

Supportive Housing Standards

Guiding Principles: Principles that should govern the provision of supportive housing

Participant Choice

Participant choice in housing and services, self-determination and empowerment are central to supportive housing model. Choice is built in wherever possible.

Accessibility

Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings.¹

There is a clear plan for accessibility from application through tenancy.

Housing First principles are followed:

- Low barrier housing access with no readiness requirements for entry
- No requirements for keeping housing, except those of a normal lease.
- Tenants are not required to accept services. Service providers are, however, required to make a broad spectrum of services available on an ongoing basis and to continually work to engage people in accessing services.
- Have lease violation mitigation policies and practices with the goal of keeping people housed

Appropriate and reasonable accommodations and supports are provided during the application and screening processes. This includes accommodations as needed for equal access.

Communication during tenancy is accessible to all tenants.

- Staff are available at regularly scheduled times including non-business hours if possible. Staff schedule is clearly communicated to tenants.
 - All property management communications and documents related to property rules and policies will meet accessibility needs.
 - Emergency contacts are provided when staff are not at the site.
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¹ From the American Alliance of Museums

Staffing Principles

- Partners (owner, service provider(s), property management and additional partners as appropriate) should enter into an [MOU](#) outlining roles and responsibilities.
 - Policies should be applied consistently across partners and should include:
 - Plans for emergencies and natural disasters
 - Grievance policy and procedure
 - Crisis response, including behavioral health crises
 - Privacy rights
 - Lease infraction mitigation/housing retention
 - Peers/people with lived experience are part of the supportive housing team and a conscious effort is made to support and promote peers/people with lived experience to leadership roles
 - Background checks are completed for all staff with direct contact with tenants. Flexibility with background is built in wherever possible to accommodate inclusive hiring practices.
 - Training plans are updated annually and include onboarding and continuous education in place for all staff who interact with tenants.
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Equity

- Address and promote accessibility and equity within housing and service delivery for disparately impacted communities in the project's region.
- Areas to assess include physical accessibility, cultural responsiveness and sensitivity, safety, environment, and accommodations specific for people with behavioral health disorders, and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities, and communication modes/methods.
- Service providers use an antiracist approach and incorporate cultural considerations into all programming, including considerations for serving LGBTQIA2S+ tenants and tenants with disabilities.
- Best practice for all site-based supportive housing service providers is to review and consider adopting relevant portions of the [National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services \(CLAS\) in Health and Health Care](#).
- Evaluate equity through the lens of accessibility and cultural responsiveness.

Entity Qualifications: Training and staffing expectations for Property Management, Service Provider and Front Desk

Property Management, Service Provider and Front Desk staff align with core values of supportive housing and reflect the population being served.

- Use Housing First, harm reduction, and person-centered approaches
- Ensure that interactions with tenants are trauma-informed

Property Management

Training expectations for site staff including property management, caretakers, and volunteers who interact with tenants are to include

- Trauma-informed approaches
- Mental health 101, de-escalation, and crisis response
- Homelessness 101
- Equity training, including antiracism and implicit bias
- Housing First
- Harm reduction
- Mandated reporter and/or vulnerable adult training
- First aid and CPR, including responding to overdoses
- Ethics and Boundaries
- Self-care

Service Provider

Service provider staff are trained in the following content:

- Trauma-informed approaches
- Mental health 101, de-escalation, and crisis response
- Homelessness 101
- Equity training, including antiracism and implicit bias
- Housing First
- Harm Reduction
- Mandated reporter and/or vulnerable adult training
- First aid and CPR, including responding to overdoses
- Ethics and Boundaries
- Person-Centered Practices
- Engaging People with High Needs or Barriers
- Definitions of Homelessness
- Motivational Interviewing
- Self-Care
- Minimizing Secondary Trauma

Site-based supportive housing service providers serving people with behavioral health needs have a licensed mental health professional available to meet with staff for consultation and training.

Front Desk:

A fully staffed front desk is recommended for majority supportive housing sites and/or those serving people with higher barriers to housing stability.

Front Desk staff are trained in the following content:

- Trauma-informed approaches
- Mental health 101, de-escalation, and crisis response
- Homelessness 101
- Equity training, including antiracism and implicit bias
- Housing First
- Harm reduction
- Mandated reporter and/or vulnerable adult training
- First aid and CPR, including responding to overdoses
- Ethics and Boundaries
- Self-care

Front Desk staff are integral to the supportive housing services team as the first point of contact for tenants and guests, and therefore key in community building and integration. Front Desk staff greet tenants and work to create a welcoming environment that makes space for the characteristics that each person brings.

Standards: Processes, activities, approaches that should exist for applicants and tenants of supportive housing.

