

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>County of Sacramento</b>  <b>Department of Health Services</b>  <b>Division of Behavioral Health</b>  <b>Services</b>  <b>Policy and Procedure</b></p>	Policy Issuer (Unit/Program)	Mental Health Services
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Title: <b>Prevention Assistance &amp; Re-Housing Services</b>	Functional Area: <b>Programs</b>	
Approved By: <i>Signed version available upon request</i>  Melissa Jacobs, LCSW Division Manager  Kelli Weaver, LCSW Division Manager		

**Background/Context:**

Prevention Assistance and Re-Housing services are used by the Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS) and Mental Health Plan (MHP) Contractors as temporary interventions to resolve or prevent homelessness as it relates to a mental health condition. Contractors can utilize Housing Subsidies and Support Services in combination with the clients' natural supports and resources in the community.

This policy will address prevention and re-housing services for clients living in the community. Generally, Full Service Partnership and children's Wraparound programming can provide the full array of prevention, rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing. All other Contractors with flexible housing funding may use the flexible dollars to provide prevention of imminent homelessness, rapid rehousing and other short-term homeless related services. Short-term services may include linking clients to other funded permanent supportive housing resources in the community.

Failure to follow the expectations of this policy and procedure or the expectations outlined in Sacramento County Quality Management training materials may result in a Corrective Action Plan.

**Definitions:**

**A. Homeless Prevention:** Short-term model designed to assist households experiencing a housing crisis who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless and are required to move, or will be imminently required to move within 14 days unless homeless prevention is utilized. Prevention does this by offering targeted services and time-limited assistance to stabilize households in their

existing housing with the goal of preventing clients from becoming homeless in the near future.

Core elements include financial assistance (including rental arrears, utility arrears), counseling and advocacy for connection to other supportive services, legal assistance, landlord/property management mediation and housing-focused case management.

**B. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH):** Targeted, time-limited interventions - typically up to 6 months – that support individuals or families who are literally homeless to return to self-sustained permanent housing.

Core elements include helping clients search for and identify housing units in the private rental market, providing support for negotiating with property owners and other move in assistance, short-term rent subsidies and housing-focused case management. An overarching goal is to help clients secure housing, provide short-term rent subsidies, and link clients to natural supports and mainstream community resources to sustain housing and increase self-sufficiency.

**C. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** A nationally recognized, proven and cost-effective solution to meet the needs of vulnerable people with disabilities who are homeless or discharging from institutionalization to homelessness. The PSH approach integrates permanent, affordable rental housing with the best practice community-based supportive services to help people who are homeless access and maintain stable housing in the community, and are generally offered by the Full Service Partnership continuum. PSH can include MHSAs built units, units funded with PSH vouchers or certificates, units and services funded through the contractor, or a blend of funding sources.

Key components of PSH that maintain successful housing include:

1. Individually tailored and flexible supportive services that can be accessed 24 hours a day/7 days a week.
2. Lengths of stay can be long term (over 24 months)
3. Ongoing collaboration between contractor, property managers/landlords and clients to preserve tenancy and resolve crises that may arise.

**D. Housing First Model:** Contractors do not screen out clients or families based on sobriety, criminal history, etc.

**E. Client Housing Plan:** Any client who is the recipient of flexible dollars or housing services and supports to prevent or resolve homelessness must have a Housing Plan. The Plan is to be developed with the client and addresses

housing needs and/or barriers – including development of a housing goal and relevant interventions and timelines to support attainment, duration of support, amounts of supports (to be updated as needs and amounts change) and sustainment of the housing goal.

