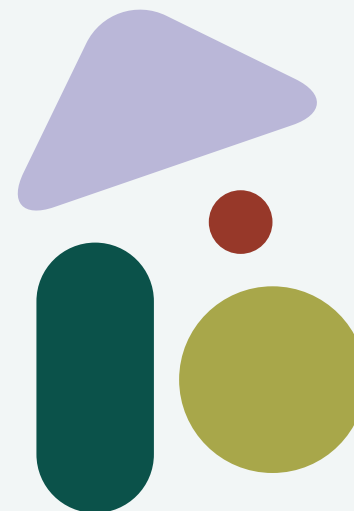
All over the country! Point Source Youth has partners in 50 towns and cities. We've seen RRH work in rural communities across Georgia, Washington, Ohio and South Carolina, as well as large urban metropolises like New York City.

WHEN SHOULD I TRY RAPID RE-HOUSING?

Right now, seriously. There's over 3.5 million young adults experiencing homelessness each year, remember? RRH programs are one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to address youth homelessness. We know RRH works. And you've got Point Source Youth **here to support you!**

WHY SHOULD I TRY RAPID RE-HOUSING?

- **It's evidence-based.** Research shows that RRH is more cost effective than traditional approaches to homelessness, like Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or Transitional Housing (TH). People who receive RRH assistance are also homeless for shorter periods of time than those assisted with shelter or TH.³
- RRH adopts a **Housing First** approach, which means it is youth-centered, low-barrier, and focuses on housing people in permanent housing as quickly as possible without pre-conditions.
- RRH doesn't just help individual young people. It also has **positive impacts on your community's entire homeless system.** By shortening the amount of time young people experience homelessness, RRH programs help create "flow-through" in your crisis response system. This means that more people who are homeless right now and need shelter can access it.⁴



HOW DO I ACTUALLY DO RAPID RE-HOUSING?

Keep reading — that's what this handbook is for!

A PHILOSOPHICAL SHIFT



85 %

ON AVERAGE, 85% OF YOUTH ARE STILL STABLY HOUSED ONE YEAR AFTER EXITING THEIR RRH PROGRAMS.



43

million

11

total
communities

5

rural
communities

IN JULY 2018, HUD ANNOUNCED \$43 MILLION IN FUNDING TO 11 COMMUNITIES TO ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS, FIVE OF WHICH WERE RURAL.

As we've helped nonprofits and communities across the country launch RRH programs for youth, we've heard one common sentiment, "woah this is...different." Starting a RRH program requires us to experience a philosophical shift in the way we do things. Change is often scary and uncomfortable. **Do it anyway.**

TRUST THAT RAPID RE-HOUSING WORKS

"Many experienced providers of rapid re-housing for youth have consistently reported that, on average, 85% of youth they have supported are still stably housed one year after exiting their rapid re-housing programs."⁵

Rural communities face unique challenges when it comes to youth experiencing homelessness. Oftentimes, homelessness is not as visible as it is in urban communities and there is a lack of youth-specific interventions. The good news? RRH **works in rural communities too!** RRH effectively serves youth in broader, spread out areas and utilizes resources that exist in communities to build access to housing that works for young people.

RAPID RE-HOUSING FOR YOUTH IS HERE TO STAY

In 2008, HUD invested \$25 million to launch pilot RRH programs in 23 different communities. In 2009, HUD recognized RRH as an effective program model in reducing homelessness.⁶ Since then the **federal government has invested billions of dollars into RRH programs**, expanding this model exponentially with special populations like veterans, families, and youth.

Youth have increasingly become a more important focus in the Federal homelessness response landscape in the past few years, as evidenced by programs such as the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). In July 2018, HUD announced \$43 million in funding to 11 communities to ending youth homelessness, five of which were rural.⁷ More youth RRH has been funded by HUD in recent years, so this is an opportunity for communities across the country to focus on youth RRH.

YOUTH ARE MORE THAN CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE

RRH approaches youth from a strength-based model. As service providers, it isn't our job to parent youth, teach them lessons, or protect them from making their own decisions. Rather, **it is our job to partner with youth, recognize their inherent strengths, and help them to build on these strengths to achieve independence.**

In RRH programs, youth are in the driver's seat. As service providers we help give directions and sometimes say "look out

for that pedestrian" but the young person is ultimately in control. Why? Because they are the **experts in their own lives.**

RRH is a housing first intervention that empowers young people with a lease in their own name and its corresponding responsibilities. Wraparound services and case management promote skill sets grounded in independence so that youth can have the agency and tools to maintain and secure stable housing on their own afterwards.

HOUSING IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

Housing is not something to be earned. There are no strings attached. As RRH providers, we help young people who want housing find housing. Simple as that.

Young people do not need to prove themselves before they are given the resources and supports to obtain housing. We have to inherently trust that young people will want to maintain their housing. And that they're capable of doing so. And that we're capable of helping them with whatever challenges pop up, should they want or need our help.

FLEXIBILITY IS KEY

RRH programs follow a **progressive engagement model.** This means that we start by offering a small amount of assistance — and if someone needs more assistance, we provide more. This works because it is flexible and individualized. It also allows communities to provide the most assistance to households who truly need it most.

Progressive engagement is supported by research. We've seen that characteristics like income, employment, or substance use cannot effectively predict what level of assistance someone will need.⁸ So we need to slow down and look at things on an individual level. Some young people will need one month of rental assistance and some will need 24 months. Some young people will excel in RRH on their own and some will need additional long-term support like a Health Home program or even Permanent Supportive Housing.

When done correctly, progressive engagement creates a lot of important flexibility within youth RRH programs. By re-assessing the need for rental assistance every few months, the RRH model is highly adaptable to the diverse needs of young people.

RRH programs shouldn't create arbitrary guidelines about how much rental assistance to provide. Instead try starting by asking each young person how much assistance they think they'll need. You may be surprised by the answer.

HOW STAFF APPROACH YOUNG PEOPLE MATTERS

As service providers, it is the staff's responsibility to interact in a way that meets the needs of young people. We need to focus on getting staff "rapid re-housing for youth" ready instead of getting youth "housing ready". This requires staff to learn to think differently (with these philosophical shifts for example!). This is a continuous learning process that can be done through training, role plays, scripts, consistent feedback, coaching, and support. It's important to constantly remind ourselves that our job is to empower and support young people in making their own choices, because they are the experts in their own lives.

[Jeffrey King from Community Rebuilders](#) summed this up:

"We spend so much time trying to teach participants and consumers to fit into what we have, rather than saying 'if this isn't working, if we're not having successful exits, it's not the people we're serving that there's something wrong with, it's the way we are delivering our services.' Instead of training youth on how to be in housing, it's training our staff on how to provide the services that youth have asked for.

It is important to acknowledge that there may be people on the team who will not be able to "go there" philosophically to implement RRH. It takes a unique type of person and approach to really embrace the RRH model. It's all about getting uncomfortable, being flexible, experimenting, and working in the grey. Having the right staff to provide quality case management services is a vital component of RRH programs."

EMBRACE FEAR

The fear may be of not enough rental assistance, youth not sustaining rental payments, or perhaps not having enough time to teach youth how to live independently. [Community Rebuilders](#) looked at their data and saw that it was serving 10-12 youth a year, 50% of whom were exiting to homelessness. Community Rebuilders asked the question: can we do better? How can we serve more people, serve them better, and serve the people with the most need? This is what brought them to the rapid re-housing model. Be afraid of not doing the best thing for the most people.

Many fears are coming from providers. **What about youth, what are youth worried about? Ask them! Those are the fears to focus on.** Community Rebuilders has found that the job of RRH providers is a lot easier if you simply ask people what they need — through listening sessions, focus groups, and feedback surveys.

CHANGE IS CONSTANT

RRH requires programs to be flexible and adaptable. While we know RRH works, it is still a relatively new intervention. This means providers need to be in a constant cycle of planning, evaluating, and implementing.

What's the best way to do this? **Ask young people how it's going.** Plan listening sessions or feedback groups to hear directly from participants in your program. Open yourself up to scrutiny, and take young people's feedback seriously. Try implementing the changes they want to see. You might be surprised how it works out.

Want something more formal? We get it — we love data too! Point Source Youth has partnered with University of Southern California and a number of nonprofits to **evaluate RRH programs as part of a formal research project.** If you'd like to join us, or learn more about our findings so far, visit our website, and explore our video resource library, toolkits and digital resources. To connect with our technical assistance experts, reach out via email to programs@pointsourceyouth.org.



We want to understand what rapid re-housing is like from the youth perspective.

Our new report, *An In-Depth Look at the Impact of Rapid Re-Housing for Young Adults Previously Experiencing Homelessness* paints a picture of young people in...

[Check out our findings!](#)

RAPID RE-HOUSING WILL NOT END POVERTY

RRH is not a poverty elimination program. Letting go of this expectation for your program and your team early on will serve you well. Oftentimes young people will pay more than 30% of their income towards rent after they stop receiving RRH rental assistance, and sometimes even while receiving RRH assistance. The goal of RRH is to end homelessness and stabilize youth in housing. With the right supports, benefits, income, budgeting, and community resources in place — young people can simultaneously become stable in housing, not become homeless again, and live in poverty.

“The most important part of rapid re-housing from my perspective is actually the case management component. (The financial assistance is) going to go away...however, the case management, the skills, all those social supports that you helped build around this young person, won't go away. **We hope that those things are the lasting things that they continue to remain to pull on once they become stable, once they become independent, and once they are out on their own managing their own apartment and financial obligations.**”

— JIMIYU EVANS,
CO-CEO OF PROJECT COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
ATLANTA, GA

CORE COMPONENTS OF RAPID RE-HOUSING

RRH CONSISTS OF 3 KEY SERVICE AREAS:

- 1 Locating housing.
- 2 Providing temporary financial assistance to help pay for that housing.
- 3 Providing wrap-around services to support households in maintaining housing.



The National Alliance to End Homelessness developed [the core components resource below](#) in collaboration with, and endorsed by, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Rapid re-housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household. The core components of a rapid re-housing program are below. While a rapid re-housing program must have all three core components available, it is not required that a single entity provide all three services nor that a household utilize all of them.



HOUSING IDENTIFICATION

- **Recruit landlords** to provide housing opportunities for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- **Address potential barriers** to landlord participation such as concern about short-term nature of rental assistance and tenant qualifications.
- Assist households to **find and secure** appropriate rental housing.



RENT AND MOVE-IN ASSISTANCE (FINANCIAL)

Provide assistance to cover move-in costs, deposits, and the rental and/or utility assistance (typically six months or less) necessary to allow individuals and families to move immediately out of homelessness and to stabilize in permanent housing.



The three components of RRH should form the foundation of your program design. When you're designing and implementing your program, come back to these as the essential RRH ingredients. We've also found that a fourth component, **creativity**, really helps! It's not essential, but it helps set your programs and youth up for success.



RAPID RE-HOUSING CASE MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES

- Help individuals and families experiencing homelessness **identify and select** among various permanent housing options based on their unique needs, preferences, and financial resources.
- Help individuals and families experiencing homelessness **address issues** that may impede access to housing (such as credit history, arrears, and legal issues).
- Help individuals and families **negotiate** manageable and appropriate lease agreements with landlords.
- Make appropriate and time-limited **services and supports** available to families and individuals to allow them to stabilize quickly in permanent housing.
- **Monitor** participants' housing stability and be available to resolve crises, at a minimum during the time rapid re-housing assistance is provided.
- Provide or assist the household with connections to resources that help them improve their safety and well-being and achieve their **long-term goals**. This includes providing or ensuring that the household has access to resources related to benefits, employment and community-based services (if needed/appropriate) so that they can sustain rent payments independently when rental assistance ends.
- Ensure that services provided are **client-directed, respectful of individuals' right to self-determination, and voluntary**. Unless basic, program-related case management is required by statute or regulation, participation in services should not be required to receive rapid re-housing assistance.

HOUSING FIRST

If you want to have a successful RRH program (or really any program that helps people experiencing homelessness), you need to understand Housing First inside and out. **It's an evidence-based approach, and it's mandated by funders like Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).**

Why? Because it works.

Housing First is actually quite simple. **You don't make people "earn" housing. You provide housing to people who need it right away.** And then you provide the individualized set of services that they need to obtain the skills and resources to maintain that housing.

We're answering the most frequently asked questions we get about Housing First for RRH programs.

We love how NAEH broke it down,¹¹

"No two people experience homelessness the same way. Some have a mental health diagnosis, some do not. Some are living with addiction, others are not. Some spend each night in shelter, while others sleep in doorways, cars, or encampments. Yet, everyone experiencing homelessness shares one thing in common: they do not have a safe or appropriate place to live.

Similarly, it is unlikely that any two people have the same path out of homelessness. Some will find long term stability by reconnecting with family or friends. Others will find new housing, get a new job, or connect with benefits that quickly allow them to exit homelessness on their own. Some will need more intensive support like rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing to help them find housing, pay for it, and maintain it.

Yet, there is one thing that can resolve anyone's homelessness crisis: reconnecting with permanent housing."

How do we decide who qualifies for Rapid Re-housing?

If your program is funded by HUD, the young person has to meet the definition of literally homeless to qualify for RRH — meaning they're staying in a shelter or living on the streets, not couch surfing.⁹ Some communities may also have additional criteria in place to prioritize RRH for young adults who need it most. This might include income limits or prioritizing high-risk youth, like those living on the street or engaging in sex work.

How should we structure our admission process to be in line with Housing First?

RRH programs should aim to make their admission policies as **low barrier as they can**, with as few steps in the intake process as possible. If your team has the capacity, you can even make things easier on potential participants by doing admissions in the community, to meet young people where they're at.

You should also be mindful not to create additional barriers to admission, by requiring documents at intake that are not mandated by your funder. Your case management team can always help young people obtain additional documentation that would be helpful once

they're enrolled and receiving services. Once you admit a young person into your RRH program, you should not put any program requirements or other barriers in place prior to allowing them to search for and move into permanent housing. A Housing First approach means that everyone is "housing ready", no matter what their history of homelessness is. Participants should not need to complete mandatory programming or classes, provide proof of sobriety, save a certain amount of money, or do anything else in order to qualify to receive housing from your program. All supportive services should be voluntary.

