



Commonly Asked Questions about Working with Housing Programs in Our Community

1. If I choose to work with the Collaborative will I lose the right to screen or refuse a prospective tenant/participant?

No. The landlord reserves the right to screen all prospective tenants that an agency brings to them using their standard application process. The Collaborative asks that accommodation be made to current screening policies so that alternative information may be considered in lieu of what the landlord currently requires.

For example, a landlord may normally require that a tenant provide proof of income that is up to three times the monthly rent cost to guarantee ability to pay. A program participant may not have the ability to fulfill this criteria on their own but their participation in the program may provide a subsidy that adequately guarantees the tenant's obligation to pay all rent costs. The landlord makes the final decision after consultation with the prospective tenant and the sponsoring agency to be sure the situation will be a good match.

2. Will the lease be signed by the tenant or with the agency providing the service to the tenant?

With very few exceptions the lease will be signed by the tenant. One of the primary purposes of housing programs is to help the tenant establish or re-establish good rental history in their own name. Information sheets about the specific housing program involved and all legal obligations can be provided when the landlord is approached with a prospective tenant.

3. If the rent is subsidized by a housing program will the security deposit be subsidized as well?

Yes, the security deposit is paid by the sponsoring agency and, in most cases, when a lease is terminated and the security deposit is returned it goes directly to the program participant so it can be used in their next living situation. This becomes an incentive for the tenant to satisfactorily complete the program and keep their rental unit in good condition.

HUDVASH is the exception to this general rule. In this case the program participant is responsible for the security deposit but will work closely with their case manager to obtain the funds to cover these costs. Some programs are able to pay a double security deposit as an added level of insurance to the landlord.

4. If the program participant has no income or loses their source of income while they are a tenant will the rent be fully subsidized?

Yes. Program participants pay 30% of their adjusted gross income for rent. If their income drops to zero so does their portion of the rent. Exceptions to this would be temporary loss of income (due to a reduction of work hours, etc.) in which case the program case manager would work with the participant to find alternative means to pay their rent obligation.

5. Will there be a lot of paperwork or extra obligations on my part as the landlord?

No. Additional paperwork is minimal and the sponsoring service agency can walk landlords through the process. Agencies provide information about how the program works and landlord obligations in writing at the start of the process.

6. What about inspections?

All rental units are subject to a HUD Quality Standards (HQS) inspection before occupancy. The standards for this inspection are no more rigid than what is normally expected for a property according to local building codes. Guidelines for the inspection can be provided upon request. Inspections are completed annually after occupancy begins.

7. Do all of the programs come with case management for the participant? Is it the same for every program or person?

Yes, all of the programs involved with this Collaborative effort include case management to assist the program participant in maintaining their tenancy and developing their skills to be self-sufficient.

Case management may be more intense at the beginning of occupancy to assist the participant in understanding all of their obligations and make crucial connections to community resources.

Meetings may be weekly or even more often at the outset and over time may taper as the participant begins to gain skills. Landlords will be informed of anticipated and actual program completion dates (some programs may allow extensions of assistance if needed) and how that affects a participant's access to case management.

8. If a tenant breaks the tenancy rules or I am concerned about a tenant's behavior should I go directly to the case manager to discuss the issue?

The goal of all of the programs is to assist the program participant in developing the skills to maintain a tenancy on their own. Landlords should approach tenants about rules violations or concerning behavior as they would with any other tenant and make every effort to resolve the situation independently. Once these efforts are attempted the case manager should be contacted to assist in resolution with the participant. There are excellent resources to assist a landlord in communicating with tenants such as:

- The **Tenant Resource Center** based in Madison offers publications on fair housing laws for tenants and landlords, sample leases and other forms and letters that can be used by landlords, and referrals for legal and other resources in the local community.
<http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org/>
- The **Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council** operates a full-service fair housing program and services the La Crosse area.
<http://www.fairhousingwisconsin.com/>

9. Why should I participate in this collaborative effort to end homelessness in La Crosse?

Housing ends homelessness. Ending homelessness in La Crosse will not be possible without the help of local landlords. Traditional approaches to resolving homelessness have revolved around assisting a person to access treatment and increase skills prior to obtaining housing – housing was the reward for overcoming barriers. Outcomes for these approaches were often unsatisfactory as folks could not achieve their goals without first securing a permanent address.

Once housed, most people experience significant improvements in quality of life, in the areas of health, mental health, substance use, and employment. The programs involved with the Collaborative effort offer landlords financial security and a third party to help out when communication with a tenant gets tough.