- F. Housing Stability:** Housing stability is defined as the client can self-sustain paying rent and utilities. Client is in a residence that is expected to be permanent unless the client relocates by choice or resulting from behaviors deemed unacceptable to landlord or the contractor. This includes any of the following: residence owned by client with no ongoing housing assistance; residence owned by client with ongoing housing assistance; rented by client with no ongoing rental assistance; rented by client with ongoing rental assistance; permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless persons; staying or living with family, permanent tenure; or staying or living with friends, permanently.
- G. Housing Subsidies and Support Services:** Housing subsidies and support services are designed to prevent, divert from or resolve homelessness. This includes, but not limited to, providing housing subsidies for permanent, transitional and temporary housing, master leases, rental security deposits, first and last month rental payments, closing rent gaps, short term emergency hotel/motel payments, utility hook ups, credit repair support, application fees, damage repair, landlord engagement and recruitment, and other fiscal housing supports as defined by BHS.
- H. Imminent Risk for Homelessness:** A client that, without intervention or change in circumstances, will likely lose housing in the next 14 days and homeless prevention services are required to preserve current housing or obtain alternative permanent housing. Client may be living in their own home, living with family/friends or “couch surfing” with a required move-out date within the next 14 days such as an unresolved formal eviction notice. Interventions are permissible prior to receiving a required move out date if it is clear that the intervention will prevent an official notice to move and there are no other resources available.
- I. Leasing:** A key component in rental assistance is that all client participants have signed leases with landlords. These leases may vary in length and standards depending on whether the housing supports are temporary or permanent. For master leasing, the lease is in the contractor’s name and the client leases from contractor. The client is not on the primary lease but is instead subleasing from the contractor.
- J. Literally Homeless – Chronically Homeless\*:** Client is currently sleeping in an emergency shelter, hotel/motel paid by the County or social services Contractor, or location not meant for human habitation and meets the

requirements for chronic homeless status. Chronic homeless status requires that the client lacks a regular fixed nighttime residence and has continuously lived in a place not meant for human habitation, including emergency homeless shelters, for at least 12 months consecutively or at least on 4 separate occasions adding up to 12 months in the last 3 years. For example: Client may be living in an unconverted garage or trailer, without connection to water or electricity and meets the duration requirements for chronic homeless status.

**K. Literally Homeless – Not Chronically Homeless\*:** Client does not meet chronic homeless status AND client is currently sleeping in an emergency shelter, hotel/motel paid by the County or social services Contractor, or location not meant for human habitation. For example, client recently moved into an unconverted garage or trailer for example, without connection to water or electricity and does not meet the duration criteria for chronic homelessness.

**L. Rental Assistance:** Funds to pay a portion of the rent for a unit in which a person will reside. Assistance may be short (up to 3 months), medium (3-24 months) or long term (greater than 24 months). Long-term rental assistance funded through the MHP is generally reserved for clients in permanent supportive housing through the full service partnership continuum. The Contractor pays the difference between the contract rent of a unit and the clients' contribution toward rent. When the rental assistance covers the remaining rent after a housing certificate or voucher is utilized the service code is referred to as a "subsidy." When the rental assistance covers the remaining rent in a market rate unit, the service code is referred to as a "rent gap."

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to outline guidelines, identify target population and eligibility criteria, and create consistency for determining the amount and duration of subsidies for MHP clients as part of using MHP Housing Subsidies and Support Services. The goal is to align funding to maximize reduction of homelessness among MHP clients, to target financial assistance to highest need clients and to ensure consistency in how Housing Subsidies and Support Services are administered. Each Sacramento County Mental Health Contractor will develop their own specific policies and procedures that are consistent with this policy.

\*If a client meets this category of homeless upon entering jail or hospital, the homeless status continues for up to 90 days of the stay. Homeless status is also continued if the individual is placed in a motel at the expense of the Contractor or government agency. An individual is not considered homeless if they are sleeping on a couch or floor of someone else's dwelling.

## **Details:**

### **A. Program Philosophy and Design**

Prevention, Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) are models designed to aid individuals and family households who are literally homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, to either stabilize in housing or quickly return to permanent housing within the community – usually within the private market. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) are longer terms supports to be provided if short-term supports are not sufficient.

Supports are offered in a manner consistent with Housing First principles. Contractors should not screen out individuals or families based on measures assumed associated with successful outcomes or due to vulnerability factors such as no or limited employment history and clients with criminal records and or evictions.

