Celebrating 25 Years
SHA NJ
Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey

25th Annual Supportive Housing Conference

Breaking New Ground; Success Begins with Home

Breaking New Ground
Success Begins with Home

Strategies for Overcoming Tenancy Challenges in Supportive Housing

Sessions Sponsored By:

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Strategies for Overcoming Tenancy Challenges in Supportive Housing

Presentation for Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey 2023 Conference

November 3rd, 2023

CSH is a touchstone for new ideas and best practices, a collaborative and pragmatic community partner, and an influential advocate for supportive housing

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

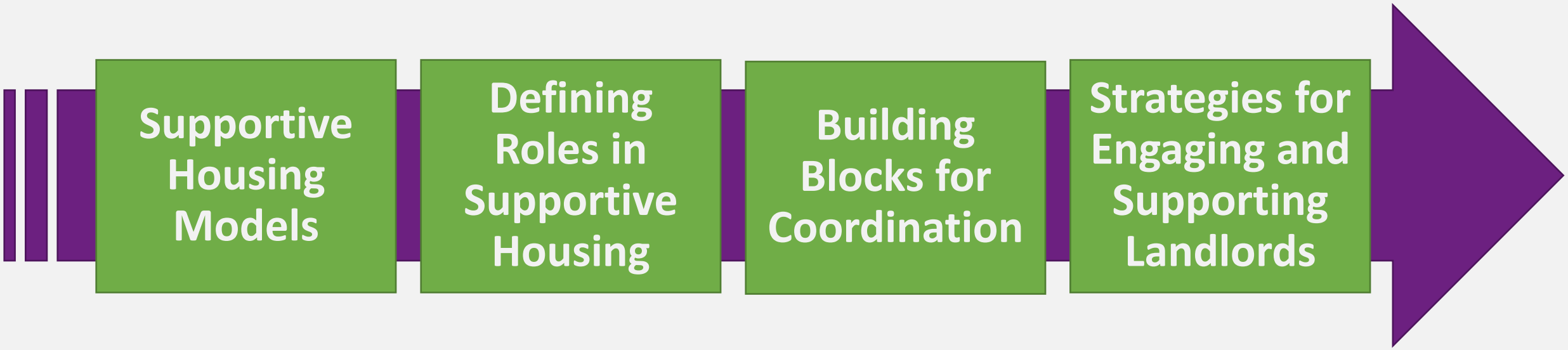
LENDING

POLICY REFORM

CONSULTING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CSH

Today's Agenda



Panelists

Brian McShane (He/Him)
Associate Director PA/NJ
CSH Metro Team

John Lambert (He/Him)
Director of Housing
Pathways PA

Wakida Williams (She/Her)
Assistant Clinical Director
Pathways to Housing PA

QUESTIONS

Who works with the property managers or landlords at your organization?

- It's done in-house
- We contract outside the agency
- Work with PM and Landlords in our community
- Other