What if they're not capable of maintaining housing?

Housing First makes the assumption that all people can achieve housing stability. If you're operating an RRH program, it's important that you and your team believe this too.

Remember, it's housing first, not housing only. Once participants move into housing you can offer and provide all sorts of wraparound supportive services to help young people maintain housing. These services should be individualized, as every participant will have different needs and preferences. Some participants will need help increasing their

income, others will need help with daily living skills like cooking or cleaning, and some will have mental health issues they'll want to address.

No matter what underlying issues may have contributed to a young person becoming homeless, every participant in RRH programs has a right to determination, dignity, and respect.

You think landlords will actually go for that?

Yes, RRH has been successful in all types of communities like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, Columbus, Ohio, Jacksonville, FL and more.

Recruiting landlords isn't easy. Oftentimes young adults in RRH programs will have limited, to no income and poor/nonexistent credit.

Having a staff person or team who specializes in landlord recruitment and retention will make this process a lot easier. We'll talk all about how to identify, and negotiate with landlords for your RRH program in the next chapter.

How are they going to afford housing on their own? My community's housing market is super expensive.

It's important to remember that RRH is not a poverty elimination program. Oftentimes young people will pay more than 30% of their income towards rent after they stop receiving RRH rental assistance, and sometimes even while receiving RRH assistance. **Stabilization is an important first step,** as we work together across movements to eliminate poverty.

Setting young people up for success after RRH assistance requires creativity. We will review lots of techniques in this manual such as rental contribution plans, shared housing, incentives for saving, linkages to community resources, and other supportive services like budgeting and employment/education assistance.

So you're saying we should just let them use drugs? Isn't that enabling them?

Housing First programs are informed by **harm reduction**. This means we recognize that substance use and abuse is going to be a part of some participants' lives. Staff should use **Motivational Interviewing** to approach young people from a non-judgmental perspective, with openness and curiosity. Staff should work with young people to co-create safer drug and alcohol use.

For participants who have a goal of sobriety, it will be a lot easier for them to achieve this once they're in housing. Having a stable place to sleep improves quality of life and makes treatment goals more attainable.

Substance use on its own, without other lease violations, should never be considered a reason for eviction from housing or discharge from a RRH program.

Isn't this a little unconventional?

Not anymore. Sam Tsemberis is credited with founding Housing First in 1992.¹⁰ This model is now considered the gold standard in homeless programs.

I think my program / community is doing Housing First, but how do I double check?

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) developed a great checklist to see if you're truly implementing Housing First at the program and community level. You can check it out [here](#).

This is a huge shift in the way we've always operated. Can you provide some more in-depth support?

Yes, definitely! Operating a RRH program that's truly in line with Housing First often requires a lot of organizational change. Point Source Youth can support you with this. We are happy to provide **one-on-one technical assistance**. This may include reviewing policies and procedures, training staff, or taking a deep dive into Housing First with senior leadership.

Contact us at programs@pointsourceyouth.org to connect with our technical assistance experts! And don't worry, our technical assistance packages are an eligible administrative expense for RRH projects funded by HUD.

“Housing should be a right, not a privilege.”

— **Joe Biden**

United States President, 2020

“**It is not specialized housing, it is ordinary housing.** What makes it different and what makes it effective is that people are also provided with lots of good services [...] For people who have spent years excluded, in group homes, hospitals, jails, shelters, and other large public service settings, having a place of their own, their own home, has a huge appeal.”

— **Sam Tsemberis**

Executive Director at Pathways to Housing, 2012

“No one grows up saying, “My goal in life is to become homeless.” And that’s the beauty of the harm reduction and Housing First model. **It recognizes the complexities of the different factors that can shape a human life.** These models meet people where they are, not where we are or where we think they should be.”

— **Lloyd Pendleton**

Director of Utah’s Homeless Task Force,
2016 TED TALK

“As we confront the pandemic, we will continue the everyday routine business of the Department — everything from providing housing counseling and investigating allegations of housing discrimination, to **restoring an evidence-based Housing First approach**, to ending homelessness and supporting sustainable economic development in our communities. These responsibilities are at the very center of HUD’s work, and we must always ensure they are met.”

— **Marcia L. Fudge**

HUD Secretary, 2021

RRH BENCHMARKS

An important component of your rapid re-housing program is evaluation. Evaluation helps to understand the effectiveness of your program and it gives you and funders tangible data to identify areas for further improvement and development.

[The National Alliance to End homelessness Rapid Re-housing Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards](#) outlines what success looks like based on a RRH program's ability to meet three primary goals:

- 1 **Reduce the length of time** participants spend experiencing homelessness
- 2 Exit households to **permanent housing**
- 3 **Limit returns to homelessness** within a year of program exit

If your program is funded by HUD, your Continuum of Care will evaluate and rank your program to determine funding priorities on an annual basis. At a minimum, your program's evaluation should include these three key benchmarks for RRH programs. It may also include other important factors like households served, grant dollars spent, increases in participants' income and benefits, and agency participation in key initiatives like coordinated entry or PIT counts.

A community may not have any programs that meet certain benchmarks. This might be due to extremely expensive or low-vacancy housing markets OR if programs are primarily serving households with zero income and/or higher housing barriers. Funders and programs may want to set alternate performance goals for the purposes of comparison between programs or performance improvement while programs work to achieve these benchmarks.

These benchmarks are based on performance data of programs that follow a Housing First approach. If your program is not in-line with Housing First, it is not possible to achieve these benchmarks. No "cherry picking" allowed!

Let's take a deeper dive into these benchmarks!

BENCHMARK #1:

REDUCE LENGTH OF TIME PARTICIPANTS SPEND EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



HOW DO WE DEFINE SUCCESS?

Households in the program move to permanent housing in an average of 30 days or less.



WHAT AREAS SHOULD WE FOCUS ON TO IMPROVE OUR PERFORMANCE IN THIS AREA?

You'll want to spend some extra time in the [Housing Identification chapter](#). Improving your team's skills in landlord recruitment, housing identification, and negotiation will go a long way!



HOW DO WE ACTUALLY MEASURE THIS?

Take the average length of time between the date when an individual or family is identified as having entered a rapid re-housing program (HMIS RRH program entry date) to when they move into permanent housing (HMIS residential move-in date).

$$\text{AVERAGE} = \frac{\text{SUM OF NUMBER OF DAYS FROM PROGRAM ENTRY TO MOVE IN DATE FOR ALL HOUSEHOLDS}}{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS}}$$

This measure is only calculated for those households that move into a permanent housing destination and does not include those who have not yet moved in or move into a non-permanent housing destination.

BENCHMARK #2:

EXIT HOUSEHOLDS TO PERMANENT HOUSING



HOW DO WE DEFINE SUCCESS?

At least 80% of households in the program exit to permanent housing.



WHAT AREAS SHOULD WE FOCUS ON TO IMPROVE OUR PERFORMANCE IN THIS AREA?

Having a strong relationship with participants is key for achieving this benchmark. You want to make sure young adults are sticking with your program long enough to find housing, and that they're engaged and communicating with you after they've moved into housing. Check out the hiring/training and natural consequences sections of the Case Management & Services chapter for more info.



HOW DO WE ACTUALLY MEASURE THIS?

Take the number of households who were discharged to a permanent housing destination and divide by the total number of households who were exited from the program during the same evaluation period.

$$\text{PERCENT} = \left(\frac{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS EXITED TO PERMANENT HOUSING DURING A TIME PERIOD}}{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT EXITED PROGRAM DURING SAME TIME PERIOD}} \right) \times 100$$

BENCHMARK #3:

LIMIT RETURNS TO HOMELESSNESS WITHIN A YEAR OF PROGRAM EXIT



HOW DO WE DEFINE SUCCESS?

At least 85% of households that have exited a RRH program to permanent housing should not become homeless again in the next year



WHAT AREAS SHOULD WE FOCUS ON TO IMPROVE OUR PERFORMANCE IN THIS AREA?

Take a deeper dive into the tenancy skills and income/benefits sections of the Case Management & Services chapter. These areas will be key to helping participants maintain housing after they're no longer receiving RRH services from your program.



HOW DO WE ACTUALLY MEASURE THIS?

You'll need access to HMIS data from homeless programs across the entire community for this benchmark. First take a look at the total number of households who were exited to permanent housing AND did not return to homelessness within 12 month. Then divide this number by the total number of exits to permanent housing during that period.

$$\text{PERCENT} = \left(\frac{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WHO DID **NOT** RETURN TO HOMELESSNESS DURING TIME PERIOD}}{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS EXITED TO PERMANENT HOUSING DURING THE SAME TIME PERIOD}} \right) \times 100$$

Return to homelessness can mean a variety of things: unsheltered location, emergency shelter, transitional housing, or a Safe Haven.

A participant **not returning to homelessness** also looks different for each young person. Examples include:

- Receiving additional housing assistance without becoming homeless again
- Receiving assistance with rental arrears
- Moving from one permanent housing situation to another
- Couch surfing/doubling up without entering shelter, transitional housing, or an unsheltered location

ADDITIONAL CORE COMPONENTS FOR RRH WITH YOUTH

So by now we know that all RRH programs must offer housing identification, rental assistance, and case management services. **But to have a successful RRH program for young adults, there are a couple more core components needed. We'll talk about them here!**

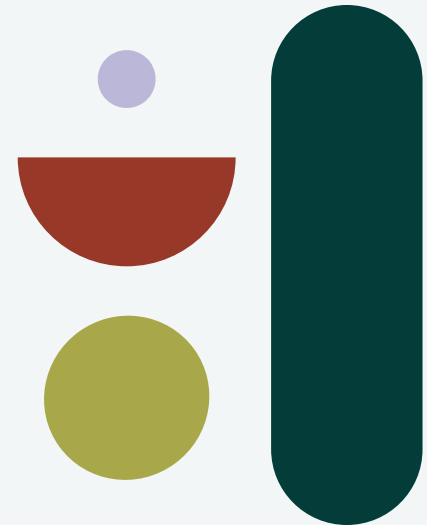
FLEXIBILITY AND CREATIVITY

One of the great things about RRH is that it's a super flexible program model that allows for a lot of creativity and innovation. Because it's person-centered and individualized, providers have a lot of freedom to **experiment and try new things.**

Throughout this handbook we'll be highlighting different partners that have been successful with creative approaches. Feel free to try some of these things in your own program. Then take a step back, look at the data, talk to youth in your program, and evaluate if it's working!

There are so many opportunities for creativity within RRH. Here's some examples of what's to come!

- [Landlord recruitment events](#)
- [Incentives for landlords](#)
- [Negotiation scripts](#)
- [Shared housing](#)
- Roommate matching tools
- [Three unique ways to calculate rental assistance](#)
- [Encouraging youth to save](#)



POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive Youth Development (PYD) should be at the forefront of all programs that work with young adults. It is a philosophical and programmatic approach, based in self-determination and empowerment, that helps youth reach their full potential by building on **the 5 C's — competence, confidence, connection, compassion, and character.**

According to Cornell University,¹² Positive Youth Development transforms how service providers work with young people.

- We move from fixing problems to **building on strengths.**
- Instead of reacting to problem behavior, we are **pro-active**, building positive outcomes.
- Instead of targeting “troubled” youth we **engage all youth.**
- We move from looking at youth as recipients of services to youth as **resources and active participants.**
- Traditionally we focus on programs and interventions, now we focus on **relationships.**

Through this emphasis on the importance of relationships, young people become not just the business of professionals, but of everyone in the community. If you want to learn more about Positive Youth Development and how to incorporate it into your programs, **check out our training section in the Case Management & Services chapter!**

“When she gave me the key I was like... **I see my future now.** It’s so clear. It felt really good to be like this is a major stepping stone in my life...I have a room where I can go to be me...It feels real good...it felt like ok, I’m gonna be an adult.”

— Riel

RRH Participant at Larkin Street

YOUTH-CENTERED SERVICES

If you’re operating a program for youth, that program should be youth-centered.

We’ve heard from young adults and providers across the country — young people experiencing homelessness want housing, and they want it now. They want providers to listen to them and ask for their input. They want help with their rent. And they want to be treated like adults and given the opportunity and freedom to make their own decisions

Providers have to trust that young people want to find and maintain housing. When we truly believe that and put the wants and needs of youth at the forefront of our work, things start to shift.

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (YAC)

A Youth Advisory Council is a key component of organizations that serve youth, especially in RRH programs. **A YAC is a formal body of young people who provide counsel, support, and feedback to the organization. Members should be paid for their labor and participation, as their feedback, time, and experience is valuable.**

Forming a YAC is a perfect way to put positive youth development into action. GenerationOn highlights the importance of forming a YAC, not just for the good of the organization, but for youth development and leadership. By engaging YAC members in the creation and implementation of programs and services that affect other youth, your organization is establishing a framework of sustainable leadership that draws from and gives back to the community.

If you want more information on how to form a YAC within your organization, we've got you! We'll be releasing a bonus chapter on YACs by the end of 2021. If you can't wait till then, reach out to our team at programs@pointsourceyouth.org and we're happy to provide technical assistance on this topic.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

Former Rapid Re-housing Housing Coordinator at [Youth Empowered Society](#), Dylan McDonough, provides the following example to help programs understand how they can be more youth-centered:

“When you do a home visit and someone has eight people crashing in their place and there’s trash everywhere, do you pull out the lease and say:

‘Hey look it says only one person is allowed to be here...when I come back everyone needs to be gone...’

Or do you say,

‘Hey this is dope, you’re housing your friends, you’re being a caring individual, this is awesome... how can I support you to do this so you don’t get in trouble with your landlord?’”

FOCUS ON DISMANTLING WHITE SUPREMACY

We cannot talk about ending youth homelessness without naming and examining the systems that inform and maintain the crisis. Dismantling white supremacy and creating systems of liberation is a vital part of this work. It is a responsibility of all homeless service providers that can and should not be ignored.