The contents of this policy and procedure are relevant to resolve or prevent homelessness or for housing related permanency activities to address housing related interventions for clients who are moving into a dwelling, owning a dwelling or renting rooms, couches or entire dwellings such as: apartments, studios, single family homes, condos and room and board homes. This policy does not address interventions related to living in residential care facilities such as board and care homes or short term residential therapeutic programs.

### **B. Program Targeting, Eligibility and Screening**

1. Target Population: The Prevention and RRH assistance components are designed to target different populations:
  - a. Prevention = households that currently have a place to live but are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Unlike literal homelessness, risk of homelessness can be difficult to assess. Many households experience a crisis that can result in housing loss; but not all housing loss results in homelessness. Households may lose their current housing, yet identify a housing solution on their own (such as moving in with a friend). Eligibility screening for prevention assistance requires contractors explore options with individuals to self-resolve and give priority assistance to individuals with the most vulnerability factors. Prior homelessness, including shelter stays, should be considered as highly vulnerable factors.
  - b. RRH = households that are already experiencing literal homelessness – meaning they are living outside, in emergency shelter, a motel/hotel paid for by a social/behavioral services agency or other places not meant for human habitation.

- c. Permanent Supportive Housing = Generally PSH is reserved for clients with high need, high risk and are capable of living in the community but need frequent contact and frequent supports to do so. Clinically these individuals would be homeless and designated as high need in the Level of Care Utilization System assessment, with clear supports and itemization of flex funds supports outlined in the Client Housing Plan.

## 2. General Prioritization Factors

- a. Contractors will prioritize the highest need clients and families that can be served whose symptoms of their mental health condition-related impairment directly impacts homelessness or homelessness exacerbates their mental health symptoms. Housing Subsidies and Supports are targeted to households for whom adverse effects of a homeless episode would be most severe (exacerbation of chronic health issue, increased risk of abuse or trauma, increased risk of exploitation, etc.).
- b. Contractors will use housing subsidies and support services based on clinical need after other natural supports or community resources have been exhausted or are unavailable to ensure Contractor is payer of last resort.
- c. Contractors will not impose additional screening to identify if a client is "housing ready" such as sobriety, employability, or income. It should be noted that if a client does not consent to treat or is not actively receiving treatments, contractors may follow the contract guidelines for timely discharge. If the Contractor is funding housing costs, they should offer to assist clients find alternate housing.

## 3. Eligibility and Screening

- a. Every client will receive a screening to establish eligibility and update in Avatar. Contractors will evaluate other options for stabilizing housing without accessing Housing Subsidies and Support Services (e.g. landlord negotiations, family/friends shared housing, etc.). This screening will include an exploration of:
  - i. Available options, including the client's natural supports that can assist with funding or temporary housing until more permanent housing can be secured.
  - ii. What strategies have been utilized and attempted in the past – including those that worked and those that did not work.

- iii. For households at risk of homelessness, an understanding of the primary factors contributing to the urgency and nature of the housing crisis.
- iv. If it is determined that no other options are available, the household will be assessed for eligibility for either RRH or Prevention.

b. Prevention – Contractors shall have a uniform set of standards that triage individuals or families as qualifying for flexible prevention rental assistance and supports by analyzing risk factors. Uniform standards will help reduce risk of bias in favor of or against clients. Common factors that are known to increase risk of homelessness include:

Moderate Risk Factors:

- Pregnancy
- Child under 2
- No High School/GED
- Not currently employed
- Not leaseholder
- Reintegrating into community
- Ages 23-28
- Moves: 1-3 in the past year
- 1-2 Disruptive experiences in childhood
- Moderate Discord with landlord or head of household

High Risk Factors

- Receiving public assistance
- Protective services involvement (CPS/APS)
- Eviction notification
- Had a shelter stay or attempted a shelter stay in the last 3 months
- Ages: under 23
- Moves: 4+ in the past year
- 3+ Disruptive experiences in childhood
- Severe discord with landlord or head of household

Severe Risk Factors:

- Parenting Youth Head of Household
- Previous shelter stay as an adult
- Prior homelessness

- c. RRH – the client must be documented as literally homeless (Category 1 of the HUD homeless definition) in clinical progress notes, Hospital discharge notes, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or other documentation by a person who has delivered services that could witness homeless status.
- d. PSH – The client must be documented and meet the homeless criteria set forth by any voucher or subsidy program. Some vouchers, certificates or subsidies require literal homelessness not chronic and others require chronic. If there are no voucher or subsidy requirements, documented literal homeless, not chronic are minimum criteria.

