

Housing Webinar Questions, October 23, 2017:

1. Will the slides be posted?
 - a. The slides from the housing webinar will be posted on the OLTL Training Webpage - Webinars: <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/provider/training/index.htm>.
2. Are there housing opportunities for individuals who are on the Megan's List? If so, where can this information be found?
 - a. If your client is subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program, your client will not qualify for any type of subsidized housing program. Your client will have to find a private market landlord that is willing to work with your client. If this a population you work closely with you might want to consider developing a marketing plan geared toward landlords - explaining the supportive services your agency will be providing in order for your client to be a successful tenant.
3. Since there are so many people on the waiting list for housing, what is being done to help folks get into housing?
 - a. The Department of Human Services' launched a 5 Year Housing Strategy to better connect the people it serves to housing. To see some of the activities the department is undertaking, please visit www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/housing. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program is another example of the numerous efforts across government and non-governmental organizations working to address the shortage of affordable housing.
4. I am an SC and have a new consumer who is not NHT but a week before I received her paperwork from the IEB, she is now in a nursing home. She has a very poor credit history and was just denied housing because of this. What can I do with just receiving her and her history?
 - a. Consider using www.PAHousingSearch.com to search for apartments that don't require a credit check. Get a copy of your client's credit report- annualcreditreport.com or call 1-877-322-8228. If there are outstanding medical bills on your client's credit report, you may be able to ask for a reasonable accommodation. Consider seeking assistance from your local Fair Housing Partnership Provider to make the reasonable accommodation request. Ask your client if they are able to start making small payments on their outstanding debt. Also, be honest with the landlord about your client's credit history.
5. How do you assist with housing when someone is residing in a nursing home but looking for an apartment?
 - a. Contact your local Regional Housing Coordinator (RHC). Your RHC might be able offer local housing resources or search options that can assist you with identifying available housing.

6. Some waiting lists are now 2 – 5 years. Will this program severely reduce this wait and what will be the common wait time for housing?
 - a. Although, the DHS Housing Strategy aims to increase access to housing, create new housing, and build better connections between human services and housing, it is not a panacea. Addressing the availability of affordable, integrated, and accessible housing requires a multi-pronged, multi-agency approach and will take many years to resolve.
7. Are landlords required to make necessary adaptations to rental properties for renters that have issues with mobility? For example, can they refuse to install things like ramps, grab bars, or stair glides?
 - a. Generally, private landlords are not financially responsible to make reasonable modifications. Landlords with four or more units are required to follow the Fair Housing Act and should approve a reasonable modification request. However, the request must be reasonable and have some connection to the client's disability. Some subsidized properties have an operational budget to complete some reasonable modifications (i.e. tub cut out, and grab bars). For more information on reasonable modification requests, please contact your local RHC or Fair Housing Partnership Provider.
8. For consumers with criminal backgrounds (not just Megan's Law offenders), is there a cut-off as to how far in the past the offense can be for a subsidized housing provider to deny a potential tenant? Does it depend on the type of offense?
 - a. Subsidized properties develop a tenant selection plan which usually outlines what criminal offenses the property will automatically deny and within the timeframe of when it occurred. Providers can ask property managers for a copy of their tenant selection plan to review. Individuals who are denied housing due to their criminal background have the right to request an appeal hearing. Clients usually have to make the request for an appeal hearing within 7 to 10 days of receiving notice they were denied. At the appeal hearing clients must bring supportive evidence to show they are engaged in supportive services and are no longer a threat to the community. For more information about the appeal process please contact your local RHC.
9. I have a consumer, who has four landlord reports that she owes them money. What can be done to help her?
 - a. Many private landlords create "do not rent to" lists and share them with other landlords. If your client is on one of those lists, it may be difficult to find a private landlord willing to work with your client. If your client owes money to any housing authority anywhere in the country, they will not qualify for housing through another housing authority until the debt is paid off. Rep-Payee Services might help your client manage their money and landlords might be willing to rent to them.
10. What is the best/safest way to acquire a participant's credit?
 - a. Equifax: www.equifax.com 1-800-685-1111

- b. Experian: www.experian.com 1-888-397-3742
- c. TransUnion: www.transunion.com 1-800-916-8800

11. Why is there so much discrepancy between the minimum wage and the average rental amount?

- a. There are a variety of reasons why the discrepancy exists, but the two most prominent reasons are that the minimum wage has not increased since 2009 (from \$7.15/hr) and because of the shortage of affordable housing across the state. Fewer affordable homes creates a higher demand, which drives the cost of housing up.

12. How does this speak to the elder population whose fixed income cannot be added to by employment? However they are competing for housing with their peers and a younger population. As addressed there are waiting lists for this population up to 3 years.

- a. There are subsidized properties that are designated just for individuals age 55+, age 62+, and/or with a disability. For more information about where these properties are located in your area, please contact your local RHC.

13. For finding housing for those who have been convicted of a crime, I have a barrier with finding a place for someone with felonies that include sexual offenses. Most housing is offered to families in which to consumer would not be allowed to go to. Is there a resource for them?

- a. As described above, there are no housing resources specifically dedicated to individuals convicted of sexual offenses or on Megan's List.

Housing Webinar Questions, October 26, 2017:

14. Will the slides be posted?

- a. The slides from the housing webinars will be posted on the OLTL Training Webpage- Webinars: www.dhs.pa.gov/provider/training/index.htm

15. What does TRBA stand for on slide 27?

- a. That was a typo on the slide; it should be "TBRA," which is an acronym for Tenant Based Rental Assistance.

16. What can advocates do to help the department's goals in connecting more people with safe, stable, affordable housing in the community?

- a. DHS formed a stakeholder workgroup in April of 2017 to solicit input and feedback from interested advocates and partners. Please consider joining the Housing Stakeholder Workgroup (HSW), information for the HSW can be found here: www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/housing/housingstakeholderworkgroup/index.htm

17. How does one go about getting a criminal record expunged in order to qualify for housing?

- a. Expungement is dependent on the nature of the criminal record, however, there are opportunities across the state which vary by locality. One example of this is the Dauphin County Bar Association, which has previously hosted local attorneys who assisted clients with their criminal records pro bono. Another resource are the many local legal services agencies through the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network:
www.palegalaid.net/

18. Special Kids Network (SKN) currently has an initiative supporting individuals with special health care needs and their families with a focus regarding exploring housing options in the region we would be interested in partnering with the Housing Stakeholder Group.

- a. Please visit www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/housing/housingstakeholderworkgroup to get involved.

19. Where would be a good and safe place for a client to get their credit history?

- a. Equifax: www.equifax.com 1-800-685-1111
- b. Experian: www.experian.com 1-888-397-3742
- c. TransUnion: www.transunion.com 1-800-916-8800

20. What should people do that are on waiting lists and living in “slum landlord” situations?

- a. In most communities, the demand for safe, accessible, low cost housing is greater than the supply. The type of housing your client wants may not be available in the neighborhoods where your client wants to live. People sometimes spend years on long waiting lists for government subsidized housing. Others must modify their “wish list” and choose housing that meets some, but not all of their desires. Your client may need to consider applying for housing in other neighborhoods. Also, it is important to inform the property manager of any change in your client’s contact information.