Supportive Housing Models

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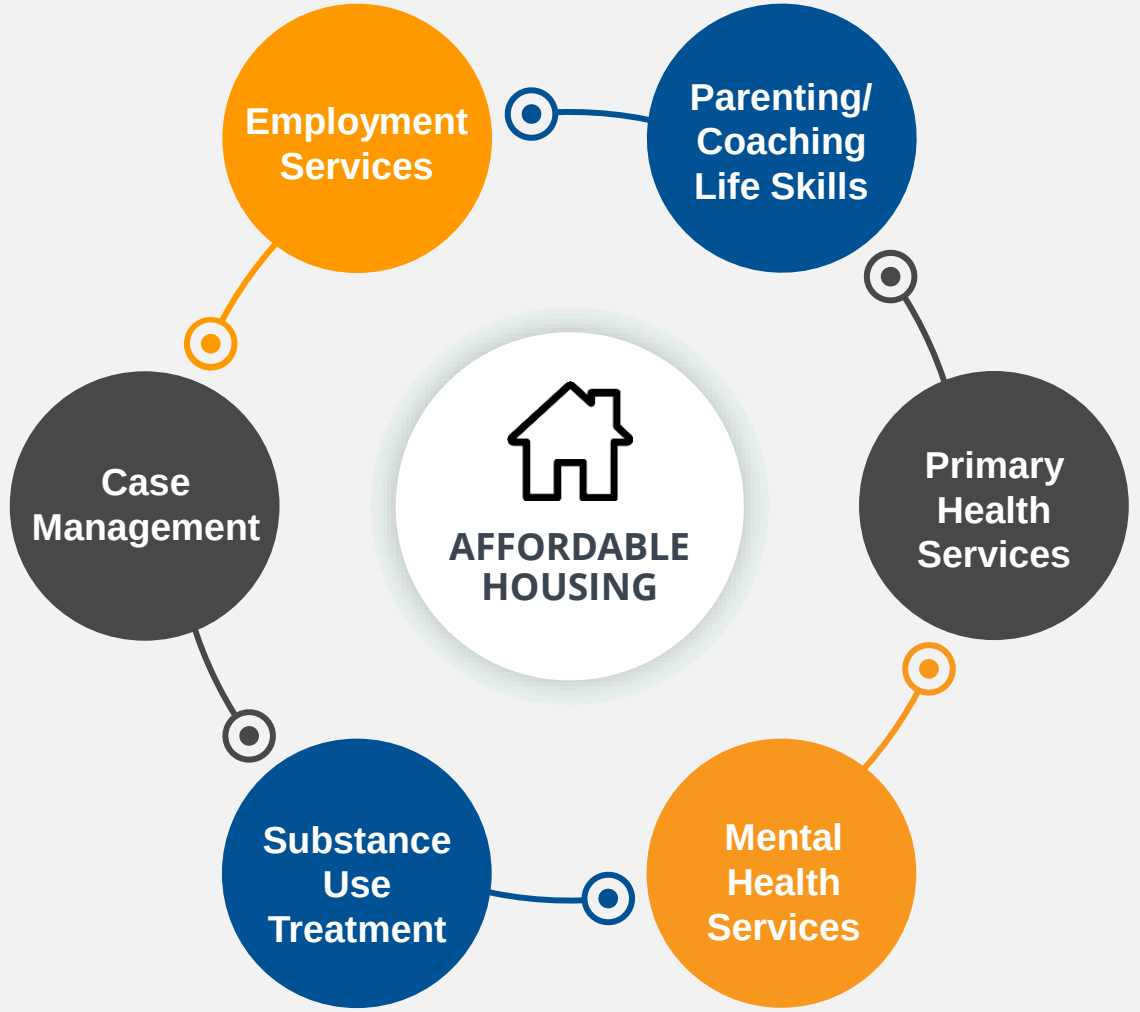
Supportive Housing is the Solution

Supportive housing combines affordable housing with services that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity.