### **C. Client Housing Plan Requirements**

1. If the client is identified as in need of Housing Subsidies and Support Services, the Client Housing Plan is to be created after the client's Core Assessment or clinical introductory note has been completed and medical necessity for treatment is established. An emergency Client Housing Plan may be completed using Quality Management guidelines to support the client with immediate housing needs.
2. If there is a need for emergency housing prior to completion of the Clinical Bundle, there must be documentation of the urgent need, along with Interim Client Plan and Client Housing Plan, per BHS Quality Management documentation standards.
3. A copy of the Client Housing Plan must be offered to the client and is considered part of a comprehensive client record.
4. Housing Plans shall at minimum include the following:
  - a. The client's presenting housing need as it relates to their mental illness and functional impairment.
  - b. The client's housing goal(s).
  - c. The type and amount of housing support provided – including services as well as purchases.
    - i. If the client will receive rental assistance by the Contractor, the plan will include documentation of the calculation. Saving the completed Rent Calculator (attachment B) in the electronic record is recommended to justify the amounts itemized in the Client Housing Plan.
  - d. Identification of who will provide what housing supports.
  - e. The amount and duration of the housing support to be provided (see sections below on amount and duration of rental assistance). Amounts must be itemized and updated in the Client Housing Plan anytime there is a change. If the goals of the Client Housing Plan are not yet met and the Client Housing Plan has expired, the Housing Plan must be updated. For the total duration of the Client Housing Plan, including extensions as needed to achieve Housing Plan goals, and if the total amount exceeds the amount in exhibit C of the contract, written county approval is required prior to spending the flex dollars.
  - f. The sustainability plan - including what the client will do to achieve sustainability.
  - g. What interventions or services CONTRACTOR will provide, including but not limited to, linkage to resources for job training, benefits, income, etc.

5. Client Housing Plans shall reflect how the Housing Subsidies and Support Services will ameliorate or prevent deterioration of mental health symptoms and level of functioning.
6. The creation of the Client Housing Plan will be documented in the client's chart with a Housing Plan Development progress note.
7. Client Housing Plans need to be reviewed every 3 months, and updated at expiration or at minimum yearly (whichever comes first). Housing Plans must be updated if there are changes to: housing status, duration or frequency of assistance, income, family constellation, needed interventions or monetary amounts etc.

#### **D. Allowable Uses of Funds**

1. Housing Subsidies and Supports are intended to assist clients in obtaining and/or remaining in housing and should be structured to:
  - a. Allow clients to move immediately out of homelessness and into rental housing whenever possible.
  - b. Allow for flexibility and tailoring to the varying and changing needs of each client.
  - c. Maximize the number of clients served by providing only the assistance necessary to stabilize in permanent housing and then increase assistance if necessary.
  - d. Assume that all clients, even those with high barriers, will succeed with minimal subsidies.
  - e. Reflect realistic expectations about the client's rent burden when the rental assistance or support ends. For example, if a client's income is limited to SSI, a sustainable housing solution is usually a room and board rather than an apartment rental.
2. Eligible activities and expenses are intentionally focused on housing. To ensure appropriate disbursement of the resources, both Prevention Assistance and RRH have an identified set of eligible and ineligible uses.
  - a. Flexible, Short-Term Financial Assistance
    - i. Rental Assistance: May include back rent payments and short-term rent subsidies.
    - ii. Utilities: May include assistance with payment of utilities or utility payments in arrears.
    - iii. Other Financial Assistance: Other assistance as needed to prevent a housing crisis from resulting in homelessness.
  - b. Stabilization Services