We can not end youth homelessness without dismantling institutional racism. We cannot end youth homelessness without working across movements. We cannot end youth homelessness if our advocacy isn't centered on ending the murders of Black and Indigenous youth, trans youth, and youth of color. We cannot end youth homelessness without dismantling the criminal injustice system which disappears these young people from their communities into jails and prisons across the country.

Point Source Youth recognizes how important this is and will be releasing additional resources on working together to dismantle white supremacy in the movement to end youth homelessness by the end of 2021.

We encourage you to reflect on the ways your organization participates in dismantling oppressive systems, and the work needed to expand and deepen this commitment. Our team can help by connecting you with experts in the field, as well as facilitating trainings on topics such as LGBTQ+ equity, anti-racism, youth empowerment work and more.

“You can't just bring one person of color to the table and assume that's diversity, that's inclusion, and that's transforming an organizational culture.”

— [Nijeeah Richardson](#),
We Are Family

“Saying that you're working with youth and only working with them to fulfill the goal or the task, isn't the same as working with and collaborating with youth and young adults...it doesn't mean to just say we have a youth action board. It means to have a board that is listened to and whose ideas are respected. There's feedback given, and there's a loop to work together.”

— Ziggy Keyes,
National Youth Forum

2

CORE COMPONENT #1

HOUSING

IDENTIFICATION



THE CHALLENGES OF HOUSING IDENTIFICATION

Housing identification is often the hardest part for many RRH providers. Why? Because it's new, and learning a new skill takes time and practice.

Most providers didn't have a career as a real estate agent or broker before going into this field. Most folks have studied social work, psychology, or maybe public administration and completed trainings in mental health, cultural competency, and client engagement. As a provider, you've been taught how to document services in progress notes and service plans. Maybe you've even learned how to manage your program's budget and write grant proposals.

But most providers haven't been taught the nuances of how to locate, negotiate, and secure housing. **Until now.**

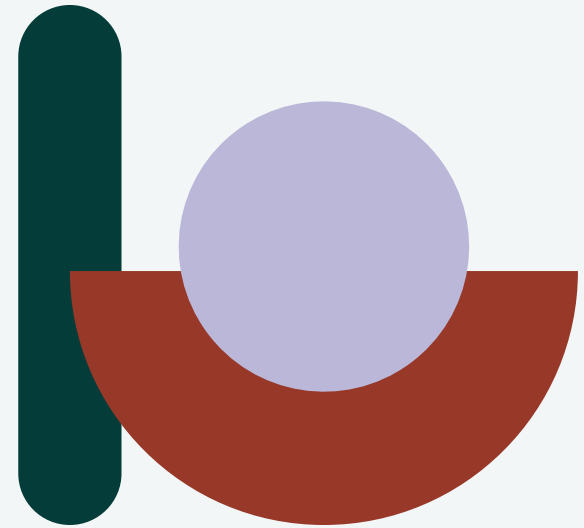
In this chapter of the RRH 2.0 Handbook we're going to take a deep dive into all things housing. We are sharing the biggest lessons learned from Point Source Youth and our partners across the country. After reading this chapter (and doing some practice and experimentation on your own) you'll:

- Learn how to **find landlords** that are actually willing to work with your program. And how to spot landlords you should walk away from.
- Understand the difference between **Housing First** and landlords' requirements for renters
- Have a **blueprint** to hire your own housing specialist.
- Know exactly what needs to go into a **lease** to make sure your program's in compliance and your participants are protected
- Be able to **teach** young people to look for housing too
- Gain **negotiating skills** and feel confident knowing what to say
- Be **excited** about shared housing

By this point you might be thinking, “that all sounds nice but it’ll never work in my community”. We hear you, and we’ve been there. We know that so many communities have a serious housing problem — with low vacancy rates, expensive units, and picky landlords. It is, however, possible to find housing for young people experiencing homelessness in any housing market. We’ve seen this work across the country — in cities like New York City, Baltimore, Greenville, Tucson, Louisville, Honolulu, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Indianapolis, and Columbus.

Be easy on yourself (and your team) during this process. Learning a new skill is never easy, but it’s totally achievable. We recommend reading through this chapter, then going out into your community and trying out what you learned. You’ll probably get stuck and that’s ok — just come back and revisit the material.

If you find you need more help, [reach out to our team](#). We’d be delighted to work with your agency and provide hands-on technical assistance.



TENANT SCREENING BARRIERS VS HOUSING FIRST

By now we've established that in order to be a Housing First program, providers cannot screen young people out of their programs or require them to meet certain preconditions before helping them obtain housing.

This means you're going to be helping young adults look for housing who face a multitude of barriers — including low or no income, poor or non-existent credit, a criminal background, poor or no rental history, etc. We are going to refer to these things as **tenant screening barriers**.

A tenant screening barrier is anything that a landlord would perceive as a factor that makes a participant a "risky tenant".



DEFINITION

Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing without preconditions and then providing additional support and services as needed.¹³

Ultimately landlords want to get paid with as little headache as possible. The "ideal renter" is somebody who will pay their rent in full and on time, be quiet and not cause other tenants to complain, and take care of their property without any damages.

For this reason, many landlords conduct credit and background checks, require renters to earn 40x the monthly rent, and request references from previous landlords.

Oftentimes landlords will use a rental screening report to check eviction history, criminal history, credit, existing debt, and income verification. These are usually NOT the landlords you want to work with.

We want our Housing Specialists to develop relationships with landlords that are flexible on a variety of tenant screening barriers. We want to find landlords who are open to negotiating and finding solutions to mitigate risks. We also want to understand what tenant screening barriers are important to each individual landlord we partner with. This will allow you to maintain credibility, respect the landlords' preferences and limits, and match participants with the right landlord, so they can find housing quickly.

Mix and match and draw arrows between the ones that fit

LANDLORD A
Lives on the property and is renting a couple extra units. Trusts the program will pay rent but has a watching eye over the building.

LANDLORD B
Lives out-of-state and owns a small investment property. Wants to rent to someone “professional”.

LANDLORD C
Large building. Requires renters to have good credit and some income. Conducts credit and background check.

LANDLORD D
Has worked with RRH and other programs for a long time. Has hands-off approach as long as rent is paid.

RENTER 1
Young adult with no income. Someone who likes to “keep the party outside” and doesn’t want a lot of visitors.

RENTER 2
Young adult enrolled in college. Has no income. Does not like to drink/smoke. Likes to hangout and watch movies at home with partner.

RENTER 3
Young adult with good credit and job. No criminal background. Likes to socialize, have friends over, and drink/smoke.

RENTER 4
Young adult with multiple tenant screening barriers. Has been evicted before, has a criminal record, and is currently searching for a job.

Having a greater understanding of what tenant screening barriers each landlord looks for will help you to maximize housing placements. It will also help guide you when creating case management goals to work on long-term housing stability. Oftentimes, Tenant Screening Barriers go hand-in-hand with barriers to maintaining housing. They are indicative of a skill that needs to be learned or a need that needs to be addressed.

Evicted for not paying rent	increase income, improve earning potential, teach budgeting skills, link with community resources
Evicted for damaging unit	work on life skills like proper cleaning, fire safety, etc.
Evicted for noise complaints	work on communication skills and boundaries with friends
Has poor credit	work on credit repair, budgeting skills, and increasing income
Evicted for multiple lease violations	education on tenant rights and responsibilities, harm reduction, etc.



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

If you can, **consolidate your questions** so young people are not asked the same information repeatedly. Use **trauma-informed care** as a best practice when talking with young people, understanding that homelessness itself is traumatic.

Remember that rapport and relationship-building is essential to this process, including assessments. Creating a non-judgmental, safe, and understanding environment for youth can help them feel more comfortable when divulging personal information.

It's important to remember that you are NOT using tenant screening barriers to screen out young people from RRH programs or to determine their readiness for housing. These barriers cannot predict who will or won't do well in permanent housing. This is about matching tenants with the right landlords, knowing more about how/when to negotiate, and directing case management interventions.

It's also important that the young adults you're working with really understand the objectives of screening for these barriers. Remember that intakes, questionnaires, and other tools used to obtain information can be difficult for young people. The information given is oftentimes personal and re-traumatizing. Participants may also assume that if they're honest with you, you will disqualify them for housing.

LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Building strong relationships with landlords is absolutely necessary for a strong RRH program. Landlord engagement is the 'secret sauce' that will allow your program to move young adults quickly from homelessness into permanent housing. It requires determination, smart marketing of your program, and a lot of creativity!

When communicating with landlords (and marketing your program), it's important that you think like a landlord. You might've entered the field as a homeless service provider because you have lived experience, enjoy helping people, or want to give back to your community. But that's usually not why a landlord chooses to buy property.

Landlords are in the housing business. They are in it for a profit. Some landlords own multiple properties and are able to do the job full-time. For many others, they may own a small rental property as supplemental income. Either way their property is an investment of their time and money.



A NOTE ON THE TERM LANDLORD

From the medieval feudal system to post- Civil War U.S., landlord and tenant relationships have often been fraught with vertical hierarchies. As the system of sharecropping grew in the U.S. among people who were formerly enslaved, high interest rates, cruel landlords and white supremacy often kept tenant farm families indebted and disenfranchised, resulting in cycles of poverty in communities across the South.

We acknowledge that the use of the term landlord is problematic and we encourage partners in the space to continue dialogue on its use. As we decolonize our philosophies and our activism we have to critically examine the language we use and how rhetoric and systems are implicated within larger histories of oppression and disenfranchisement.

“We were hosting a monthly luncheon for landlords and property owners where they could come by, hang out, chit chat, and talk about who needs housing and what’s available. It was a really great way to go a little bit deep with them and build that rapport.”

— [Josh Crocker \(he/him\)](#), Youth Resource Center
Director at Pendleton Place in Greenville, SC

Here are some things landlords want. Make sure you’re speaking to their underlying motivators:

- **No damages:** Landlords want their property to be taken care of. If the property gets damaged it either loses value or requires the landlord to spend time and money repairing it.
- **Limited vacancies:** Landlords want tenants who will stick around. Vacancies cost them money - no rental income, listing fees, and cleaning costs
- **Consistent rental payments:** Landlords want their rent paid in full and on time, without chasing after a tenant. This helps them stay on top of their own mortgage payments.
- **Good neighbors:** When a tenant is loud, dirty, or smoking in the unit, the landlord is usually the first one to hear about it. Why? Because neighbors complain. Landlords don’t want to deal with the headache of mediating between tenants.

Landlord engagement is a two part process: you need **search and sales**. First you have to search for viable units and then you have to sell your program and the young adults you work with to the landlord.

HOUSING SEARCH

Finding affordable units is challenging in a lot of communities. Finding landlords willing to rent to participants of a RRH program is even tougher. You will need to identify **way more potential units than you actually need** because many landlords will be unwilling to work with you.

Here are some of our favorite ways we've seen providers across the country identify potential housing units:

- Use **websites** like [Zillow](#) and [Apartments.com](#) to search for units. Pay special attention to listings that have been up for a long time or that don't mention tenant requirements for income, credit, etc.
- Explore units for rent on **Craigslist** (but beware of scams!)
- Maintain a **running list** of landlords you've worked with before. Call them, check in, thank them, and see what vacancies they currently have.
- Host a **landlord event** (if you can swing some free food even better!)
- Attend local **community board/association meetings**.
- Check out local **Facebook housing groups**.
- Take a trip back in time and check out the **classifieds section** of your local paper #TBT.
- **Cold call** landlords.
- Drive or walk around your city. Keep your eyes peeled for **signs** that say "for rent", "vacant" or "for lease". Call numbers you see listed for apartments!
- **Ask** friends, family, colleagues, and program participants what landlords they know.
- Check out **college bulletin boards** and forums.
- Hire a **broker**.
- Research [Landlord Meetups](#) or **networking events** in your community.
- Host **brainstorming sessions** at your agency. See what creative ideas and connections staff have! Be sure to include the whole organization, not just RRH staff. You'll want to get everyone's feedback, from the CEO to the maintenance staff! If you can't get everyone in one place, try smaller meetings, a Zoom, or even an online survey.

LET'S BUILD COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE!

Click this tweet and reply with your answer.

Check out others' responses from across the country!



pointsourceyouth @PSYyouth

Rapid re-housing providers What's one place you've successfully found a rental unit for a Young Adult in RRH?

[#endyouthhomelessness](#) [#housingfirst](#)

12:51 PM • Feb 7, 2022 • Twitter Web App



“We have a few ways that we are navigating that (high cost rental market). And the main way is to build a relationship with our landlords. And so the way we do that is we are absolutely relentlessly and brutally honest with them. We let them know what our programs are, not by handing them a brochure, but by having them come and tour our facilities, our shelters, our outreach programs, and meet some of the youth that are volunteering and working in other programs. So that we can get a little buy-in, other than financially.”

— [Robert Daley](#), Program Manager, Residential Youth Services & Empowerment in Honolulu, HI

A NOTE ON WORKING WITH BROKERS

Making connections with real estate agents and brokers is a great way to increase your housing search efforts. They have relationships with tons of different landlords and can help you identify which landlords will be a good fit for your program. The right brokers will have relationships with multiple landlords willing to work with programs. This will make the footwork of finding apartments and selling to landlords a whole lot easier. Brokers already know how to speak to a landlord's interests.



DID YOU KNOW?

Broker's fees are an eligible expense under Continuum of Care (CoC) Rapid Re-housing programs! They go under the Housing Search and Counseling section of your Supportive Services budget.¹⁴ Consult with your local HUD Field Office if you have any questions on how this works.

TEACH YOUNG PEOPLE HOW TO LOOK FOR HOUSING TOO

Affirming youth must be at the forefront of all of your work as a RRH provider. Always look for ways to get young people involved in your program. Teaching young people the skills to look for and maintain their own housing:

- **Increases** your chance of success, by having more folks on the ground spending more time looking for housing.
- Creates more opportunities for **youth buy-in**.
- Helps **manage young people's expectations**.
- Teaches valuable **life skills** for independent living.
- Makes it easier for young adults to find new apartments **on their own** after the program ends.
- Increases **patience** for clients.
- Improves the **relationship** between participants and staff.
- Lets young people **learn by doing**.
- Affirms young adults and gives them an **active role** in navigating out of homelessness.

THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN HOW TO LOOK FOR HOUSING.



Check out rental listings online and call them together using a speakerphone.

Model what to say.

Debrief with the young adult afterwards and explain why you asked specific questions. See what questions the young person has.

Then have them call the next listing with you as the role of listener! Share your feedback afterwards.



Host a workshop for RRH participants.

Share some basic education on how to talk to landlords.

Then have the young adults role-play with each other. Staff should be circling around the room giving feedback.



Brainstorm a list of places young adults can look for housing

Feel free to use our list above as a starting point!

Create a log for participants to track their progress of calls made and the outcomes.

YOUTH CHOICE

It is important to honor youth choice whenever possible. RRH programs should actively seek youth input during the housing search process. Sometimes the rental market will dictate what areas are affordable and accessible to youth in RRH programs. If their desired area is out of reach, give them multiple other neighborhoods to choose from. If getting a 1-bedroom apartment is unattainable, see if they want to look at a studio or decide how many roommates they'd prefer.

**“It’s the youth’s program.
It’s their home and their lease.
They should absolutely have a
voice in saying where they feel
comfortable with living.”**

— [Lakietha Sanford](#), Rising Up Case Manager,
3rd Street Youth & Clinic

“What area do they feel most comfortable in? With finding a location — is it close to their job? Is it close to their community? Is it close to their natural supports? That’s a huge part of what we talk about.”

— [Scott Schubert](#), Senior Director of Homeless and Housing Services, YMCA of Greater Seattle

COLLABORATION OVER COMPETITION

RRH programs function best when there is collaboration. Don’t view other RRH programs as your competition — you all share one goal, ending youth homelessness!

Some communities, like Austin, have actually **centralized the housing search for all programs**. RRH programs, like Lifeworks, contracted with their local continuum of care to do housing location services for their RRH program.

They (the CoC) do everything from the landlord engagement to the housing maintenance between the landlord and themselves — in terms of maintaining that relationship while the case manager’s working with the client.

— [Erin Waylon](#), Senior Division Director of Housing at LifeWorks in Austin, TX

Other communities like Atlanta and New York have tried a simpler approach of **sharing resources**. If you have a landlord with a unit who’s willing to work with a RRH program, and you don’t have any young adults who want that unit — share it with others!

This is a great opportunity to get a young person housed with RRH. Trust that your community partners will pay it forward when they know of an available unit that they can’t use.

“Since this national pandemic has happened, we’ve pushed to scale up rapid rehousing. And bring in more people that can help carry the load as additional funding hits the ground, **to stand up more interventions so we can get more people off the street faster.** And that has created somewhat of a race to the landlord line to see who can build that relationship, solidify those units, and put a hold on them quicker. So that was some of the challenges that you as communities have to work through — how you coordinate around that type of effort. As you continue to build this capacity within the community, there’s going to be a need for more **intentional coordination, specifically around landlord engagement,** if you have multiple rapid rehousing providers out there trying to do the same thing.”

— [Jimiyu Evans \(he/him\)](#), co-CEO of Project Community Connections in Atlanta, GA

FINDING HOUSING OUTSIDE OF YOUR COC

You can place young adults outside of your CoC, if the RRH participant chooses housing in another community.¹⁵ Here are some regulations and considerations you should make sure to follow:

- The **majority** of the program participants in your project must continue to be assisted within your geographic area, meaning no more than 50% of the units assisted at any given time in your project may be located outside of your CoC's geographic area.
- The RRH provider must provide **monthly case management** (in the geographic area where the participant chooses housing).
- The RRH provider must conduct an **annual assessment** of the program participant's service needs.
- You must still **calculate rent contributions** and review a program participant's income.
- There is **no maximum distance** the program participant can move.
- The CoC where the participant is moving **does not need to be notified** of the move; nor does the CoC where the participant is moving have the authority to deny the move.

SELLING YOUR PROGRAM AND PARTICIPANTS

When you talk with landlords, you are marketing and selling your program to them. It is important to be strategic in how you communicate. You want to balance being **clear and honest** about what your program can and will do, while also **not oversharing** or scaring the landlord away.

When you call a landlord to see if they have any vacancies, it is important to go into the conversation **with a plan**. Will you be pitching a specific tenant to the landlord or do you want to talk about the program in a more broad sense?

Generally, it's best to take a **broader approach** when contacting new landlords. This allows you to gather more information and be more responsive to the landlord's needs and preferences — which is super important in the beginning. Matching a landlord with participants who meet their desired qualifications is a great way to build trust. Once they've experienced what your program can offer firsthand, they may be more willing to take risks on tenants with higher barriers in the future.

Here are some simple Do's and Don'ts to keep in mind when talking with landlords.

Do's and Don'ts when talking with landlords

DO'S

- Have a **plan** before calling a landlord
- Be **honest and clear** about what your program can and will do
- Be **direct** about the population you're serving
- **Disclose** tenant screening barriers when asked.
- Take **accountability** when incidents occur
- Focus on a **strengths based** approach when talking about program participants
- Create a clear plan of how and when the participant's **rent** will be paid
- Communicate **proactively** with the landlord if/when plans change. Be responsive
- Be a good **listener**. Validate the landlord's concerns, even if you can't do anything about their complaints.
- Be **friendly**. Landlords are people too. Treat them as such. Ask about their weekend, kids, or lunch!
- **Negotiate**. Always.

DONT'S

- **Don't overshare**. The landlord doesn't need to know every detail about the young adults you work with.
- **Don't make promises** or agreements that the program or participant may not be able to keep
- **Don't ignore** the landlord. It's better to actively communicate, even when news isn't good.
- **Don't speak for** the client.
- Don't take your first **"no"**.
- Don't be afraid to **negotiate**.
- Don't agree to work with **every** landlord. It's important to find the right landlord
- **Don't burn bridges**. Many landlords are friendly with each other and will communicate about the good and the bad of working with your program.

Specific Participant Approach:

- Used when calling a landlord or broker to find a unit **for a specific young adult.**
- This works best when a client has **limited tenant screening barriers.**
- Be prepared to **answer difficult questions** about the participant.
- Be ready to **negotiate** as it's usually a harder sell to the landlord.
- Good for **less desirable units** — because of location, shared housing, etc. — that the landlord would have a hard time renting on their own.

Housing Specialist: Hi! My name is (your name) and I'm calling from (agency name). How're you doing today?

Broker: I'm good. How are you?

Housing Specialist: Good thanks! I have a client who is looking for a studio or one-bedroom apartment. Do you have any vacancies?

Broker: I might have something, How's their income and credit?

Ideally, if you're using the client specific approach with a new landlord/broker, the client will have good income and credit

Housing Specialist: Their income is pretty good. They work at Starbucks.

Broker: Ok. What type of program is this?

Housing Specialist: It's called the Rapid Re-Housing Program. We work with different clients who currently cannot afford a full month of rent.

Broker: Ok. So is the tenant going to pay the rent or are you?

Housing Specialist: That's a good question. We will work with the client for x months and provide them with financial assistance. The client will contribute \$x

dollars to the rent and we will pay the remainder. During this time we will work with the client to increase their income further so that they can pay the full rent on their own when the program ends. We'll also step in and help provide support if either the landlord or the client needs it!

Broker: Hmm ok

Housing Specialist: When can we come and see the unit?

Broker: I can show it to you tomorrow or this weekend.

General Approach:

- Used when calling a new landlord or broker to tell them about the **program**.
- The goal here is not just to get one young adult housed. You want to start forming a **long-term relationship** with the landlord or broker to get many participants housed.
- Very effective when you have **multiple participants** who are still looking for housing (with various unit sizes and locations).
- **Easier** to sell to the broker or landlord.

Housing Specialist: Hi! My name is (your name) and I'm calling from (agency name). How're you doing today?

Broker: I'm good. How are you?

Housing Specialist: Good thanks! I work with young adults to help them find an apartment. I was wondering what vacancies you have right now?

Broker: Wait what type of program do you work for? And what size apartments are you looking for?

Housing Specialist: It's called the Rapid Re-Housing Program. We're able to pay the first month's rent, security deposit, and a broker's fee. We always have a list of clients that are looking for different size apartments, so can always help you fill vacant units. Do you have anything available?

Broker: I have a 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom available. Do your clients have good credit?

Housing Specialist: That's great to hear! We work with a bunch of different clients, so some have poor credit and some have good credit. We will also be there as a

support system and can provide assistance with the rent if needed. So if the landlord's concerned about any of the client's credits, know that we're there to help too. We can also match you with a client with good credit if that's important to the landlord?

Broker: Yeah I think the landlord would prefer that. At least to start.

Housing Specialist: Sure thing, no problem. What is the rent for the apartments and when will they be available?

When selling your program to landlords, usually **less is more**. Don't go around saying "I know you might be worried about XYZ, but...". You want to let landlords bring up any specific concerns they have first. Then it's your job to listen to the landlord's concerns, validate them, and explain how you will alleviate that particular concern.

Here are some helpful data points to have on hand. If your data looks good, use it when asked! If not you can also just keep the conversation to general examples/outcomes.

- **Eviction rate** for program participants.
- **Percent of security deposits returned** at end of lease.
- **Number of landlords** you've partnered with.
- **Average length of time** in rental units.
- Percent of clients who **increased income**.
- Average number of **contacts** with participants per month.
- **Percent of landlords** who've chosen to work with the program again.
- **How long** it takes you to fill a landlord's vacant unit.
- **Average time** from viewing the apartment to the landlord receiving checks.
- Percent of rental payments made **on time**.
- Average amount of **rental arrears** for participants.

ACTIVITY:

Now that you've read all about how to talk with a landlord, it's your turn to practice. What better way to learn a new skill than to put it into action?

At your next staff meeting:

- **Divide your team into groups of 3.** Have one person be the landlord/broker, one person be the staff member, and one person be the observer.
- The landlord/broker and staff member should **role-play** these conversations, and the observer will **give feedback** afterwards.
- **Rotate 3x** until all 3 staff members have role-played each role.

FINDING THE “RIGHT LANDLORD”

It’s important that your RRH program is focused on finding the “right” landlord. Not every landlord you come in contact with will be a good fit for your program.

When a RRH young adult signs a lease with a landlord, you are both entering into a long-term relationship with that person. Like with any relationship, it’s important to consider any red flags that come up. Trust us when we say that sometimes it’s better to start the housing search process over, than to work with a landlord who is going to cause problems for the young adults and staff.



Green flags:

- The property is **maintained well**
- The landlord treats you and participant with **respect**
- The landlord focuses on **tenant responsibilities**, like paying rent
- The landlord is **responsive** and communicative
- The landlord has a **straightforward lease** with no rules that are not enforceable in housing court
- The apartment is **clean**
- Other people in the building say **nice things** about the landlord
- Questions are answered **clearly** and directly
- They take their time to make sure your concerns are **heard**



Red flags:

- Shows up **late** to viewing without notifying you
- **Rude** to participant or staff
- **Calls you a bunch** of times before the viewing
- Is generally **unresponsive**
- Tries to **“help fix”** or be a parental figure to the young person
- Has building **violations listed** (you can find these online)
- The landlord asks lots of questions about participant’s **personal life**
- The building is **run down**
- The landlord says they’ll make **repairs after** participant moves in
- The landlord makes **threats**
- **Rushed** apartment tours
- The lease has **unreasonable rules** for tenants, like no guests
- **Avoids** or dodges questions you ask about the unit, utilities, repairs, etc.

“Have a dedicated housing person if you have the capacity to do so. Because it is such a massive undertaking both in terms of the data entry, the landlord recruitment and maintaining those relationships, and all of the paperwork that comes with it. It’s a lot. It is a full-time job and then some.”

— [Josh Crocker \(he/him\)](#), Youth Resource Center Director at Pendleton Place in Greenville, SC

It is the responsibility of the RRH program to know when to terminate relationships with existing landlords too. If a landlord is causing problems for tenants, the RRH program should not place new clients with this landlord. Instead, they should **terminate the relationship**.

This can be a difficult decision for RRH programs. In tight housing markets, it can be difficult to say “no” to landlords who have vacant units and are willing to accept tenants with multiple tenant screening barriers. But if the landlord is not following through on their responsibilities, it is the RRH program’s duty to protect future tenants.

HIRING A HOUSING SPECIALIST

If you’re feeling overwhelmed, that’s completely understandable. Working with landlords is *a lot* different than working with young people experiencing homelessness. It requires us to approach the work from a totally different perspective, using new skills and language.

Mastering this skill (like any new skill) takes a lot of hard work, trial and error, practice and coaching. And still, it’s not for everyone.

Most of our partners have found that it is more effective and efficient to train specific people on their teams, with a more natural inclination for these skills, to be **Housing Specialists**. If you can hire somebody who’s already worked in the field as a housing specialist, realtor, broker, or property manager — even better!

A Housing Specialist is a staff member whose **primary job duties are to reach out to landlords and brokers** to build relationships, identify available rental units, and help participants secure these units.

Our partners have seen tons of benefits from hiring specialized housing staff to work in their programs.

- The Housing Specialist is able to serve as the **main point of contact for landlords**, answering questions, addressing concerns, and explaining processes, which helps landlords feel supported, and advocated for, just like participants.
- Having one point-of-contact ensures **clear and direct communication**.
- The Housing Specialist will be up-to-speed on all things housing. This means they will be able to address the **tenant and landlord's rights and responsibilities**.
- Conflict is reduced because housing specialists help to **mediate** between landlord and tenant.
- **Training needs** are reduced.
- Helps staff improve and **strengthen skills** by focusing their energy in one area.
- Housing specialists provide staff with a bigger picture view of the **housing market** and can make decisions strategically when matching landlords and tenants.
- **Strengthen relationships** between program and landlords by having the same person repeatedly work with the landlord/broker.
- Allows for case management staff to **focus** on case management, setting young people up for success.
- Improves **landlord retention** by having a dedicated staff member to work on relationship development.

