

## TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Finding safe and affordable housing that meets housing quality standards for young adults with mental illness can be an ongoing challenge. Frequently, they experience barriers such as a lack of affordable housing options which could restrict them from transitioning from out of home treatment services into an independent living setting with or without supports.

### AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION WHEN ADDRESSING HOUSING

- **Safety:** While safe housing is important for everyone, it is especially critical for an individual with mental illness. Locks on the doors and windows, smoke detectors, cleanliness, and adequate lighting are a few safety factors important to a well-maintained living environment.
- **Location:** Ideally, a housing location is close to a bus route, shopping, parks, grocery stores, pharmacies, libraries and other venues that provide opportunities for socialization, including proximity to family members, informal supports, and behavioral health service settings.
- **Cost:** Programs that help cover the cost of rent may be essential in assisting individuals with low-income to live independently.
- **Age Limitations:** An individual must be 18 years of age or a legally emancipated minor in order to apply for many of the state and federally subsidized housing programs or to sign a lease.
- **Lack of or poor rental and credit history:** Most rental properties require a credit report and previous rental history. If applicable, consider the use of a responsible party (e.g., family member) to co-sign the lease or provide the landlord with letters of reference that show the young adult's trustworthiness in situations where an individual has not yet obtained a rental or credit history.
- **Structure/Support/Socialization:** Tailor living arrangements with the necessary structure and support for individuals to manage their ongoing recovery, treatment responsibilities, and self-sufficiency. Individuals who are developing their social networks may benefit from a living environment where social activities are included.

### LIVING WITH FAMILY OR WITH A ROOMMATE

One option is to live with family (e.g., parents or extended family members) or with a roommate. The obvious advantage is cost savings, medication education/monitoring when needed (e.g., roommates can serve as peer mentors), and the opportunity to socialize with people who are understanding and supportive of their recovery. Considerations when living with others can be a lack of privacy and potential over-involvement by others that may hinder the young adult's development of self-sufficiency. Should an individual decide to live with someone, s/he should have a frank discussion concerning household rules and privacy expectations before agreeing to share a residence and/or signing a lease agreement.

Addressing the following areas before signing any lease agreement will help clarify each household member's responsibilities:

- equal division of rent
- payment of utility bills
- sharing cleaning and household chores
- meal planning, buying and storing food, cooking responsibility
- agreements on handling parties and overnight guests, etc.

**The following form may be a helpful guide for individuals when seeking a roommate.**

Describe Yourself	✓	Describe the Type of Person You Would Like to Live With	✓
Neat		Neat	
Messy		Messy	
Gets up early		Gets up early	
Gets up Late		Gets up late	
Mostly on time		Mostly on time	
Usually late		Usually late	
Likes loud music		Likes loud music	
Likes quiet music		Likes quiet music	
Likes to be alone or with a few people		Likes to be alone or with a few people	
Likes to be with a lot of people		Likes to be with a lot of people	
Has trouble saying “no” to others		Has trouble saying “no” to others	
Reliable		Reliable	
Not Reliable		Not Reliable	
Has a criminal background		Has a criminal background	

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING FOR AN APARTMENT

1. How much is the rent?
2. Is a security deposit required? How much?
3. Is there an application fee? How much?
4. What forms of identification are required to apply?
5. What are the terms of the lease? How long is the lease for?
6. Are any utilities covered in the rent? What utilities does the tenant pay for?
7. Is the apartment furnished or unfurnished?
8. What are the private or shared areas (e.g., kitchen, bathroom, laundry)?

9. Is a refrigerator or washer/dryer provided? Private or shared?
10. Is the apartment complex under a Home Owners Association (HOA)? Applicable fees?
11. Is the apartment complex managed by an individual owner or a management company?
12. Does the complex allow pets? If so, is there a pet deposit? A monthly pet fee?

## ARIZONA RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT<sup>1</sup>

The Arizona Residential Landlord and Tenant Act specifies general provisions, landlord and tenant obligations, and remedial and retaliatory actions that pertain to renting residential dwellings in the State of Arizona (see [A.R.S. § 33-10](#)). Before renting there are certain actions persons can take to protect their rights and avoid problems. The [Arizona Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook](#) was designed by Community Legal Services and outlines these actions, as well as the rights and obligations of tenants in Arizona. Information pertaining to the eviction process, non-payment of rent, and unlawful seizure of a tenant's personal property are also contained in this handbook.