Housing:
Affordable
Permanent
Independent



Support:
Flexible & Voluntary
Tenant-centered
Coordinated Services

Single Site Model

Scattered Site Model

Defining Roles in Supportive Housing

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Tenant Responsibilities

- Pay Rent
- Abide by the Lease
- Communicate with the Landlord

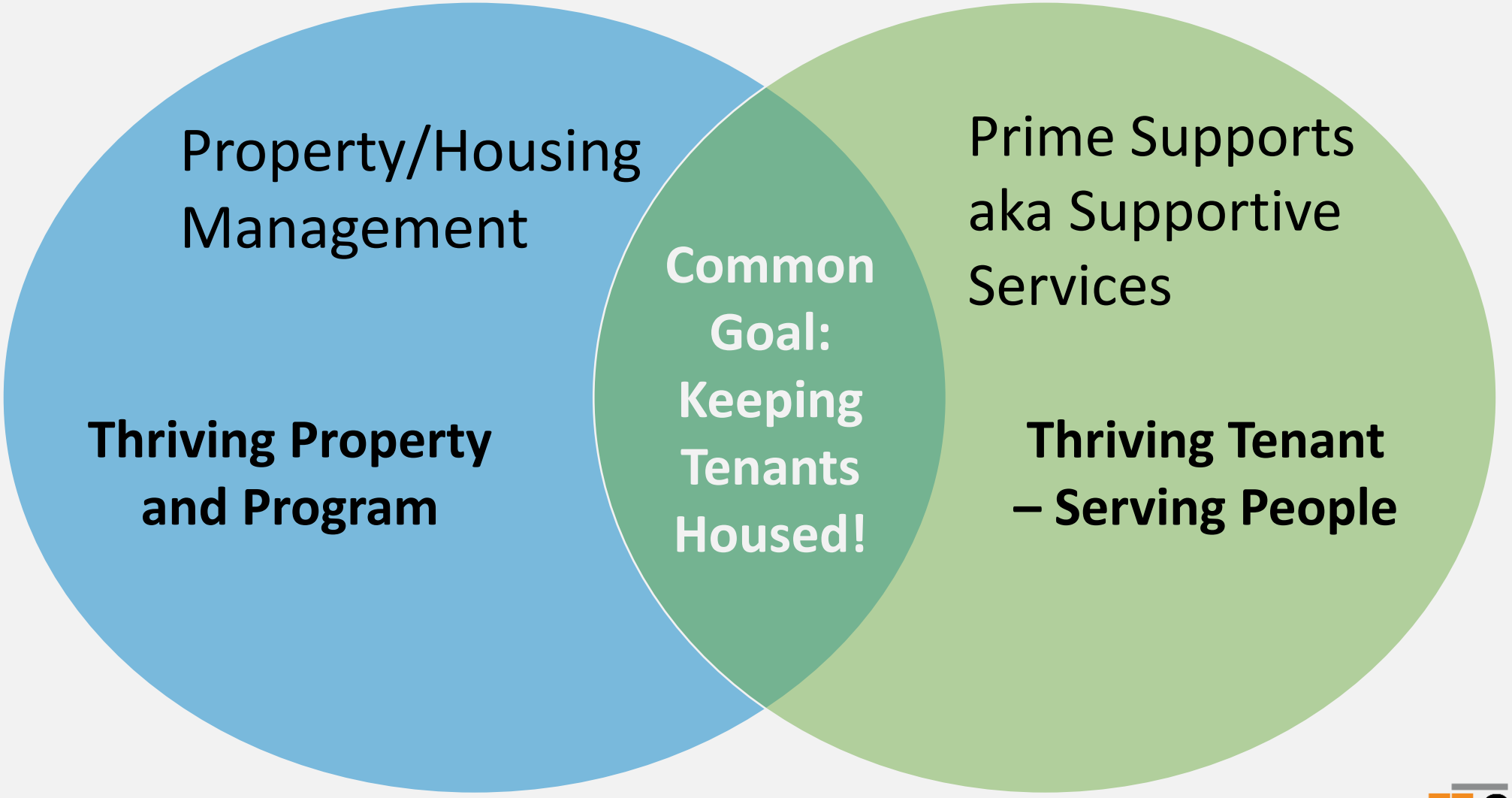
Property Management Responsibilities

- Tenant Selection
- Maintenance
- Operations
- Fair Housing
- Fiscal Management

Support Services Prime Responsibilities

- Service Planning
- Coordinating Healthcare
- Helping Manage Crisis
- Developing Life Skills
- Connecting to Community

Roles and Goals



Practical Strategies for Coordination

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Clarifying Roles

Cross Train

Write it Down!

Separate & Distinct Roles

- Potential conflicts when property/housing management and service providers have same roles.
- Development of expertise.
- Collaborating brings new ideas.
- Creative solutions arise out of healthy tensions and conflict.
- Housing seems more generic and less institutional with distinct roles.
- Clarity for tenant that services are not a condition of tenancy.