- i. Legal Services: Limited legal services, including consultation and representation, related to tenant/landlord matters or housing issues may be allowed.
  - ii. Community Based Services: Linkage to an array of supportive, mainstream services to help maintain stable housing. These services may include benefit enrollment assistance, job development, childcare assistance, or other basic needs resources.
- c. RRH Eligible Activities include:
- i. Flexible, Short-Term Financial Assistance
    - o Rental Assistance: May include rental deposits, first or last month's rent, and/or time-limited rental subsidy (see sections below for more on duration of subsidy).
    - o Utilities: Assistance which could include monthly utility payments, utility security deposits or utility payments in arrears. Payments for utility arrears will be made if they are required for the establishment of new utility service.
    - o Short-Term Motel Costs: Meant to be a short term sheltering option to be utilized when the health and safety of the client justifies sheltering off the streets and there are no shelter spaces available or shelter declines to admit the client. Hotel/motel should not be used as a substitute for housing. Stays can be longer term in situations where securing a unit is challenging, such as for large families or 290 registrants, and the health and safety needs of the client continue to require that they remain sheltered.
  - ii. Relocation and Stabilization Services
    - o Legal Services: Limited legal services, including consultation and representation, related to tenant/landlord matters or housing issues may be allowed.
    - o Credit Repair and Money Management: Services targeted to critical skills related to housing budgeting and money management.
- d. PSH Eligible Activities include:
- i. Flexible, Long-Term Financial Assistance
    - o Rental Assistance: May include rental deposits, first or last month's rent, pro-rated rent, ongoing rental assistance as determined by the housing plan.
    - o Utilities: May include assistance with utility security deposits for participating households, or utility payments in arrears.

- Ongoing collaboration between contractor, property managers and clients to preserve tenancy and resolve crises that may arise, for example bed bug remediation.
  - Short-Term Motel Costs while client is searching for housing (only if no other options are available such as shelter).
  - Hotels/motel stays are meant to be a short term sheltering options. Hotels/Motels should be utilized when the health and safety of the client justifies sheltering off the streets and there are no shelter spaces available or shelter declines to admit the client. Hotel/motel stays should not be used as a substitute for housing. Stays can be longer term in situations where securing a unit is challenging, such as for large families or 290 registrants, and the health and safety needs of the client continue to require that they remain sheltered.
- ii. Relocation and Stabilization Services
- Legal Services: Limited legal services, including consultation and representation, related to tenant/landlord matters or housing issues may be allowed.
  - Credit Repair and Money Management: Services targeted to critical skills related to housing budgeting and money management.
3. Ineligible Activities: Full Service Partnerships and Children’s Wraparound Contractors may utilize the full complement of flexible dollar services. All other Contractors may not utilize flex funds for the following expenditures without written county approval from their contract monitor, and must be part of the Client Housing Plan to prevent or resolve homelessness. These services include:
- a. Long term rental support
  - b. Home furnishings or appliances unless the client is homeless and without basic necessities to live in a housed environment
  - c. Payment of consumer debt
  - d. Payment of telephone or cable expenses
  - e. Provision of assistance to household in Transitional Housing program
  - f. Legal services related to mortgages
  - g. Food purchases in excess of \$50 per household member
  - h. Travel Costs
  - i. Pet Care
  - j. Entertainment or reward based activities
  - k. Car repairs
  - l. Late fees or penalty fees unless they are a barrier to someone experiencing homelessness securing housing.

## **E. Amount of Rental Assistance or Support**

In all instances, the financial assistance should be as minimum as feasible to resolve the housing crisis. Expenditures in whole or in part may not exceed the amount stipulated in Exhibit C of the contract, for the duration of each Client Housing Plan, without written approval from the County.