The **Landlord/Tenant Act** and this handbook do not apply to the following situations:

- tenants in mobile homes (unless tenants rent both trailer and lot from the same person or company);
- tenants in public housing projects or public institutions;
- occupancy under a sales contract if occupant is the purchaser;
- transitional occupancy in a hotel, motel, or recreational lodging;
- occupancy by a person employed by the landlord as manager or custodian if the right to occupy is conditional upon employment in and about the premises; and
- certain other conditions found in [A.R.S. § 33-1308](#) and [A.R.S. § 33-1310\(3\)](#).

Information regarding legal provisions for individuals who are pursuing housing in a mobile home setting is outlined in the [Arizona Mobile Home Parks Residential Landlord and Tenant Act](#) per [A.R.S. § 33-11](#).

## FAIR HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

There are both state and local laws that prohibit discrimination in all aspects of housing: rental, sales, services, advertising, etc. It is illegal to treat people differently on the basis of their race, color, national origin, religion/creed, sex/gender, physical/mental disability, familial status (pregnant or children under age 18), or retaliation. Individuals who believe they may have been discriminated against can contact the Arizona Attorney General's Office: Civil Rights Section at 1275 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, by calling (602) 542-5263 or 1-877-491-5742, or by filing a complaint online at [http://www.azag.gov/civil\\_rights/complaint.html](http://www.azag.gov/civil_rights/complaint.html).

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.azsos.gov/public\\_services/publications/residential\\_landlord\\_tenant\\_Act/](http://www.azsos.gov/public_services/publications/residential_landlord_tenant_Act/)

## HOUSING OPTIONS AND PROGRAMS

A comprehensive housing continuum is one that offers a full array of options that meets the unique needs and preferences of behavioral health enrolled adults. Housing that provides structure and consistency enhances the person's recovery process while being flexible enough to meet the changing needs of youth in transition. Integrating and maintaining young adults in community based services and settings are critical tasks for transition planning. When young adults experience safe, stable, and familiar living arrangements they are able to benefit from their clinical treatment, employment opportunities, and social activities.

The Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS) provides adults with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI), who are enrolled with Tribal and Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (T/RBHAs), the opportunity to access various affordable housing options with and without supports based on eligibility and funding sources. These housing options are for adults who are being released from the Arizona State psychiatric hospital and jails, living in inappropriate environments, experiencing extended utilization of out of home treatment services, and/or frequently using the crisis system. Additionally, adults who are homeless, living in shelters and/or on the streets, as well as youth who are transitioning from the children's behavioral health service system to the adult service system can also benefit from a team's exploration of these housing options. There is limited funding of housing programs for behavioral health enrolled adults categorized as general mental health or substance abuse (GMH/SA).

This Tool Attachment lists a continuum of housing options, defines these options, and offers criteria for state and federal housing programs. Clinical teams are encouraged to explore other housing resources and opportunities in addition to the ones listed here.

***To access the housing services listed below, an individual must be Medicaid eligible, enrolled and case managed in the T/RBHA's service delivery system as an adult with a serious mental illness and be a legal resident of the United States.*** The clinical team, including the housing specialist, will assist the individual and his/her family, if involved, with identifying the type of housing that best fits that person's circumstances.

### HOUSING OPTIONS

#### **Independent Community Housing**

In this housing type tenants live, either alone or with a roommate, in a home or apartment setting. While they receive minimal to no ongoing supervision from behavioral health staff, individuals continue to receive support and services from the behavioral health system. Types include state housing programs, federal Section 8 and Public Housing programs through local Public Housing Authorities (PHA), subsidized housing through local non-profit organizations, and federal and state funded Supportive Housing Programs that are administered by contracted housing providers. Units are not licensed and tenants pay up to 40% of their adjusted income towards rent.

### **Semi-independent Community Living**

This housing type focuses on providing maximum benefit to adults who are transitioning from more restrictive out of home treatment services. Two community housing models are the House Model and Apartment Model. Both use community based supportive service providers to assist tenants with managing their psychiatric symptoms and tasks of daily living, eventually leading toward the goal of independent living. Dwellings are unlicensed and tenants pay up to 40% of their adjusted income towards rent. A single house or apartment complex cannot house more than eight T/RBHA enrolled persons at a given time.

### **ADHS/DBHS: RBHA Permanent Housing Program**

This program focuses on specialized permanent community living with and without supports for tenants who can live independently. State General funds are used to purchase property that provides housing to adults with serious mental illness. Units are unlicensed and tenants pay up to 40% of their adjusted income towards rent.

### **State Community Housing Support Services**

This type is for tenants who require minimal support and prompts with their independent living skills and recognition of safety/hazardous situations. Support services are voluntary and include, where needed, support with independent living skills, group and family counseling, money management, community integration, vocational training, and employment.