Embracing Good Tension

Respect the different roles of each partner

Understand all roles are necessary

Acknowledge and use built-in tension between roles

Frequent, Ongoing Communication

- **Formal**
  - Established meeting time on regular basis
  - Standard agendas
  - Appropriate and equal staffing at meetings

- **Informal**
  - Understanding of who and when to call each other
  - Sometimes you'll be speaking many times a day!

Planning Ahead: Release of Information (ROI)

Confidentiality of Protected Health Information

- ROI to share information within the same organization is generally not required.
- Cannot require tenants to sign ROI or authorization forms.
- Tenants may revoke their release or authorization form at any time.

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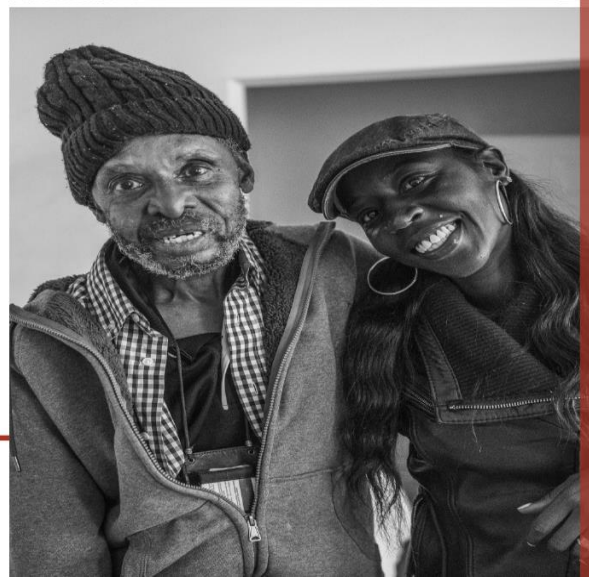
Learn From People Who Do This Work Every Day

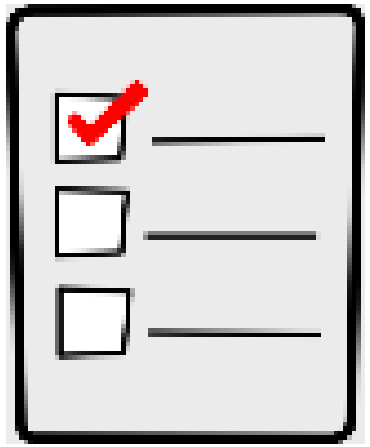
Strategies for Engaging & Supporting Landlords



John Lambert, MA & Andrew Spiers, LSW

Today's Agenda

- ✓Introductions
- ✓History of the Pathways to Housing PA housing program
- ✓Brief Review
- ✓Q & A



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Learning Objectives

- Understand the intention of supporting continued tenancy in relation to high fidelity Housing First practice.
- Explore strategies that will assist providers in recruiting landlords.
- Gain skills to support landlords in maintaining long-term, collaborative relationships.

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Introductions

John Lambert

- Director of Housing
- With Pathways since 2008

Wakida Williams

- Assistant Director of Clinical Services
- Formerly clinical team leadership
- With Pathways since 2013

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History(Then & Now)

2008

- One clinical team
- Initial group of 15 landlords recruited
- 50 apartments

2023

- Eight clinical teams
- 75+ landlords
- 500+ leased apartments
  - How to balance vacant apartments needed for quick move-in/relocation vs. overhead costs

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Leasing(Master-leasing)

- *What it is*
  - Pathways is the lease holder
  - “Use & Occupancy Agreement”
- *Benefits*
  - Stability for landlords, agency, and participants
  - Landlord is assured rent will be paid on time
  - Fewer barriers to housing folks with criminal histories
- *Alternatives*
  - Participants signing the lease promotes self-determination, independence, and control

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Scattered-site Model

- ***Benefits***
  - Promotes choice
  - Promotes community integration
  - Prevents NIMBY
  - Saves on upfront capital costs for building/development
- ***Challenges***
  - Finding affordable housing in desirable neighborhoods
  - Can be isolating
  - Costs for travel and maintenance to various sites
- ***Alternatives***
  - Congregate living with services on-site
  - Residential programs

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Review

- High fidelity Housing First practice means supporting tenancy in every way possible.
- Recruiting landlords takes a lot of hard work to start, but this pays off over time.
- Landlords are your greatest asset— keep them happy!
- It is vital that your landlords buy into your mission and understand your philosophies.

