

Getting Started with Landlords/Property Owners

Locating available housing options is challenging under normal conditions. Seeking housing for individuals experiencing homelessness and serious behavioral health conditions is even more challenging. Several proven strategies can be used to expand housing options. Housing navigators, and others responsible for helping create a pool of housing available to clients, need to build relationships and rapport with landlords and property owners, much as a case manager would cultivate relationships with service providers in the community.

Step 1: Cultivate Relationships

Craft your message: To set yourself up for success, craft an “elevator speech” or short description of your project, how it benefits the community, and how it benefits the landlord or property owner. Adapt your key talking points and tailor your pitch to focus on messages that resonate with them and garner support. Things to highlight may include:

- Reasonable assurance of timely rental payments,
- Assistance with identifying tenants,
- Support to address issues if they arise without landlord intervention, and
- Risk mitigation in case of any damage.

Develop materials such as flyers and social media posts to spread the word about the benefits of your program.

Research the key stakeholders, groups, or networks in your target community: Meeting with your local Continuum of Care lead agency and getting introduced to the key stakeholders in your community can help guide you in your initial outreach efforts. Additionally, different community groups, churches, networks, and rental companies provide an avenue to direct messaging to a larger audience in a shorter timeframe. Lastly, connect with your partner county agencies and departments, which may have leads or helpful experiences to share.

Step 2: Build Long-term Relationships with Property Owners/Managers

Speak the landlord’s language: Understand that landlords think in terms of tenants, leases, and properties. Make sure landlords know how the program benefits them and can make their job easier. Remember that landlords are your customers, too, so be proactive in supporting them. Give them special treatment! Respond to their calls and emails within a day.

Only promise what you know you can deliver: You cannot promise there will never be a problem or that rent will always be on time. However, you *can* promise that someone will be available to help with concerns or questions. You *can* promise that the tenant and the landlord will be supported if there are problems. Make payments on time, every time. Create processes to obtain landlord feedback.

Stay connected: Invite landlords to sit on boards or committees or offer them the opportunity to help brand or review materials. Show that you are happy to see them. Answer when they call and reach out at least monthly. Ask if there are any concerns about your clients, and if there are, follow up promptly.

Be proactive when supporting clients: Ask clients how they get along with neighbors and about any problems they are experiencing. Make routine visits to clients' units, and make sure you are aware of any issues that could result in eviction (e.g., hoarding, additional residents).

Additional Resources

- [Developing an Intentional Landlord Engagement Strategy](#) | The National League of Cities
- [Engaging Landlords: Risk Mitigation Funds Community Profiles](#) | United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)
- [Homeless System Response: Landlord Engagement in the Time of COVID-19](#) | United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Exchange
- [Housing Search Assistance Toolkit](#) | HUD Exchange
- [Landlord Engagement Toolkit](#) | The National League of Cities
- [Landlord Outreach Strategies](#) | National Alliance to End Homelessness
- [Landlord Recruitment and Engagement Desk Book](#) | United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- [Rapid Re-Housing Landlord Benefits Checklist](#) | National Alliance to End Homelessness