By the end of 2022, we will be adding tons of bonus resources to this handbook, including a Housing Specialist job description where all you have to do is plug in details about your company and post it! In the meantime, one of our partner's, Jericho Project, has shared their Housing Specialist job description. [Download it here](#) for some inspiration when creating your own.

LANDLORD RETENTION

As you can see, recruiting landlords is a lot of work. Building strong relationships with landlords requires a large time commitment upfront. But in an ideal world, that time pays off with landlord retention.

Having a handful of landlords/brokers who know and trust your RRH program is a crucial element for your program's success. This will give you a consistent flow of available units as new young adults are admitted into your program who are actively seeking housing.

A RRH program's housing team should always be seeking out new landlords, brokers, and units. But having a couple of consistent "go-to" options will also take a ton of pressure and stress off your team.

What can you do during the housing search phase to set yourself up for a long-term relationship?

- Attempt to meet the landlord's **tenant screening requirements** (income, credit, voucher, etc)
- Show multiple clients the same unit to create a **"pool of clients"** for the landlord to choose from
- Be **direct** with the landlord when answering any questions
- **Explain the plan** for paying rent to the landlord prior to lease signing — Will the client contribute directly to the landlord? How much? How long do you expect the RRH program to contribute towards rent?
- Be **clear** about who's responsible for what — the tenant, the landlord, and the agency
- **Don't overpromise** — under promise and over deliver!

"You want to be the **program of choice** for landlords, so when someone moves out they're calling you saying, 'I have a vacancy, who can you send to me?'"

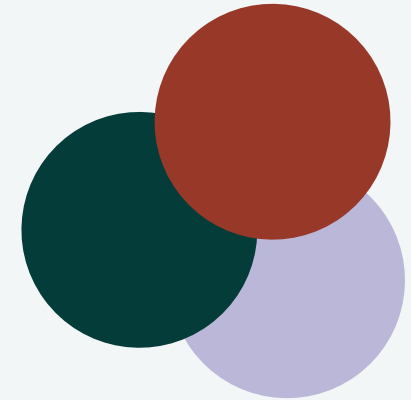
— [Erin Wixston](#), Associate,
OrgCode Consulting, Canada

So you've placed a tenant in a landlord's unit. Now what?

- Pay rent **on time**.
- Encourage and facilitate **communication** between the landlord and the tenant.
- Assign a **point of contact** for the landlord within the RRH program.
- Be **responsive** to landlord's calls, texts, and emails — it usually helps to tell the landlord you'll get back to them within 1 business day.
- Serve as a **mediator** and sounding board between the tenant and the landlord if/when there's conflict.
- Conduct **home visits** with tenants and check in with the landlord.
- If the agency or tenant will be late with the rent, be **proactive** in communicating this with the landlord.
- **Pay** for damages and/or late fees.
- Build **connection** to the agency — send thank you cards, give the landlord a holiday card or small gift, or host a landlord lunch.



Make it a staff policy & priority to respond to landlords **within one business day**.
Responsiveness goes a long way.



LEASE REQUIREMENTS

A lease is a legal contract between the renter and the landlord. The purpose of a lease is to specify the length of the rental agreement, the condition of the unit, the services provided during the lease term, and the rent amount due to the landlord.

HUD¹⁶ has set forth a couple requirements for RRH lease agreements:

- Initial lease must be for term of at least **one year**, automatically renewable upon expiration (for additional terms of at least one month)
- Lease term may be **longer** than rental assistance
- Total rent for unit must be determined to be **rent reasonable**

In addition, here are 9 things that are usually included in standard lease agreements:¹⁷

1. **Names** of all adult tenants.
2. **Limits on occupancy:** this usually includes adult tenants listed on the lease and their minor children — meaning tenants can't move in their friends or they may face eviction proceedings.
3. **Term of the tenancy:** remember HUD requires lease terms to be at least 1 year.
4. **Rent:** this includes the amount of rent, when it's due, how it should be paid, and any applicable late fees.
5. **Deposits and fees:** the dollar amount of security deposit, what deposit may be used for by both landlord and tenant, how and when the deposit will be returned, and any pet or cleaning fees.
6. **Repairs and maintenance:** this includes the tenant's responsibility to keep the unit clean and pay for damages they cause, how the tenant will alert the landlord about any needed repairs, the steps landlord will take when making repairs, and any restrictions about changes tenant can make to the unit, like adding a washing machine or painting.
7. **Entry to rental property:** this section should specify when the landlord may enter the unit, for what purposes, and with how much notice.
8. **Restrictions on illegal tenant activity:** this section will usually specify that tenants cannot make excessive noise or conduct illegal activity, like drug dealing, on the premises.
9. **Pets:** if the landlord has agreed to allow a pet in the unit, it's best to make sure that's included in the lease. Usually landlords will also include any restrictions on size or number of pets.

It's important to note that **different states may have additional laws** to comply with. For example, some states may have specific rental laws around rent control, health and safety codes, a landlord's right to enter the unit, security deposit limits, rights to sublet, specific disclosures like flooding or bed bugs, and anti-discrimination laws (this can include discriminating by payment source, like a voucher or program).

To find out more about your state laws, **search for “your state rental laws” on Google**. If you want more help fully understanding the information and its implications on your program, reach out to our team for Technical Assistance at programs@pointsourceyouth.org. We'd be happy to walk you through it.

Leases are boring. They're usually written in convoluted legal terms that make it hard for the untrained eye to understand. The more that you (or your team) read through leases, the more familiar you will become. Remember, it's your job to make sure the lease terms are appropriate and to **advocate** for the landlord to revise the terms if needed. Once the lease is signed by all parties, it becomes a binding contract.

Here are some things to look out for that should NOT be in a lease:

- Language that allows for **changes** to the lease.
- Full and complete **access** into the tenant's apartment at any time.
- Excessive late **fees** (a normal range is 3-5% of the rent).

- The tenant is responsible for all **repairs** and damage.
- The landlord has **verbally** discussed additional fees that aren't included in the lease.
- Requiring payment in **cash**.
- The tenant can't have **guests** in the apartment.

Most of the time, RRH participants are excited to be moving into their own place. It is common for young adults to want to rush through the lease signing to make things official. Make sure your team **goes through the lease with the young adult** and explains what each section means. We also recommend doing this a second time after the participant has moved in. Following the lease terms is a key component to maintaining housing.

A WORD OF CAUTION: MASTER LEASING

You'll want to **check public records** and make sure the landlord on the lease is the actual owner of the property. You do not want to rent a unit from someone who is master-leasing or subletting the unit from the actual owner. You risk paying the RRH tenant's landlord rent, and that landlord not paying the actual owner of the building. If that happens, the RRH tenant may be evicted for non-payment of rent.

Here's a [real life example](#) of this happening to veterans in RRH programs in New York City.

THREE-PARTY LEASE AGREEMENTS¹⁸

HUD does allow for RRH programs to enter into master leases or three-party lease agreements, where the **nonprofit provider leases a unit and then subleases that unit to an RRH tenant.**

This can be a helpful option for tenants with particularly **high tenant screening barriers.** This is best used as a **short-term** transitional strategy of no more than 1-year. This period provides enough time for RRH participants to demonstrate that they are “good tenants” to landlords, so that the landlord will then transfer primary control of the lease to them.

Alternatively, providers can also **co-sign** leases for a limited period of time. This helps to alleviate some risk for reluctant landlords, shifting the risk onto the nonprofit provider.

It’s important to note that the RRH provider is taking on significant risk when entering into three-party lease agreements with RRH participants. The agency is taking on financial liability for damages or unpaid rent. The agency also enters an awkward relationship of pseudo-landlord and service provider. This means the agency may then be responsible for evicting a RRH tenant themselves.

For these reasons, three-party lease agreements should be used only as a **last resort** for tenants with the absolute highest barriers. Many providers do not use these three-party lease agreements at all, and they still have successful RRH programs.

A NOTE ON SHARED HOUSING

HUD requires that all RRH participants have **individual leases** with landlords in their own names.¹⁹ This means that if you have three young people sharing a 3-bedroom apartment, each person should have their own lease with the landlord for their specific room.

This helps to protect each of the tenants — so that if one young person does not pay their rent or abide by the terms of their lease, only that participant’s tenancy is at-risk.

Later, we will be talking more about the [benefits of shared housing](#), how to [negotiate](#) shared housing with landlords and how to [alter case management](#) services when youth are in shared housing.

NEGOTIATING

Negotiating is yet another skill that most of us were not taught before. This is especially true for folks socially conditioned to be “passive” and “agreeable.” Just like the housing search takes time and practice, so does developing strong negotiation skills.

Some people think that negotiating requires you to be aggressive, but it doesn't. You are able to negotiate and still be polite and professional. In fact, we advise it. Remember you're trying to build a long-term positive relationship with every landlord and broker you work with.

Here are some helpful phrases to get you started with negotiating:

“Would you consider...”

“What if we...”

“Would you be willing to...”

“Is the apartment able to...”

“Would you be able to...”

“Based on my research of other units in the area...”

“Is that flexible at all...”

“If you can do XYZ, we're on board...”

If you want the highest likelihood of success when negotiating, try starting with a small **independent landlord**. Large management companies often have strict rules and policies and therefore tend to be less lenient. A small landlord can usually be more flexible. They'll also be more pressed to fill the unit as just one vacancy can have a significant impact on their income.

As with anything in life, if you don't ask, the answer will always be “no”. So take a risk and try negotiating.

And remember, negotiating is a give and take process. Don't expect to get a “yes” right away. Prepare to go back and forth with the landlord. Compromise is the name of the game. You'll want to make a request to the landlord and **offer something in return**. Think about what concerns the landlord may have about renting to someone experiencing homelessness.

“Being a Housing Specialist is so different from being a Case Manager. They speak an entirely different language. You need Housing Specialists that are really strong negotiators and aren't afraid to ask the tough questions.”

— [Kelly O'Sullivan](#), Managing Program Director,
Jericho Project

THINGS YOU CAN OFFER A LANDLORD²⁰

- You can **pay for any damage** to housing due to the action of a program participant. The amount paid must not exceed 1-month's rent and is a one-time cost per program participant, paid upon the program participant's exit from the unit.
- Two months of **security deposit** (must not exceed 2 months of rent.)
- Make an **advance payment** for the first and/or last month's rent.
- Cut checks **quickly** and on-time.
- Help landlord fill vacancies **quickly** without needing to spend money on advertising.
- Return **calls** within one business day.
- Offer help with minor **repairs**.
- Hands-on **support** with tenants.
- Can help tenant **move out** if problems come up, so that landlord does not need to evict tenant.
- Multiple interested **potential tenants** for landlord to choose from.
- A **three-party lease agreement**.

THINGS YOU CAN REQUEST FROM A LANDLORD

- **Reduced** rent.
- Increased rent that **includes utilities** or other amenities.
- Splitting the apartment into **multiple leases** by bedroom for shared housing.
- **Waive** tenant screening requirements.
- A **12-month lease** — or longer!

SHARED HOUSING

Shared housing can be an excellent option within RRH programs. It can make housing more affordable and accessible, especially in high-cost markets.

According to Pew Research Center, nearly **one-in-three** U.S. adults has an adult roommate who is not their romantic partner or a college student aged 18 to 24.²¹ This number is undoubtedly higher for young adults.

Over **85%** of college students have a roommate. Research has shown that roommates not only make housing more affordable, but they also improve many quality of life measures for students. A study by Skyfactor found that students with at least one roommate are more likely to report higher levels of institutional commitment, peer connections, social integration, and satisfaction with their on-campus social environment than students who do not have a roommate. Additionally, students who have at least one roommate are less likely to report high levels of distress and homesickness.²²

There are many pros and cons to using shared housing within RRH programs.

PROS

- The landlord may be able to get **more money** overall for the unit.
- The rent is lower for each individual tenant, making it more **affordable**.
- Separate lease agreements **minimize risk** for the landlord.
- Creates a **rotation** of units.
- RRH programs can easily fill empty rooms with RRH participants, **decreasing vacancy times**.
- **Developmentally appropriate** for young adults.
- Can increase **natural supports** and socialization for tenants.
- Allows participants to seek out **larger apartments**, which are typically less in demand than a studio or 1-bedroom.

CONS

- Landlords may **not be familiar** with shared housing.
- Landlords may be **hesitant** to issue separate leases because it's not what they usually do.
- It can be difficult to get landlords to treat each tenant **separately and equally**.
- Can result in increased **conflict between tenants**.
- Landlords may be tempted to **mediate** between tenants.
- Some participants may not **want** shared housing (this choice should be honored.)
- Can be **challenging** to mediate among different personalities.
- Need to address **roommate conflicts** and concerns.

While having one roommate (or more) helps bring the price down, it also adds more personalities and nuances to the living space that can sometimes create friction. [Jericho Project's Roommate Matchup Survey](#) helps mitigate potential issues by empowering young people to clearly identify what they're looking for in a roommate. The more choice and agency young people have in determining what's best for their shared housing, the better the outcomes.

In the Case Management chapter, we'll talk more about how to prevent and mediate conflicts between roommates.

And don't forget what we just covered in the leasing section — HUD requires that all RRH participants have **individual leases** with landlords in their own names.²³ This means that if you have three young people sharing a 3-bedroom apartment, each person should have their own lease with the landlord for their specific room.

3

CORE COMPONENT #2

**RENT & MOVE-IN
ASSISTANCE**



HUD LIMITS 101

Financial assistance is probably the most well-known and sought after component of Rapid Re-housing programs. Its goal is simple — to help young adults pay for housing so that they can quickly resolve their homelessness.

It's important to note, this component of RRH is not intended to be administered in isolation. RRH is so effective because it couples the financial assistance with the services needed to help young adults find and stay in housing.