1. Prevention- When funding prevention assistance, the amount of the assistance will be dependent on the presenting needs and goals as identified in the Client Housing Plan.
2. Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing
  - a. Clients may receive a maximum monthly rental assistance based on their household size, household composition, income and local Fair Market Rent (FMR). Rental assistance are higher for clients with no or very low income and are smaller for clients that have some income.
  - b. BHS requires that Contractors use a standardized BHS rental assistance calculator tool to determine a maximum rental and/or housing assistance amount for each household. A fixed maximum amount helps clients manage their expectations when searching for a reasonable housing unit. A Rent Calculator also helps ensure that clients are receiving equitable housing rental assistance and helps prevent bias. A Rent Calculator (attachment B) is available on the BHS website. A rent reasonableness checklist (Attachment A) can also be used in unusual circumstances that are not covered by the Rent Calculator such as calculating rent for a home with more than 6 bedrooms. Completed Rent Calculators should be saved as support documentation for the amounts itemized in the Client Housing Plan in the electronic health record.
  - c. The household's initial rental assistance calculation, plus any adjustments made because of the income re-certification and rental assistance re-calculation will be documented in the electronic health record and explicitly spelled out and itemized in the Client Housing Plan.
  - d. The Rent Calculator (attachment B) provides rental assistance monthly maximum amounts, but titrating rental assistance amounts down to phase-in independence and self-sustainability is encouraged and should be part of the Client Housing Plan. Monthly maximums provided by the calculator are not intended to be inflexible requirements of payable amounts. Rather it is designed to provide unbiased equitably based guidance that sets expectations and allows for self-sustainability based on client income, which is a requirement. The BHS Rent Calculator (attachment B) will be updated regularly to adjust fair market rents set by HUD and median family incomes. Contractors are required to utilize the most updated version of the

calculator to ensure fairness and continuity for clients across programs and contractors.

#### **F. Duration of Rental Assistance**

Lengths of all Housing Subsidies and Supports should be as short as feasible in order to stabilize the household / resolve the immediate crisis.

Prevention- Assistance is limited to the length of time necessary to remedy the immediate housing crisis and based on the client needs outlined in the Client Housing Plan. Limitations may apply, and vary, depending on the specific type of assistance and any associated maximum limits. Contractors should work with households to determine the sustainability of the supports documented in the Client Housing Plan. Additionally, for households seeking continued assistance, the household may also be considered as a candidate for a higher level of services.

Rapid Re-Housing - Clients may receive financial supports based on the client needs as outlined in the Client Housing Plan with an initial term of up to 6 months and reviewed at least quarterly. Should continuous assistance be required, households may be considered for up to an additional 12 months (for a maximum of 18 months possible) and identified in the Client Housing Plan. Contractors may extend support past 18 months with Contract Monitor approval in cases where there are delays such as obtaining income, formal vouchers or housing as identified in the Client Housing Plan. If the client's housing situation is not stable after 18 months, they should be considered for a higher level of care.

Permanent Supportive Housing –Based on client need as outlined in the Client Housing Plan, clients may receive long-term permanent supports for those who meet criteria and continue to meet level of care criteria.

#### **G. Documentation**

Contractors will comply with any documentation outlined in this policy as well as any Quality Management policies and training regarding the use of Housing Subsidies and Support Services. Contractors will enter all clients currently experiencing homelessness who receive Flex Fund supports into the Homeless Management Information System and will refer clients to the coordinated entry queue when qualified. Contractors will comply with the Homeless Continuum of Care's data standards. For more information, contractors can contact Sacramento Steps Forward's or visit their website for HMIS forms and documents at <https://sacramentostepsforward.org/resources/helpful-materials/>

#### **H. Payment/Verification Documentation**

Financial assistance may only be issued to 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors or landlords, which may include the head of the household, such as staying with a friend or family

member's house. The head of household would be the person who holds the lease; payments may not be made directly to clients.

### **I. Housing Stabilization Services**

Landlord Relations is one of the most important services you can provide. Contractors must offer clients education and resources for basic landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities. Clients will be informed of landlord's minimum expectations in caring for and maintaining housing units. Meanwhile, contractors should be understanding of landlord rights and responsibilities and offer a standard level of support to those landlords who lease to MHP clients, which should be detailed in written policy format and given to landlord partners.

Contractors may also offer increased security deposits to reduce the risk assumed by the landlord. Additionally, Contractors will respond to landlord calls regarding crucial tenancy problems in a timely manner.

