

# Housing as a Human Right

Elevating Accessible Solutions



Presented By



In Partnership With



Landlord Engagement: A  
discussion about incentives, risk  
mitigation, outreach, and  
education

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# Allegheny County Department of Human Services

## Housing Navigation Unit

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# Allegheny County Housing Navigation Unit

Our Housing Navigation Unit began in 2016 with one member

We expanded a few years later to 2 full time staff

I manage the unit

We work as a liaison between non-profit service providers in housing programs and landlords

## Primary Responsibilities

- Recruit and retain landlords
- Mediate disputes
- Limited housing search if provider cannot locate units on their own
- Train providers on housing– types, where to find it, real estate basics
- Serve as Subject Matter Expert on housing and real estate, not service coordinators
- Match making. Available rental unit e-mails.

# Allegheny County Housing Navigation Unit (page 2)

## Why we are needed

- Our market is tight and competition for apartments is fierce
- Case Managers are social workers, not real estate experts
- Need a landlord's perspective on our team
- Look at our housing system as a system, not a bunch of providers doing the same thing in an uncoordinated way
- Landlords sometimes need more than just timely rent payments in order to say yes
- We are the fourth leg of a stool to make things work– Landlord, Tenant, Service Provider, and Housing Navigator– we bring the other 3 together and can help when one of those 3 is falling short
- Connectors– the match.com of local housing
- Landlords have available units, providers have a supply of participants looking for housing; we bring the two together

# Allegheny County Housing Navigation Unit (page 3)

## What have we learned

- Hire people with real estate experience
- Know your housing market
- Learn what your landlords want in order to say yes
- Learn what your program participants need to compete in the market, especially if they are competing against non-program participants
- Tailor incentives in a way that allows providers and program participants to compete in the private market



# Allegheny County Housing Navigation Unit (page 4)

## Landlord Incentives

- The HNU, itself, is an incentive
  - 4<sup>th</sup> leg of stool
  - A person for landlords to call when they have a dispute
- Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund
  - \$3000 for up to 3 years after move-in if to unit with up-front enrollment
  - Began in October 2017
  - Almost 500 properties enrolled
  - 81 payouts, has dramatically increased since COVID 19
- Sign on bonuses through ESG-CV
- Small repair fund (up to \$5000) for Emergency Housing Voucher participants to comply with Section 8 Housing Quality Standard (HQS) Inspections

Questions for HNU?

# Housing Providers & PHRC

- Housing providers play a key role in ensuring fair and equitable housing opportunities in our communities.
- We offer free training & consultation to any housing provider in PA.
- Our goal is to help housing providers establish fair policies and navigate challenging decisions, as well as connect housing providers to key community housing and social service resources.

# Leveraging Previous Experience

- My previous role was at the Housing Equality & Equity Institute at Tenfold
- In this program, we engaged with landlords and tenants in multiple ways:
  - Community Rental Equity Fund
  - Section 811 PRA
  - Eviction Prevention Network/ERAP
  - Seminars, Conferences, & Forums
  - Individual consultations
  - Informal Housing Resolutions
  - Rental Advantage Course (PREP)
  - Landlord & Tenant Guide
  - Rental Housing Search Engine

# Landlord Outreach Strategies

- Work in partnership
- Start with relationships
- Don't duplicate services
- Offer clear, simple, and valuable information
- Move beyond compliance
- Invite housing providers to be a part of your mission

# Suggestions for Engagement

- Start slow
- Establish trust
- Craft effective messaging

# Let's connect!

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# SDHP's Landlord Strategy

Fall and Spring Webinar Series – Relevant Topics and External Presenters

Exploring different ways to share information:  
Informational Videos

Mapping: Statewide Resources and growing our  
Inventory

Community Outreach & Engagement

Development of Original Content

Evaluating Impact and Needs Assessment



# Mapping The Resources

- Incentives and Mitigation Funds
- Associations, Rental Property Owners Association (RPOA), and Real Estate Investment Associations (REIA)
- County Engagement
- Eviction Mediation and Counseling
- Local Events

# Community Engagement

- Using alternatives to Webinars
- Participating with counties at the local level
- Assisting with local Landlord Engagement Events

# Landlord focused Content

- Housing Choice Vouchers Explained
- Assistance Animals Explained
- Home Modifications, “Widen Your Doors, Widen Your Business”

# Questions for SDHP?

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