RRH programs should distribute short-term (1-3 months) and medium-term (4-24 months) rental assistance on an individualized basis. This means recognizing that all young adults will not need rental assistance in the same dollar amount or for the same amount of time. This is very different from most traditional housing programs where households pay 30% of their income towards rent. Luckily, HUD has recognized the need for RRH to be flexible to meet the varying needs of young adults.

HUD allows for creativity and flexibility when deciding how much the RRH program and participant should each contribute towards rent. We typically recommend creating a plan with the young person, so they know what to expect. But you can also revise the plan as you go if you need to, based on the young person's needs.

In Section 578.51 of the CoC Program Standards, HUD outlines its rules and limits for providing rental assistance:²⁴

Rental assistance:

- **Cannot be coupled** with other forms of federal, state, or local rental assistance.
- Can be used for **security deposit** (up to two months of rent).
- Can be used for an **advance** payment of the first and/or last month's rent.
- The rent must be **"reasonable"** — more on this in the next section.
- Can be used to pay up to one month's rent in **damages**. This may be done one-time per participant and all payments should be made after the young adult moves out of the unit.
- Must be applied to a **lease** in place between the participant and landlord. The lease must be at least one year long and is automatically renewable upon expiration (we discussed this one [earlier](#), remember?)

If you're interested in *only* providing financial assistance, read up more on our **direct cash transfers** work [here](#).

We'll review different options for determining [rental contribution plans](#) later.

If the young adult vacates the unit, the RRH program may continue to pay the rent for a maximum of **30 days** from the end of the month in which the unit was vacated.

- The RRH program cannot make vacancy payments if the landlord has **filled** the unit with another tenant.
- If the young adult vacates the unit for less than 90 days to stay in an institution, the unit is **not** considered vacant and payments can be made as usual.

And that's it. HUD actually gives you a ton of choices with rental assistance and providers are able to set their own terms.

OTHER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

HUD allows for lots of other types of financial assistance (like moving costs, transportation, childcare and food) that don't fall into the rental assistance category. We'll talk more about that when we get to the [Supportive Services section](#).

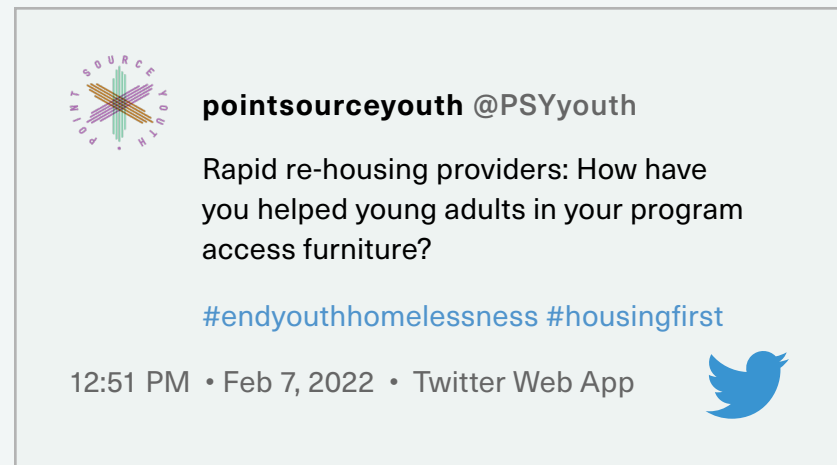
But one thing HUD **does not** allow you to use RRH funds for is **furniture and household supplies**. This can be especially problematic for RRH programs working with young adults. Many participants are moving into their own place for the first time with RRH and don't have any of the basics — like a bed, table, sheets, or pillows.


We recommend seeking out community resources and foundation funding to help bridge this gap.

- Create an online **Wishlist** for your program.
- Launch **fundraising campaigns** targeted to help young adults move into housing.
- Purchase move in kits from **bulk distributors**.
- Apply for **foundation grants**.
- Connect with **furniture banks** in your community.

You can also contact your local HUD Field Office, [comment](#) on any changes to HUD Proposed Rules, or work with homeless advocacy organizations to **stress the importance** of more flexibility in this area.


If you're a current RRH provider, we'd love to hear from you. **Tweet your reply so we can all share some community wisdom!**



 **pointsourceyouth @PSYouth**

Rapid re-housing providers: How have you helped young adults in your program access furniture?

[#endyouthhomelessness](#) [#housingfirst](#)

12:51 PM • Feb 7, 2022 • Twitter Web App 

AFFORDABILITY

It's important to note that RRH programs are not intended to get rid of poverty. Their purpose is to end homelessness.

More often than not, RRH participants will not have “affordable” housing after the program ends — by traditional definitions anyways. This is part of a **larger affordable housing crisis** that needs addressing. RRH on its own cannot solve larger systemic inequalities. We'll need to collaborate across movements and spaces to advocate for liberation-driven policies and practices that work to **eradicate poverty, challenge the stigmas of the welfare system and dismantle the white supremacist systems that perpetuate and create poverty**. Rapid re-housing is an intervention that sits at the praxis of larger, more sustainable liberation work; it's important to understand its potential and its limitations. Along with providing RRH, we must all be advocates for a better system that centers the needs and voices of QTBIPOC youth.

It is important that RRH providers **do not define their success** by the metric of having participants pay 30% of their income towards rent. With the current housing market and lack of a livable minimum wage in many communities, this is simply not possible. The majority of low-income and poor households (even middle-class households) will pay far more than 30% of their income towards rent.

And while structurally this isn't OK, our programs have to work within this reality.

Luckily it is possible for young adults to maintain housing after RRH, while paying more than 30% of their income towards rent.

Through **strong case management services**, RRH programs can help young adults to increase their income, connect with community resources, enhance budgeting skills, and so much more. This will allow young adults to survive, and potentially even thrive, without reentering homelessness.



The federal government typically defines housing as affordable when it consumes no more than **30 percent of a household's income**.

[More information here.](#)

This can be a hard reality for RRH providers. Many of us entered this field as helpers looking to change the system and fix income and housing inequalities. But with RRH, we have to focus on ending homelessness for as many young adults as possible, as quickly as we can. We do this by offering financial assistance and supportive services in a personalized, flexible, and progressive way. This allows us to maximize RRH resources and help as many young people end their homelessness as possible. That's our contribution towards fixing the homeless system.

So then how should we define affordable housing within RRH programs? Let's start with how HUD defines affordable housing.

FAIR MARKET RENT (FMR)

Each year **HUD sets a rate for Fair Market Rent** (FMR) in each County. You can look yours up [here](#).

This is how HUD determines rental rates for Section 8 vouchers and other federal housing programs. It's also how HUD determines the amount of rental assistance in your RRH budget.

FMR gives a big picture look at what's "fair" rent to charge within a community. It's a useful tool as a general guideline of what your program can afford to pay for each young person's rent — because it's what was budgeted through HUD.

However, this is **not** how you should assess affordability for each individual participant's rental unit.

RENT REASONABLENESS²⁵

HUD will only allow RRH providers to provide rental assistance for a unit if the rent is reasonable.

The RRH program must determine whether the rent charged for the unit receiving rental assistance is reasonable in relation to rents being charged for comparable unassisted units. This should take the following factors into account:

- Location
- Size
- Type
- Quality
- Amenities
- Facilities
- Management and maintenance
- Reasonable rent must not exceed rents currently being charged by the same owner for comparable units that are not receiving funding from a program

The best way to do this is to create a system or form for assessing rent reasonableness. [We recommend this form from HUD.](#)²⁶ Make it a mandatory part of your process for putting in financial assistance requests as young adults prepare to move into their housing units.

RENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS

As with all of the RRH core components, rental assistance should follow principles of Housing First and progressive engagement.

HOUSING FIRST

We've already established that a RRH program's admissions policies should not require young adults to have income, complete mandatory programming or groups, get sober, or do anything else to be enrolled in RRH.

The same goes with administering rental assistance — a young adult should **not have to meet any preconditions** in order to move into housing and receive help with their rent.

The goal is to help young people find housing as quickly as possible and then to work with them on maintaining that housing, once they're already living in it.

This will achieve the strongest outcomes for participants and serve the maximum number of households.

PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Financial assistance should not follow a cookie cutter approach — it should be **individualized** based on each person's needs.

Financial assistance can vary in the amount and duration provided.

RRH programs should not assume that one size fits all. By being flexible and providing just as much financial assistance as each household needs, RRH programs are able to serve more households, ending homelessness for more young adults.

We recommend **creating a plan** for how you'll administer financial assistance, so that it doesn't become a monthly negotiation with participants. Structure is important, as it affirms young adults with the information needed to plan ahead and budget accordingly. But the plan should also be **flexible** — if a young adult loses their job, starts school, gets pregnant, or has another major life change — the plan can change too.

RRH programs should **regularly assess** participants' ability to pay rent and maintain housing on their own. When creating Housing Stability Plans (or service plans) goals should really center around the primary goal of RRH programs — helping young people end their homelessness. As young people get closer to (or further away from) meeting their goals, rental assistance should be adjusted.

Sometimes RRH participants will end up needing more support than temporary rental assistance and case management. In these cases, it is helpful to facilitate linkages to a more **long-term intervention** like Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or a long-term rental voucher.

REMINDER

The goal is to help households until they are no longer imminently at risk of becoming homeless in the near term. It is important to recognize that RRH programs **cannot alleviate every challenge a household may be experiencing** and that a household may still be severely rent-burdened by the end of the subsidy. If the RRH program has ended homelessness for that household and provided the foundation and support for it to be successful in staying housed, the RRH program has met its goal.

[From National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)

METHODS FOR CALCULATING RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Before we dive into some community examples, we'd like to emphasize that HUD does not have any set structure or guidelines you must follow when determining how much rental assistance to give each participant.

“You can pay 100% of the rent for 3 months and then start to scale it down — that’s fine. You can pay by income — that’s fine. If you’re working with a young person who’s in school and they can’t have a job during the school year but then during the summer they can have a job, you can pay more during the school year and less during the summer. You can do all of those things so long as they work within the parameters of your CoC’s written standards.”

— [Brett Esders](#), Senior Specialist, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

EXAMPLE 1:

[The Connection](#) in Middletown, CT bases rental assistance off a **percentage of the unit's rent**, rather than the young adult's income. They've found it helps prepare young adults to rent in the private market and helps avoid the dynamic of, "If I make more income, I'll pay more for housing, so logically I shouldn't make more income."

They also recommend **incentivizing** youth who have demonstrated that they can consistently pay rent and other bills. Once a young person has made consistent payments, the program will give them the option to pay rent directly into a savings account, rather than to the landlord. This helps prepare them for the future.

LENGTH OF TIME	EXAMPLE YOUTH PORTION (ASSUME \$850 RENT)
1 - 3 months: 0 - 10%	\$0 - \$80
4 - 6 months: 15%	\$130
7 - 9 months: 20%	\$170
10 - 12 months: 25%	\$213
13 - 18 months: 40%	\$350
19 - 21 months: 65%	\$550
22 - 24 months: 85%	\$725



John Lawlor notes that for trans youth who face **employment discrimination at higher rates**, it may take **6+ months** for folks to find employment. Make sure your program is rooted in a strong foundational understanding of these things so that it doesn't encourage or pressure young people to trade sex, etc., to meet contributions.

EXAMPLE 2:

[Northwest Youth Services](#) has participants start by paying 30% of their income from the last month towards move-in costs. Then they **slowly increase** the percentage of the rent the youth pays, decreasing the overall RRH subsidy. Northwest Youth Services proactively discusses a plan to increase the participant's income quickly so that they can pay the full amount of rent within 6-9 months.

Northwest Youth Services uses progressive assistance to increase the length of financial assistance by 3 months at a time if needed. They recommend using **concrete tools** — like a rent calculator, attendance logs, job search tracking sheets, and budgeting tools when assessing the need for more assistance.

EXAMPLE 3:

[Jericho Project](#) begins conversations with participants by asking how long they think they will need rental assistance. Then Jericho places them on either a 3, 6, 9, or 12 month contribution plan. This plan starts as a **percentage of the participant's income** and then eventually increases to an increasing percentage of the rent. Jericho has found this helpful in motivating young adults to seek out work.

Jericho also offers participants the option to contribute the majority of their rental contribution to a **savings account**, rather than paying it directly to the landlord. This helps young adults to have a “cushion” of savings for after RRH assistance ends.

Jericho's rental contributions are **flexible**. Case Managers can work with participants to come up with an alternative plan if there are extenuating circumstances — this must then be approved by a manager.

What happens when participants don't pay their rental contribution?



Improve rapport with youth



Experience natural consequences with an unhappy landlord



Increase resources on budgeting and financial literacy



Remove savings incentives



Collaborate on finding a job they are excited about

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Young adults should be **involved** when determining how much rental assistance they need.
- There should be a clear **plan** in place for rental contributions.
- Not every young adult should receive the same **amount** of rental assistance. This isn't a cookie cutter model.
- It can be helpful to base rental contributions on an **increasing percentage of the rent** rather than income.
- You can be creative and **incentivize** youth by creating savings options.
- Rental assistance *must* be coupled with strong **case management services** to be successful. Participants should be talking about how they will take over the full amount of the rent proactively and regularly.
- Plans should be **adaptable**.

TRACKING TEMPORARY RENTAL ASSISTANCE

There is a lot to keep track of when administering temporary rental assistance in a RRH program. We recommend putting together a streamlined process to ensure that you have all of the supporting documents needed to keep your program in compliance.

We've seen this work really well by creating a **checklist** for Case Managers/Housing Specialists to use as a "cover page" when putting together financial assistance requests. This makes it easy for staff to ensure they have everything they need, supervisors to review and approve requests, and finance to check things on their end as well.

Here are some things we recommend including on your own cover sheet:

- Proof of homelessness
- Lease agreement
- [Deed](#) or other proof of ownership by landlord
- [HQS inspection](#)
- [Rent reasonableness checklist](#)
- Rental contribution form
- [W9 form](#) for payee

We also recommend tracking how much **financial assistance** each household receives. You can track this at the program or finance level in an excel sheet. Or you can make a check-list type "cover page" for the participant's chart.

