



Effective Landlord Engagement Strategies

Building Enduring Partnerships with Landlords

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Agenda

- **Knowing what Landlords want**
- **Recruit and Retain Landlords**
- **Supporting Your Landlords**

Knowing What Landlords Want

Know What Landlords Want



Understand your Landlords

- Use/build community/agency database to log Landlord unit types and amounts
- Identify landlords known to be flexible with evictions, criminal histories, pets or other TSBs
- Identify landlords willing to be flexible with rent/utilities in exchange for program support and services
- Survey landlords to understand the type of tenants in their buildings, nature of building and neighborhoods and other “soft” information
- Make sure you are coordinating with other providers to avoid landlord confusion, fatigue or other issues

Chat Discussion

- What services do you think would be most attractive to landlords?
- What services do you offer landlords currently?
- What services do you think you could commit to offering?

Incentives for a Landlord Partnership

- Cut checks fast and on time
- Double damage deposit if/when needed for “risky” client
- Risk Mitigation Fund for damages caused by tenant
- Help with minor repairs
- Steady referral source of new tenants; no need to advertise
- Calls returned within one business day
- Staff teach “good tenant” skills
- If problems can’t be solved, assist tenant to move out without an eviction
- Part of a mission to end homelessness and part of the team
- Annual recognition event, positive media exposure

Recruit and Retain Landlords

Recruit and Retain Landlord

- Single best way to recruit and retain landlords to support good tenancies within your program
- Landlord are your “second client”, requiring case management and responsiveness similar to clients
- Landlord supports begin prior to viewing unit, continue through tenancy support, and even maintain contact after program support is complete

Targeting > Match > First Impressions > Good Tenants > Program Responsive

How Do You Build Better Landlord Partnerships?

- **Your programs** have a good outreach strategy to identify potential partners
- **Your programs** offers attractive incentives for landlords who partner with you

AND

- **Your programs** know your landlords concerns and needs and respond to them accordingly
- **Your programs** try to create a Win-Win for landlords and clients through ongoing, individualized tenant and landlord supports

Recruit

Retain/Grow



Finding and Keeping Landlords in a Difficult Market

- Developing and maintaining landlord relationships must be someone's full time job
- Housing search is proactive and continuous
- Landlord incentives are well-designed to minimize landlord risk
- Program and staff ALWAYS do what they promise
- Calls from landlords are returned quickly
- Checks are cut quickly

Landlords are Your Second Client!

Landlord Recruitment: Leave No Stone Unturned



Landlord Partnership Check-List

- How can you ensure that landlord calls receive a rapid response?
 - ▶ Whom does the landlord call?
 - ▶ What days/hours will the landlord reach a live person?
 - ▶ How are calls covered when the designated staff contact is not at work (vacation/sick/holiday)?
 - ▶ How quickly are calls returned to the landlord?
- How do you ensure timely program payments to landlords?
 - ▶ Is the process for cutting checks clear and effective?
 - ▶ Is there back-up if someone in the chain is not available?
- Build an information database on all housing partners: PHAs, subsidized landlords, private market landlords, etc.
- Include and update landlord and housing details: Screening requirements they will or will not waive for RRH tenants, rents, unit locations/descriptions, profile of typical tenants.
- Coordinate with other RRH programs to avoid “bidding wars” or landlord confusion about which program has promised what. Ideally, all RRH programs offer the same incentives!
- Track significant housing complaints about partners and follow up to make sure landlords are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Supporting Your Landlords

How Do You Support Landlord Partners?

- Your best landlord supports are your **tenancy supports**
- If you assist your clients to pay the rent, follow the lease, care for the unit, and avoid conflict, your landlords will be happy
- That's a better guarantee than the landlord has with any other tenants
- But if/when things don't go that smoothly, the landlords want someone who can help resolve the problem....and that's why they will work with you

Review Rules for Keeping Housing

1. Pay the Rent On Time
2. Treat the Building with Respect
3. Treat Other People with Respect
4. Follow the Lease

These rules can help keep housing.



1. Pay the Rent On Time

- Increase income /decrease expenses
- Spending plan and ways to track spending
- Automatic withdrawal or vendor pay
- “Reminders” a week before rent is due
- Ask landlord to accept 2 payments/month, when tenant receives paycheck
- Create an emergency savings account if income is erratic



2. Treat the Building with Respect

- Many program participants have never owned their own housing and lack knowledge/skills
- If there is a history of damage, find out how it occurred, then deal with the cause
- Skills are taught most effectively where they will be used—in this case, in the tenant's own unit

3. “Peaceful/Quiet Enjoyment”

- A clause in most leases: Tenant shall not disturb the peaceful /quiet enjoyment of the premises
- Intentionally vague language allows landlord to evict for almost any problem behaviors such as failure to control trash, children, guests and noise, and/or conflict with other tenants
- Tenants are often not aware of this lease requirement; explain it to them!
- Watch for violations when visiting the home and ask about any problems when you talk with the landlord

4. Follow the Lease

- Read and explain—in **simple terminology**—the client’s lease
(or have a tenant/legal service provider “translate”).
- If the language is too obscure, consult a legal services or tenant advocacy resource to identify the critical requirements.



Tools for Clients

Example: Summarizing Primary Lease Requirements

Things that can get me EVICTED:

- Rent is more than 5 days late
- Someone moves in with me (stays more than 2 weeks)
- If I get a dog
- If the police are called about me twice in 30 days

Things I can do WITH WRITTEN PERMISSION from Landlord:

- Get a roommate
- Get a cat

Call: Megan (my housing questions person): 123-456-7890

So How Do You Find Out About Tenancy Problems?



- Conversation with the individual or family: Any problems with the landlord or other tenants?
- Check-in calls or visits with the landlord: How are things going? Any problems I need to know about?
- Home visits: Have you noticed damage, excessive noise, disruptive behavior of children or guests?

BE PROACTIVE: Anticipate Problems

Plan ahead, *with your participant*, about how to respond if it looks like a previous rental problem (Housing Retention Barrier) is recurring.

For example...

- How will you prevent your friends from using your apartment as their party room?
- What will you do if you know you won't have all the rent on time?
- How can you stop your children or friends from making noise in common areas that bothers the neighbors?
- What can you say if someone in your family wants to borrow the rent money—and you don't think they can pay you back by the first of the month?

What if Being Proactive Isn't Enough?

- Suppose the first time you find out about your client's tenancy problem is when the landlord contacts you and is really angry?
- What do you do to save the partnership (and your client's housing)?
- You can be proactive in your response, because some issues are predictable enough to plan what to say:
 - You didn't return my call....
 - There was a party...
 - You paid your share of the rent but your client didn't pay his/her share...

Dealing With Contentious Situations

- Define the problem—ask for details about what your client (or you) may have done wrong
- Distance yourself emotionally; speak slowly, calmly
- Don't get into ego battles, argue or replay past issues
- Apologize for self for any failures to meet expectations
- You may ask for time to make a plan (after you speak with your client); set a date/time for a call or meeting
- Or, agree on a correction plan--what you can do differently
- Follow up with the landlord and your client. Make sure the plan is working as intended





Questions