## **STATE FUNDED HOUSING PROGRAMS**

*While each T/RBHA's criteria for state sponsored housing differs, the case management team will be able to assist the individual in obtaining the most appropriate type of housing. To apply for a state funded housing program an individual must be Medicaid eligible and determined to have a Serious Mental Illness before contacting his/her case manager to arrange a staffing where they can explore the person's housing needs and available options.*

### **Sponsor Based Rental Assistance**

A subsidy for rental assistance is provided through the housing provider (sponsor) to the landlord. The housing sponsor leases the dwelling unit, pays the full amount of rent directly to the landlord/owner, and holds all liability for damages and loss. The landlord/owner performs rental history, credit, and criminal background checks on the sponsor rather than the tenant, yet may perform them on each prospective tenant prior to and/or during tenancy. Tenants are obligated to pay up to 40% of their adjusted income to the housing sponsor for their share of the monthly rent. Tenants may select the location according to space availability and the landlord's/owner's willingness to participate in the program.

### **Tenant Based Rental Assistance**

A subsidy for rental assistance is provided to the tenant who signs the lease with a landlord/owner. Tenants lease the dwelling unit and pay up to 40% of their adjusted income for rent directly to the landlord/owner; the housing provider pays the remainder of the rent directly to the landlord/owner. Tenants are responsible for damages and loss and may be required to meet the landlord's/owner's credit history and criminal background checks prior to and during

tenancy. Tenants can choose location of the dwelling unit. Units must be within the area's Fair Market Rent (FMR) and pass a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection.

### **Project Based Housing (Community Living Housing Programs)**

There are two program models, a House Model and an Apartment Model. Each model has in-home or community based services available to tenants up to 24 hours per day, depending on their needs as listed in their Individual Service Plan. Service providers teach living skills and monitor the tenant's recovery. Skill training can include meal preparation, housekeeping, personal hygiene, budgeting, medication monitoring, community integration, and social recreation. Unlike the voucher program, the rent subsidy is tied to the complex and cannot be transferred. Tenants pay up to 40% of their adjusted income towards rent.

### **Bridge Subsidy Rental Assistance**

A subsidy for rental assistance is provided to the tenant who signs the lease with a landlord/owner that is administered through a local Public Housing Authority. Tenants lease the dwelling unit and pay 30% of their adjusted income for rent directly to the landlord/owner; the Public Housing Authority pays the remainder of the rent directly to the landlord/owner. Tenants are responsible for damages and loss and may be required to meet the landlord's/owner's credit history and criminal background checks prior to and during tenancy. Tenants can choose the location of the dwelling unit.

## **FEDERALLY FUNDED HOUSING PROGRAMS**

### **Section 8 Housing**

This Housing Choice Voucher program is federally funded and designed to provide safe, affordable, and permanent independent housing that meets housing quality standards for persons with low-income. This income driven housing program provides a rental assistance subsidy to tenants through local public housing authorities, normally operated by units of government who have statutory authority to manage these programs for the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Tenants choose the location of the dwelling, lease the unit, and pay 30% of their adjusted income for rent directly to the landlord/owner through the Voucher. Tenants are responsible for damages and loss, and are required to meet the landlord's/owner's credit history and criminal background checks prior to and annually during tenancy. Programs are based on a crime free/drug free lifestyle. Persons with a recent criminal background may not be eligible for this program.

### **HUD Section 202**

This federally funded housing program is designed for persons who are elderly and/or have a disability. Through this program HUD provides capital advances to finance the construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition of structures that will serve as supportive housing. HUD also provides rent subsidies for the project to maintain its affordability. Tenants maintain their self-sufficiency through independent living that develops and fosters community supports. They pay 30% of their adjusted income towards rent; HUD provides the rent subsidy.

### **HUD Section 811**

Section 811 is designed for adults with disabilities. Through this program HUD provides capital advances to finance the construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition of structures that will serve as supportive housing for very low-income tenants with disabilities. Additionally, HUD provides rent subsidies for the project to make and keep housing affordable. Tenants maintain independent living while developing and fostering community supports in order to maintain their self-sufficiency. They pay 30% of their adjusted income towards rent; HUD provides the rent subsidy.

### **HUD Mainstream Homeless and Shelter Plus Care**

These federally funded affordable housing programs are designed for persons with disabilities who are homeless. Through these programs HUD provides housing vouchers similar to those mentioned in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program listed earlier. It provides very low-income people, who are disabled, with options that allow them to live independently in an environment that provides support activities that foster self-sufficiency. Tenants pay 30% of their adjusted income towards rent; HUD provides the rent subsidy.

## **OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS**

Some local non-profit organizations offer housing for people with disabilities. Refer to the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) and the [Arizona Department of Housing](#) for additional resources.