If you want more individualized support setting up a system that works for your agency and program, reach out to us at programs@pointsourceyouth.org! Our team would love to help provide technical assistance.

4

CORE COMPONENT #3

**RRH CASE
MANAGEMENT
& SERVICES**



It's housing
FIRST,
not housing
ONLY.

HOUSING FIRST VS. HOUSING ONLY

Congratulations! If you've made it this far you've worked your way through the most challenging parts of this handbook. You've learned how to locate, negotiate, and secure housing which is no easy feat. And you've learned all about how to administer rental assistance.

Now comes the fun stuff — you got an apartment and paid the rent. What's next?

Providing the **supportive services** needed to help young adults maintain that apartment.

Providing supportive services certainly isn't easy. You're helping young adults increase their income, learn valuable life skills, improve their mental and physical health, create a budget, and be a good tenant. For most young adults in RRH programs, this will be their first time in housing of their own. There's a lot to learn and experience.

But the good news is that supportive services is a little more “business as usual” than the rest of the RRH core components. So if you've worked with young adults before, you may not feel so much like a fish out of water.

It's important that you're walking into supportive services with a plan so all parties know **who does what.**



TENANTS

- Expect to live in a **safe and well-maintained** unit.
- Live **free of discrimination** and harassment.
- Are responsible for **maintaining** the conditions of the unit.
- Can have **guests** in the unit and are responsible for the actions of those guests.
- Must abide by the legal terms of their **lease**.
- Must pay **rent** on time.
- Must **honor** rights of other tenants, including a quiet living environment.
- Must provide **access** for repairs.

LANDLORD²⁷

- Must **maintain** a habitable living environment — depending on your state and local laws this may include things like providing trash receptacles, maintaining common areas, keeping plumbing, heating and electric equipment in working order, handling any bug infestations, and disclosing any environmental hazards like lead paint or bed bugs.
- Must ensure a **quiet** living environment.
- Some state and local laws require landlords to maintain tenant **safety** by maintaining locks, removing hazards, providing safety equipment like smoke detectors, and giving proper notice when making repairs.
- Must respond to **repair** requests and perform repairs.

RRH STAFF

- Pay the program's **portion of the rent** on time.
- **Support** the landlord and tenant with any conflicts or issues.
- Pay **damages** and/or late fees when applicable.
- **Explain** lease terms to both landlord and tenant.
- Provide wraparound **services** and support to help tenant gain the skills and resources to maintain housing independently.
- Offer **Case Management** services monthly (tenants are not required to accept these services.)
- Conduct annual **HQS inspections** to ensure habitability of the unit.
- Be **responsive** to both landlord and tenant.

You'll notice the list above is actually quite short. There are no mandatory service plan goals for tenants besides paying the rent, abiding by the lease, and maintaining their housing. Of course there is a lot of work that can go into this, but the overall goal is quite simple.

It is also not the program's responsibility to make the tenant do anything. It is the RRH program's responsibility to advocate for both tenant and landlord, keeping conversations focused on lease terms and landlord-tenant responsibilities.

Remember, the overall goal of RRH programs is to **quickly end homelessness and stabilize participants in housing**. Because RRH is a short-term program model, we are not focused on long-term goals. The focus of services always comes back to one question — what does this young adult need to be able to maintain this unit once the RRH program is out of the picture?

Usually the answer can be found by connecting participants with community services and support.

“So if the landlord’s doing something shady, we need to know that so then we’re able to **advocate. Because for a lot of our youth, they may not know their rights as a tenant and what they can and can’t be removed for... So then we’re able to take on the responsibility of ensuring that they don’t get taken advantage of too.”**

— [Scott Schubert](#), Senior Director of Homeless and Housing Services, YMCA of Greater Seattle in Seattle, Washington

“(RRH) is pretty impressive and provides a great opportunity for many of our young people to transition into housing very quickly and then be wrapped around with services that are going to help ensure their housing stability going forward. And one of the biggest things that excites people about this particular housing intervention is the **speed of access to affordable housing, the affordability of the intervention as it compares to other interventions across the community, and the layered approach of service delivery** that allows for the very comprehensive outcome that you’re looking for, for that particular individual.”

— [Jimiyu Evans \(he/him\)](#), co-CEO of Project Community Connections in Atlanta, GA

SERVICES YOU CAN OFFER

(NOT REQUIRED!)

As you know by now, services in RRH are entirely voluntary. RRH programs are required to offer case management services at least monthly. But participants in RRH programs are **not** required to accept these services.

You want to make your services enticing, relevant, and useful to your participants. The best way to learn how to do this is to **talk to young people in your programs**. Find out what would help them stay in housing. Ask them what they like about your program. And most importantly, ask them how you can do better.

Developing and offering services that youth see as valuable and actually want to receive is a key component of a successful RRH program. Supportive services help set young adults up for success by providing them with the skills and resources they need.

Like rental assistance, supportive services should also follow a progressive engagement model. This means that you should not offer all young adults all of the services we are going to describe below. We recommend starting with just **case management**, and then offering others as needed. Talk with each participant and ask them what they need, as an individual. Then provide them with that service or help them get connected with a long-term provider.

Let the young adult take the driver's seat.

“It is hard. When we opened our drop in center the first month we had no young people show up and we constantly had to reassess, what’s a different strategy. So I think innovation is key in this. So always trying to reevaluate yourself and what’s going to work for your community. I think that’s also a really hard thing. People want like this easy cookie cutter approach, but we know that that might not work in every community. So always reassessing, what’s unique to my community and what’s going to work in my community and then working from there. It’s always a really good, good approach.”

— [Andrew Palomo](#),
National Network for Youth,
Director of Community Strategies

OBTAIN AND MOVE INTO HOUSING

- Assess [tenant screening barriers](#).
- Assess existing and needed supports.
- Obtain needed IDs and docs.
- Access furniture and other household supplies.
- Review lease.
- Set [roommate rules or agreements](#).
- [Find housing](#) — ideally this is done by a Housing Navigator.

SUPPORTS TO STABILIZE IN HOUSING

- Case Management.
- [Life skills, Jobs, Education and Benefits](#).
- [Peer support & community](#).
- [Parenting and child care](#).
- [Budgeting](#).
- [Landlord/tenant mediation](#).
- [Mental and physical health](#).

DISCHARGE PLANNING

- Education about community resources.
- Linkages for long-term support.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Case Management is a collaborative approach to service delivery involving assessment, planning, coordination, and linkages to community services. As RRH is a short- to medium-term intervention, the majority of case management services are actually connecting participants with long-term community providers.

Case management should also focus on each young adult's strengths. It can be helpful to work on building natural supports with friends, family, and romantic partners as well.

One of the best things about RRH is that services are largely home-based. This gives providers a unique opportunity to see young adults in their natural environment, which can help with identifying service needs.

Service needs should be assessed **collaboratively** with young adults. Ask them what they think they need to succeed — if there's something they're not considering, open up a conversation about it and see if they agree that they'd like to work on it. Case Managers should identify goals and develop an individualized housing and service plan.

The majority of direct service delivery with a RRH Case Manager should focus on housing retention. A major component of this is helping young adults understand the terms of their lease. Leases are often lengthy, confusing, and full of legal jargon. A case manager can help break down the lease in a way that's accessible and easy to grasp.

“When we say rapid rehousing, it is so much more. It’s the employment side. It’s the emotional side. It’s sometimes the spiritual side. It’s family planning. It’s so much that we put into these youth to make them successful human beings with a brighter future. We can’t just focus on housing. **We focus on the whole person. And if you do that, you’re going to be successful.”**

— [Lakietha Sanford](#), Rising Up Case Manager, 3rd Street Youth & Clinic



WHAT DOES MY LEASE SAY?

**This tool was created by the National Alliance to End Homelessness*

Tenant Name

Tenant Address

Case Manager Name

Case Manager Phone number

Who is my landlord?

I can reach my landlord by phone at:

I can reach my landlord by email at:

My landlord's address is:

My lease starts on:

My lease ends on:

What happens if I want to move before my lease ends?

How much notice do I need to provide my landlord if I decide not to continue or renew my lease?

My total rent each month is: \$

My contribution for rent while I'm receiving RRH services can be found:

My rent is due each month on:

I pay my rent: online / by check / by money order

My rent is paid at (include website or who check/ money order should be made out to and where it should be mailed or dropped off):

My rent is considered late on:

Lease-signing is an empowering and landmark moment for clients (and everyone, really). While this is a moment of celebration, it's also an important time to help the young people you work with fully understand the parameters of their lease. The National Alliance to End Homelessness' "What Does My Lease Say?" tool helps clients and case managers **tangibly breakdown the terms and conditions of their lease** in language that's accessible and digestible.

Download [this worksheet](#) and fill it out with young adults at your first home visit after lease signing. We've found that most people are usually too excited to really digest a lease when they're signing it, so it's best to review it again afterwards

LIFE SKILLS²⁸

Life skills are one of the more flexible components of RRH programs. These are services that help assist participants to **function independently in the community**. Some examples given by HUD include budgeting of resources and money management, household management, conflict management, shopping for food and needed items, nutrition, use of public transportation, and parent training.

We've seen providers get creative with implementing life skills — taking a group of young adults shopping to teach them how to buy nutritious food at an affordable price, doing a cooking class over Zoom, offering financial coaching services, or practicing a commute to a new job together.

JOBS, EDUCATION, AND BENEFITS

This is a big one — if RRH participants don't obtain income to pay their rent, they are very unlikely to maintain permanent housing at the end of the program. We encourage providers to support young adults with **identifying employment goals, preparing resumes, and doing mock interviews**. It is also important to help young adults **maintain employment** through conflict resolution, time management, and other relevant skills. But RRH providers don't have to do it all to be successful with this. You can partner with your local [American Jobs Center](#) to refer youth to these services. Many centers even have specific youth services available for participants under the age of 24. This is an especially good option for more long-term goals, like pursuing education or specialized training.

“A lot of rural areas are kind of what we call food deserts.”

— [Milo Edwards](#), Youth Emergency Services & Washington State Youth for Youth, Youth Programs Specialist

If a young adult is unable to work due to a qualifying disability, RRH programs should help them **obtain SSI**. [SOAR training](#) is a great option for providers. SAMSHA has found that “decisions on SOAR-assisted initial applications were received in an average of 115 days in 2020. The national SOAR allowance rate for 2020 was 65 percent. This compares to the initial allowance rate of about 30 percent for all persons aged 18-64 who applied for SSI or SSDI in FY2019”.²⁹

Of course other benefits like SNAP, TANF, and any local rental assistance will also help young adults have more room in their budget for housing expenses.

FOOD

RRH providers are able to use HUD funds to **provide groceries or food** to participants.³⁰ Providers should also focus on **long-term access** to food, by helping young adults identify places to shop, local food pantries, and other community resources. Providers should also connect with local [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) offices to ensure young adults who are eligible, receive funds to purchase food.

TRANSPORTATION³¹

RRH programs are able to use HUD dollars to provide **access to public transportation** for other eligible service needs in this section. There are also other unique ways to help young adults access transportation if public transportation is not readily accessible in your area. You can learn more [here](#).

BUDGETING- EXISTING

Budgeting is an important life skill for all adults, but especially for young adults. Robin, from Northwest Youth Services notes that the rent burden for youth is realistically between 50-70% of their income.³² It's important to recognize this as you work to determine what additional supports and resources can help each household succeed in maintaining stable housing.

In order to help your clients remain stably housed, you'll need to work together to build budgeting skills. The more **honest, transparent and comprehensive** your approach to budgeting is, the more support you'll be able to provide in setting them up for success and empowering them with long-term tools to understand their monthly income and expenses.

OrgCode Consulting Inc.'s [Honest Monthly Budget](#) from their *Excellence in Housing Training Series* is a great resource to help clients approach budgeting by accounting for the diverse ways they may be both earning money and spending it.

“One thing that we’ve done recently is we reached out to Uber, and we were able to secure a grant with them to be able to help provide transportation.”

— [Scott Schubert, Senior Director of Homeless and Housing Services , YMCA of Greater Seattle in Seattle, Washington](#)

EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING
The Honest Monthly Budget

Client:	Version:	Date:
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Things that I have to spend money on:	Formal ways I get money:
Rent	Job
Utilities	General Welfare
Food	Disability
Arrears	Pension
Repairs	Inheritance
TOTAL	TOTAL

Other money that comes in goes toward:	Informal ways I get money:
Child Support	Binning/Bottle Collecting
Debts	Odd Jobs
Cigarettes	Treasure Hunting
Coffee	Baby Sitting
Alcohol	Sex Work
Other Drugs	Drug Running/Dealing
Health Stuff	Day Labour
Household Supplies	Theft/Pawning
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	Friends/Family
Kids	Selling Prescription
Other Friends	Gambling
Cable	Medical Research
Socializing/Partying/ Night Out	Panhandling
Sex	Selling Crafts
Bus	Busking/Street Entertainment
Taxis	Honorariums
Gambling	Non-Medical Research
Legal Stuff/fines	Other
Other bills	
TOTAL	TOTAL

All the Ways I Spend Money:	All the Ways I Make Money:
GRAND TOTAL	GRAND TOTAL

Difference Between What I Spend and What I Make:
--

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PEER SUPPORT AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

A **Peer Navigator** is a young person with lived experience. Peer Navigators are great for providing additional support, teaching life skills, and providing linkages to community services. Peer Navigators often assist young adults by going with them when making linkages to new community resources. This helps to build rapport and ensure participants get the services they need.

Training is an important component of hiring effective Peers. [Doors to Wellbeing](#) has a comprehensive list of training and certification requirements and appropriate contact information in each state. If this is a new role for your program, Point Source Youth consultants will work with you to create job descriptions, role development, and connections to training and support.

“I’m trying to do as much peer connection as possible and building community that they might not have considered before. So we’ve done a lot peer events — picnics, watching a movie together, a cooking class where they all have the ingredients with them, etc.”