Responsible Entities: Service Provider (SP), Property Management (PM), and Front Desk (FD) are the entity responsible for carrying out the standards described

Standards at Application	Responsible Entity		
	SP	PM	FD
There is an established procedure for staff to communicate with tenants and referral sources during the application process in ways people can understand as well as track and retain documentation. The roles and responsibilities are clear and detailed in the MOU that exists between the owner, property manager, and service provider.	X	X	
Site's tenant selection policies and procedures comply with Minnesota Housing's Tenant Selection Plan Guidelines . This includes a timely and clearly stated process for the approval or denial of housing applications and appeals. Additional flexibility with screening criteria beyond the guidelines is encouraged.		X	
The supportive housing intake process from eligibility screening through lease-signing is conducted with a trauma informed and culturally responsive approach and only includes the minimum number of questions needed to determine tenant eligibility, such as those required by funders. The process should ensure applicant understands their rent amount and rental assistance.	X	X	X
The housing application process is separate from any service needs assessment and does not request detailed clinical information.	X		

Standards During Tenancy	Responsible Entity		
	SP	PM	FD
Lease terms for supportive housing tenants are the same as non-supportive housing tenants—without service participation requirements or limits on length of stay (as long as lease terms are met). <i>To the extent possible, tenants have flexibility to end their lease without penalty if they find another affordable housing option.</i>		X	
Sites have clear policies for addressing crises, including behavioral health crisis response.	X	X	X
The supportive housing intake process from eligibility screening through lease-signing is conducted with a trauma informed and culturally responsive approach and only includes the minimum number of questions needed to determine tenant eligibility, such as those required by funders. The process should ensure applicant understands their rent amount and rental assistance.	X	X	X
<p>Within one week of move-in tenants receive: orientation, tenants' rights handbook, copy of policies or site manual after going through the documents with site staff. Tenants sign off on policies/site manual after reviewing with staff. Policies are accessible at any time during tenancy.</p> <p><i>Orientation includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Info on unit and building amenities, reviewing property rules, guest policies, information on community resources, and who to contact in case of an emergency after hours.</i> • <i>Introduction of all site staff that includes explanation of roles and how staff work together to support tenants and building operations.</i> • <i>A copy of the lease. Staff ensure tenants have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities as tenants.</i> • <i>A list of tenants' rights, including clear grievance procedures that are posted and easily accessible.</i> • <i>Unit inspection protocol.</i> • <i>Plans for emergencies and natural disasters.</i> • <i>Necessary releases of information are obtained and privacy rights strictly followed.</i> • <i>Opportunities for community participation such as tenant council.</i> 	X	X	X
All supportive housing tenants are offered services during the application process and immediately when they move-in and have person-centered,	X		

<p>individualized service plans. Service plans are required for all tenants, and choice of service provider is offered.</p> <p><i>Plans should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Be tailored to tenants’ needs, preferences, and culture. Identify strengths and needs related to housing stability and steps to address potential issues.</i> • <i>Be flexible to adapt to type, location, intensity, and frequency of services based on tenants’ changing needs and preferences.</i> • <i>Include housing transition planning.</i> • <i>Involve identification and coordination with existing supports. Primary service provider should ensure that the household is connected with additional supports as needed.</i> • <i>Identify and utilize other supports already in place (e.g. Housing Stabilization Services Person-Centered Plan, TCM, etc.)</i> 			
<p>Tenants will have a choice in which services they receive and how to receive services. The options are clearly and continuously communicated to tenants.</p> <p><i>This includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where to receive services</i> • <i>How to engage in services, including scheduled meetings, drop-in times/open office hours, and group activities</i> • <i>Who provides their services (agency and staff person)</i> • <i>Tenant has choice of which services to engage in</i> 	x		
<p>A core housing-related services set is offered to all supportive housing tenants including children. Additional support services, beyond the core set of housing-related services are available through the site based service provider or through referrals. Services should be offered in consideration and response to culturally specific needs and preferences.</p> <p><i>Core housing related services offered include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education for whole household on roles, rights, and responsibilities as a tenant and those of the property manager/landlord;</i> • <i>Assistance with maintaining key relationships with the property managers and neighbors;</i> • <i>Advocacy to prevent eviction when housing is at risk;</i> • <i>Prevention and early identification of behaviors that may jeopardize continued housing;</i> 	x		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assistance with maintaining services and supports, including applying for benefits to retain housing;</i> • <i>Supporting the building of supports and resources in the community</i> 			
<p>All supportive housing tenants have access to services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People receive services through the site-based provider during any gaps in eligibility or otherwise accessing individual services.</i> • <i>Services are available if people lose eligibility for individual services for any reason.</i> 	x		
<p>Outcomes goals are set and tracked by the service provider to inform program improvements, with housing stability and equity as the primary outcome measures.</p>	x	x	
<p>There is a clear process for obtaining tenant feedback on housing and services and meaningfully responding or incorporating feedback into program improvements.</p>	x	x	X

Standards at Transition	Responsible Entity		
	SP	PM	FD
Tenants who are transitioning out of supportive housing for any reason are supported to move on to other housing that better meets their needs and preferences.	X	X	
Legal eviction is the last possible resort, and all other housing transition options are exhausted prior to legal eviction, including mutual termination of lease.	X	X	