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Learn From People Who Do This Work Every Day

John Lambert, MA
Director of Housing
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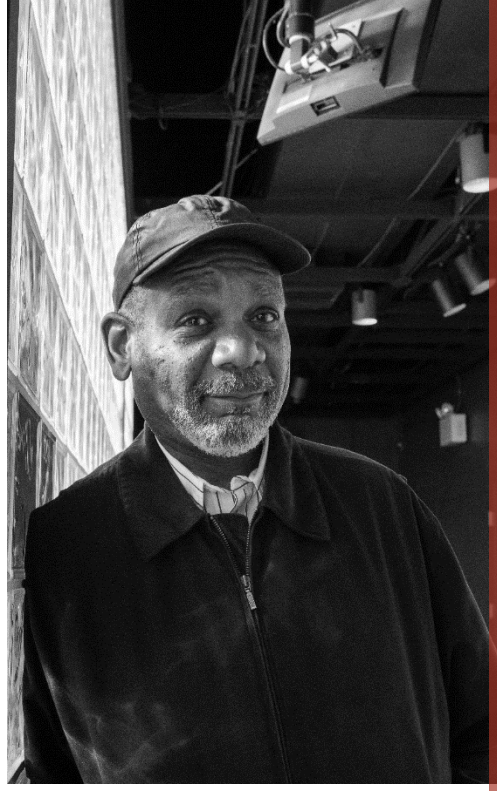
Eviction Prevention Strategies



Wakida Williams, M.S.-Assistant Clinical Director

Learning Objectives

- Describe the role of harm reduction in supportive housing work
- Identify common tenancy challenges and practical strategies for mitigation
- Practice developing mutual agreements to maintain housing

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Setting expectations

Expectations for program participants

- Rehabilitative vs *Habilitative* care
- Set people up for success & explain as much as possible up front
- Participants should know who to contact for what and when
- Participants guide the course of their "treatment," except for
  - Signing and adhering to the lease
  - Agreeing to receive visits in the home
  - Contributing 30% of income towards "rent"

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Expectations for landlords

- It won’t always be easy
- Rent will get paid
- Problematic behaviors will be addressed
- Repairs will get completed
- An ear to listen when they need to vent
- Opportunities for networking and professional development
- A chance to give back and contribute to ending homelessness

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Preventing & responding to eviction

Common causes of complaint and/or eviction

- Noise disturbances
- Too much foot traffic
- *Wanted* guests
- ***Un***wanted guests
- Subleasing
- Hoarding or other unsafe conditions
- Damages
- Odors and pests
- Non-payment of rent
- Complaints from neighbors or the community

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Accountability without Termination

- Almost always will be relocated
- Short term housing provided until rehousing is possible and another unit is identified
- Staff help with relocation
- Ongoing clinical conversations to prevent recurrence
- There is no *X number of evictions* and you're out
- We will prioritize participants who have not yet been housed
- Service-only participants

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What if?

- No one is ever home?
- Participant refuses to allow us entry?
- Participant only lets me see certain rooms?
- They are constantly losing their keys?
- Causing significant damage or disturbances?
- Won't allow maintenance staff in the unit?
- …what other challenges are you facing?

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Communication

Confronting the problems

- What is nature of the problem?
- Avoid shame
- Provide information verbally and in writing
- Talk about priorities for bringing the unit into compliance
- 30-day notice

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The role of harm reduction

Harm reduction within the home

- The intention is to keep people safe in their homes
- Focus on the reduction of specific behaviors or patterns
- Set up systems to reduce risk and maintain organization
- Provide supportive monitoring for safety maintenance
- Do not expect overnight miracles
- Goal is a functional house, not a beautiful house

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What is harm reduction in a housing context?