— [Erin Waylon](#), Senior Division Director of Housing at LifeWorks in Austin, TX

LEGAL SERVICES³³

RRH programs are able to use HUD funding to **pay for legal assistance** for the following subject matters: child support; guardianship; paternity; emancipation; legal separation; orders of protection and other civil remedies for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking; appeal of veterans and public benefit claim denials; landlord tenant disputes; and the resolution of outstanding criminal warrants.

PARENTING AND CHILD CARE³⁴

RRH programs can provide assistance with parenting and child care needs. It’s important that this should be related to **housing goals**. For example, if a young adult can’t attend job interviews because they don’t have access to child care — the RRH program could pay for childcare with a licensed provider, temporarily while helping them to connect with a community provider for a long-term childcare voucher.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH³⁵

RRH programs can utilize HUD dollars to help participants obtain **mental and physical health care or substance abuse treatment**. This can be through the direct provision of services by a licensed professional. It’s important to keep in mind that because RRH is a short-term intervention, it will also be important for Case Managers to provide linkages to long-term providers.

“It’s incredibly important to understand how trauma impacts mental health and the pervasiveness of trauma. Many of the people we work with don’t know a life without trauma. They were born into trauma and have had experiences of subsequent trauma. And often the work that we do can be retraumatizing. And it is absolutely critical to understand trauma, the pervasiveness of trauma, how trauma manifests itself, and what the implications are for the work that we do and the way we show up in that work. It’s really critical.”

— [Michele Andrasik Fred Hutch](#), HIV Vaccine Trials Network, COVID-19 Prevention Network, Director/
Senior Staff Scientist

LANDLORD/TENANT MEDIATION

RRH staff can add a lot of value by **mediating** between the landlord and tenant when conflict arises. By listening to both parties, validating concerns, and problem solving, RRH staff are able to help de-escalate and resolve conflicts.

If you’d like to learn more about how to train your team to mediate conflicts, reach out to our team of consultants at programs@pointsourceyouth.org. We’ll introduce you to best practices and tools used for conflict resolution. If you want more in-depth assistance, we can also provide one-on-one consultation, problem solving, and connection to resources.

A NOTE ON NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

It is important that RRH providers don’t take a disciplinary approach with young adults in their program. Sometimes young adults will make choices that will have negative impacts on them. It is not the program’s responsibility to shield young adults from these consequences — nor is it their responsibility to create a punishment for their choices to “teach them a lesson.”

The actions of young people can **impact important relationships** with their friends, neighbors, or their landlords which can create problematic consequences for them. Make it clear to the young folks you serve that the consequences are natural consequences not based on program rules. If there is an issue, case managers should consider asking the youth “what do you think you can do to repair your relationship with your landlord?” instead of telling them to do something because it’s a program rule.

Natural consequences can be an important learning opportunity for young adults. Continue to support young adults as they experience these natural consequences.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE HOUSING YOU FIND IS OUTSIDE YOUR COC

[As we discussed earlier](#), RRH programs are able to place youth outside of the program’s CoC. However, if the RRH program chooses to do this, they must **still provide monthly case management services**, at a minimum. It’s important that programs are still meeting young adult’s service needs, even if they’re outside of the CoC.

In most communities, **calling 211** is a good starting place. Just dial “211” from the community where the young adult is moving, and you will be connected to a call center that can link or refer you to community resources. 211 is available to approximately 309 million people, which is 94.6% Americans.³⁶ 211 covers all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. You can find out more about 211 in your area by visiting 211.org.

If 211 isn’t available in the new CoC where a participant is moving, RRH staff should work with the young adult to research different resources online and provide direct referrals and connections to needed services.

“So many service providers are finding it easier to place youth in far-flung areas, but that also presents a challenge in delivering services and signing youth up for benefits like SNAP and health care.”

— [Lakietha Sanford](#), Rising Up Case Manager, 3rd Street Youth & Clinic

SHARED HOUSING

We already discussed some of the [pros and cons](#) of shared housing, and we reviewed how to set roommates up for success with thoughtful roommate matching. Now we're going to cover how to **support** young adults after they've moved into shared housing.

It's important to **expect disagreements**. Whether roommates are just meeting each other through the RRH program or if they've been friends for a while and actively wanted to live with each other — conflict is pretty much inevitable. And it's totally normal.

Have ideas in place for how your program will support youth in mediating conflict, and supporting moves or changes in living structure if it's necessary. Doing this early on will help you move quickly in times of conflict to make sure folks are always in stable, secure housing that centers their needs, wants and independence.

Roommates each have [their own lease](#), which guarantees them their own rights as a tenant. This means that a RRH program cannot kick out a roommate — that the lease is a legally binding document. It's important to explain to youth that you'll work to mediate conflicts and find empowering solutions, however it is not part of rapid re-housing, nor is it legal, to immediately remove someone from their leased housing.

Proactively talking through each roommate's expectations and commitments regarding noise, overnight guests, shared spaces, pets, etc. helps to prevent conflict. We suggest facilitating

a conversation around these topics before or shortly after lease signing — and putting everything in writing so that there's always a reference point for youth.

Remember, you are helping young adults think about their own needs and preferences in their housing unit so that they can establish their own rules. The RRH program should not be imposing a set of rules on young adults.

A lot of conscious and subconscious needs and desires go into how we treat our living spaces. [The Jericho Project Roommate Rules Template](#) helps clients map out the various rules they have for their living spaces. By having roommates create an informal “contract” of house rules together, they can both discuss their various needs and wants and have a tangible document to reference in times of conflict or disagreement.

By setting the groundwork and addressing common roommate issues before they arise, you are proactively reducing roommate conflicts. But, they will likely still occur. Make sure your staff is trained in mediation techniques. Our team of consultants loves to work on this topic and can help with broad training or individual case consultations and problem solving. Contact us for more details.

The form is titled "ROOMMATE AGREEMENT" and includes the following sections:

- Roommate names:** A line for "Date" and a line for "Roommate names".
- Cleanliness:** A section asking "How clean do you like the common areas? How often will you clean them and who will be responsible for which areas? How often should dishes be done? Who will take out the garbage? Etc." followed by several lines of dotted text for notes.
- Noise:** A section asking "How late can we play music, watch TV, or talk? What times are appropriate for loud noises? Is it different during the week or on weekends?" followed by several lines of dotted text for notes.
- Sharing Items:** A section asking "How will you split the cost of common foods, like condiments and spices? Cleaning supplies? Cakes? WiFi? Electricity? Are there any items you definitely don't want to share?" followed by several lines of dotted text for notes.

NAVIGATING LEASE RENEWAL

Lease renewal is a crucial time period for RRH participants. It is something that you should start preparing participants for at the initial lease signing.

If the landlord and participant both choose to renew the lease - things are much simpler. The young adult can stay in the unit and take over the full rent once RRH financial assistance ends. They will not need to worry about finding a new unit, paying another security deposit or brokers fee, or figuring out moving logistics and expenses.

If the landlord chooses not to renew the lease, things will be more difficult. The participant may need additional assistance finding and obtaining a new unit. This does not mean that the RRH program or the participant “failed”. The time spent in the housing unit was still a success - the young adult did not spend this time homeless and they were able to establish a rental history and learn tenancy skills.

Sometimes RRH participants will choose not to renew a lease, even if the landlord is willing to renew. This may be due to changes in their budget, desired living situation (they might want to live on their own, with a partner, or with a different roommate), or preferred location. The young adult has the autonomy to make this decision.

Here are some strategies we suggest to prepare for a positive lease renewal:

- Help young adults understand the **terms** of their lease, from the beginning.
- Pay the RRH program's portion of the rent **on time** always.
- Work **proactively** with young adults, discussing their plans to pay any rental contribution before the 1st of the month.
- **Communicate** proactively with the landlord.
- Provide the landlord with a **thank you letter** after the young adult moves in.
- Ensure all parties understand **expectations** for the landlord, tenant, and program.
- **Check in** with the landlord regularly.
- **Set a reminder** for staff to start talking about lease renewal at least 3 months before the end of the lease.
- **Mediate** with the landlord and tenant whenever issues arise.

PLANNING FOR DISCHARGE

Like lease renewal, discharge planning should happen **proactively** at the beginning of the program. It's important that both the participant and landlord understand that RRH is a short- to medium-term intervention.

The goal of RRH programs is to help young adults establish independence and housing stability as quickly as possible. This allows RRH programs to serve more youth, ending homelessness for as many young adults as possible. A RRH program does not need to wait until all of a participant's goals are met to reach case closure.

RRH programs should have **written policies** in place around discharge practices. These policies should establish who, when, and how it will be determined whether or not the participant is ready for discharge.

Some potential indicators of discharge readiness may include the participant's ability to pay rent on their own, whether the participant is currently paying rent and following lease terms, whether the participant is connected to any needed supports, and the participant's own evaluation of their readiness.

Programs should also have clear policies in place for when a participant will be involuntarily **discharged**. This may include long periods of being unable to contact participants, threats or violence by participants, or other serious incidents. These policies should be aligned with [Housing First](#).

If you don't currently have a robust discharge policy in place, or if you're not sure if your current policies are in compliance with HUD and Housing First, the Point Source Youth team can help.

We also suggest ensuring that young adults have a tangible list of **resources** they can access should they need additional assistance after they are discharged from the RRH program. We recommend providing resources along with a discharge letter.

Some resources to include are:

- Access to community based rental assistance for eviction prevention
- Medicaid
- SNAP
- Pro bono legal services
- Food pantries
- Local Workforce One center
- Budgeting resources
- 211
- Community health centers

Finishing RRH services is something to be **celebrated!** Consider ways you can reflect on and congratulate young adults for their accomplishments. Can you invite participants back to meet with new RRH participants? Can you pay them for their feedback to improve the program for future participants?

HIRING AND TRAINING

Hiring and training is an important component of a RRH program. It takes a unique person to work with young adults and to fully embrace the RRH mindset.

When hiring staff, it is important to assess that candidates have a **youth-centered** and **strength-based** approach to service delivery. The Point Source Youth team can work with you to create job descriptions, screen resumes, assess and edit interview questions, join the interview process, and provide feedback and advice towards the most qualified candidates.

Ideally you should be looking for candidates with the following characteristics:

- Hire people with lived experience. Don't just expect young people to give back by volunteering — actually give them full-time jobs and hire them for integral roles in your program.
- Hire people who look like the people you serve. Blair Franklin, Executive Director at [Youth Empowered Society \(YES\)](#) has done an excellent job at this. “Most of our staff are Black, most are queer or trans, most are young people themselves and have lived experience.”
- Hire people who believe in Housing First. Ask them about it during the interview process.
- Hire people who value autonomy. It is very hard to “unlearn” core beliefs and relearn new values. Look for people who want to empower young adults, not fix or parent them.

“Something that we really tried to do too is **include youth in the interview process when we have case managers that we’re hiring. They’re able to see some of the things that we as service providers aren’t necessarily able to see. And also a connectedness — they’re like, ‘I’d like that person to be my case manager’ or, ‘No, I felt like they weren’t really answering the question.’ So they’re giving you honest feedback and I think that’s something that has been really beneficial for us as well.”**

— [Scott Schubert, Senior Director of Homeless and Housing Services, YMCA of Greater Seattle in Seattle, Washington](#)

Once you've hired your team, it's time to train and support them. In general, we suggest doing this through interactive trainings and role-plays. It is important that all policies, trainings, and forms are aligned. You should use person-centered language that is based in autonomy, strength, and empowerment.

PSY consultants will work closely with the case management team to apply best practices, trainings and techniques known to strengthen case management service provision. We will help you change the conversation from "how can we change the people we serve so that they will succeed in RRH" to "how can we change RRH so that it can work for the people we serve."

At a minimum, we suggest all staff are trained on the following evidence based practices. Our team can provide these trainings directly or help you find a local trainer in your community. Contact us for more information!

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive Youth Development works to enhance young people's strengths by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and treating youth as active participants. It is focused on youth choice and empowerment, and it is a radically different approach than when providers treat youth as service recipients.

PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Progressive engagement works by offering a small amount of assistance — and if someone needs more assistance, we provide more. This works because it is flexible and individualized. It also

allows communities to provide the most assistance to households who truly need it most. This applies to both support services and financial assistance.

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First offers housing quickly and immediately to young people without preconditions. Participants are then offered wrap-around services to support them in maintaining their tenancy.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Motivational Interviewing as a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication that works to strengthen an individual's motivation for change. Staff learn specific skills like open-ended questions, affirmations, and reflections to help participants make progress towards their own goals.

HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction works to reduce the risks and harmful effects of substance use and homelessness.

"Our job is to help them build the tools and the capacity to strengthen the strengths that they already have and provide choices so that they can effectively navigate life."

— [Michele Andrasik](#) [Fred Hutch](#), [HIV Vaccine Trials Network](#),
[COVID-19 Prevention Network](#), [Director/Senior Staff Scientist](#)

SUPPORTING RRH STAFF

RRH programs should actively work to support their staff through training, supervision, and burnout prevention.

Training and supervision should work to support staff in their professional development. We recommend **regularly meeting** with your team for individual and group supervision. This helps to build camaraderie and the support needed to stay in this field.

Case conferences can be a valuable learning opportunity for your team. During case conferences, you can take a multidisciplinary approach to supporting individual participants. It allows staff to learn from and give feedback to each other, which can sometimes be more valuable than feedback from leadership.

The management team should also work to **support staff** during difficult conversations, like mediations between roommates or the landlord and tenant.

Burnout is very real in this field. Burnout should be discussed regularly and the team should know signs to look out for.

Signs of burnout:

- Withdrawal
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty managing boundaries
- Aggression
- Cynicism or a negative attitude

RRH programs can help support their team in developing coping skills to manage stress, promoting time off, offering mental health services through an Employee Assistance Program, and providing ongoing training and supervision.



**“Self care is self preservation.
It’s necessary.”**

— [Dr. TaMara Rose](#),
SisterLove, Inc,
Project ONE LOVE Manager

We're here to support you!

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To connect with our brilliant team of TA providers,
reach out to us at programs@pointsourceyouth.org.

ENDNOTES

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