### **J. Housing Supports Program Exit**

Successful termination from Housing Subsidies and Support Services occurs when the client and or family has reached an ability to self-sustain paying rent and utilities, has resolution for crisis for which they sought services, or has reached the maximum duration limit as per the Client Housing Plan. If a client's functioning does not necessitate FSP services, but housing supports are still required, maintaining the client at the lower level of care is permissible. Clients not in compliance with their Client Housing Plan may have their housing rental assistance terminated if it is clinically justifiable.

### **K. Shared Housing**

All clients experiencing homelessness with limited income will be supported into shared housing unless otherwise clinically indicated as this is the most financially sustainable and flexible option. Contractor staff will work with landlords to create and or execute separate lease agreements for each client and or family. To the extent feasible, clients should be afforded choice of roommates. Many Room and Board facilities already have their own policies relating to the rights of existing tenants to select from among different potential roommates when there is an opening.

### **L. Housing Location/Navigation**

Clients should be encouraged whenever possible to conduct their own housing search in order to support identifying housing options independently. Contractors will utilize housing and budgeting to aid clients in understanding their ability to pay rent and meet lease requirements by the end of their rental assistance or other financial assistance. If clients cannot identify housing on their own, Contractors will support in identifying options.

### **M. Additional Housing Resources**

Sacramento BHS requires that clients are supported with applying for other housing resources that may be available to the client in the community, including housing from coordinated entry. Housing resources are available that adjust rent to the household's particular income and ability to pay, including most programs administered by Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, the local Housing Authority. Both public housing and voucher programs (Housing Choice Voucher, Shelter plus Care, DHA, VASH and others) provide subsidies.

#### **N. Housing Quality**

Housing Subsidies and Supports can only be provided if the unit appears safe. Contractors are encouraged to consider the following factors:

1. Structure does not pose health threat
2. Unit is accessible
3. Adequate space
4. Adequate security (ability to secure unit)
5. Operating sanitary facilities
6. Adequate heating and cooling

#### **O. Lease Terms and Requirements**

A written lease or rental agreement for a rental unit is recommended between households who receive rental assistance through the Contractor and the owner/property manager. In master leasing situations funded by the contractor, the property manager may also be the Contractor. The Contractor should support the client with resources regarding tenant's rights so they can be better informed and negotiate their leases if applicable or possible.

#### **P. Geographic Considerations**

Housing units must be located within Sacramento County. To the extent possible, Contractors should help clients find housing in their home or desired communities within Sacramento County limits that are close to public transportation. If a client moves out of the county to be closer to natural supports or a new job, for example, funding any services or supports after the move could place a contractor at risk for a Corrective Action Plan.

#### **Q. Occupancy**

Occupancy of units should be determined based on multiple variables such as maintaining health and safety, voucher limitations, local ordinances, lease terms, CPS mandates, etc. For example, some vouchers limit maximum occupancy of a unit to 2 people per bedroom plus 1 person to the living room.

Minimum occupancy is 1 person per bedroom. Any pregnant woman will be treated as 2 persons. The Contractor however shall not impose rules regarding the household's actual sleeping arrangements but can restrict the rental size based on funding and sustainability.

#### **R. Rent Reasonableness**

Sacramento BHS requires that units must have reasonable rent, when possible, which means they generally may not be above the cost of comparable units in the community. Rent reasonableness should take into consideration the gross rent and utilities of the unit and the location, quality, size, type, and age of the unit, and any amenities, maintenance, utilities to be provided by the owner and the scarcity of the housing inventory. The BHS Rent Calculator automatically ensures rent reasonableness. In rare circumstances where the calculator is not appropriate, such in homes more than 6 bedroom, the rent reasonableness checklist (Attachment A) can be used and saved in the client’s chart.

**Related Policies and Attachments:**

- [QM 10-30 Progress Notes \(Mental Health\)](#)
- [QM 01-07 Determination for Medical Necessity and Target Population](#)
- [QM 10-26 Core Assessment Mental Health\)](#)
- [QM 10-27 Client Plan](#)
- [MH 02-12 Corrective Action Plan](#)
- Attachment A: Rent Reasonableness
- Attachment B: Rent Calculator

**Distribution:**

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