- ✓ Recognizes that participants can be at different stages of change
- ✓ Effective interventions should be individually tailored to each participant's stage
- ✓ Offer education/information, and support
- ✓ Participants are allowed to make choices
- ✓ Regardless of their choices they are not treated adversely, their housing status is not threatened, and help needs to continue to be available to them

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Mutual agreements

Soliciting the agreement using **ACES**

- **A**ction words
  - Tell me about…
  - Show me…
- **C**urious questioning
  - I wonder if…
  - Help me understand…
- **E**mpathic statements
  - It sounds like you are feeling (worried, sad, angry, etc.)…
  - I can understand (how hard this is, how overwhelmed you are, etc.)…
- **S**tatements of concern
  - I worry that…
  - I am concerned because…

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Mutual Agreements

- I will organize my apartment.
  - Before my next home visit in two weeks, I will clear a continuous walkway in my unit of at least 26” wide.
- I will not disturb my neighbors.
  - I will limit guests in my apartment to two at a time and turn the music off by 7:00 pm on weeknights and 9:00 pm on weekends.
- I will not wash my clothes in the bathtub or sink.
  - I will schedule biweekly trips to the laundromat with my team for support with washing my clothes.

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Corrective Action Plan

- Last line of defense against eviction
  - Or used to negotiate rehousing
- Choices available to participant have narrowed
- Directly addresses areas of non-adherence to lease
- May include a probationary period
- Should not be a surprise to the participant
- Include copies of any relevant policies

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In order to maintain your housing at _____, you have agreed to the following conditions along with Pathways to Housing PA Clinical Team:

- There will be no complaints from neighbors or my landlord about loud noise, disruptive behavior, or traffic in and out of my apartment.
- If I do have guests over, they must not disturb my neighbors.
- I may not have other individuals living with me in the apartment.
- There can be no illegal behavior in the apartment.
- Pathways to Housing PA staff will complete weekly inspections of the apartment to visit and monitor safety. If I deny PTH staff or its maintenance contractors access, I will be in violation of this agreement.
- I will not make any threats of violence toward staff. In the past I have suggested threats and talked about weapons. As appropriate, actions of this nature will be treated as criminal and the authorities will be contacted moving forward.
- For next 3 months, I will meet twice a week with the certified peer specialist on my team to discuss my recovery and stability in my unit.
- You shall not engage in any objectionable conduct whatsoever. "Objectionable conduct" includes behavior by the client, or any guests of the client, which makes, or will make, the apartment or the building dangerous, hazardous, unsanitary and/or detrimental to other tenants or occupants of the building.

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Final thoughts

Review

- Eviction should be treated as a last resort, which means supporting tenancy in every way possible.
- Proactive and continuous communication is vital.
- Every participant's needs are different so our interventions must be individualized.
- Incorporate choice into all areas.
- Evictions can and should be regarded as learning experiences!

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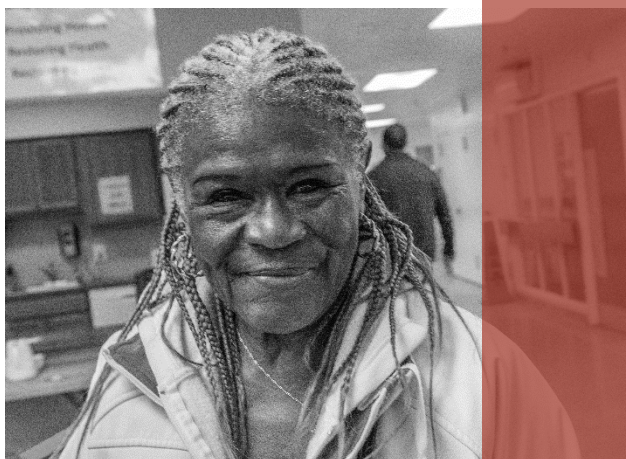

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