

Participant Handbook

Permanent Supportive Housing

Case Manager: _____ **Agency:** _____

Welcome to Permanent Supportive Housing! The purpose of this Participant Handbook is to explain the program and how we'll work together to help you get and keep housing. This is a great time to ask questions, talk about hopes, needs, or concerns you have. Our program staff are here to support you in your journey to greater independence in housing.

Our program works with Homeless Services Network of Central Florida (HSN) of Central Florida. HSN provides rental assistance while our program provides Case Management services. Together, we serve people experiencing homelessness in Orange, Seminole, and Osceola Counties.

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Overview of Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing, or PSH, is a long-term program that offers Case Management and housing to people who need a little extra support getting a place of their own. The goal of the program is to help you get a home where you can live with greater independence and work on things that are important to you.

What you can expect as a participant

- **Case Management:** We're here to help you get housed, stay safe, get or keep income, and achieve the vision you have for yourself.
- **Housing Search:** We'll help you find housing that meets your needs.
- **Rental Assistance:** The program provides financial assistance to help you afford a place of your own.

What are the basic requirements to participate?

In order to participate in the program, you'll need to agree to a few things:

- Agree to Case Management while you are in the program
- Have regular home visits and maintain monthly contact with your Case Manager
- Work on things that will help you stay housed, stay safe and that are important to you
- Pay your rent contribution on time, once you have income
- Abide by your lease and program responsibilities

We'll review the program rights and responsibilities in more detail, but these are the basics.

What does Case Management look like?

- We'll get to know you so we can support your hopes and goals so we can provide meaningful services.
- We'll join you to see potential units, help you submit applications, and be there at lease signing and move in.
- We'll provide direct services or link you to other community resources.
- We'll maintain regular contact with you, including home visits. You can expect more frequent visits right after you move in or if your safety or housing are ever at risk.

What kind of home can I get?

- We work with landlords that participate with housing programs.
- The unit must pass a safety inspection to make sure everything is safe and working.
- The unit must also be affordable.
- We will review your housing needs and preferences when beginning housing search, so we can help you find the right place.

How can I afford my own place?

- The program pays a portion of the rent and basic utilities (electric, gas, water) for you.
- If you already have income, you will pay 30% of your income towards rent and utilities.
- If you don't have income, the program covers these expenses temporarily while we help you apply for benefits or employment.
- The goal is for you to pay your portion of rent and utilities as soon as you're able!

Rights and Responsibilities - Program and Participant

Program and Case Manager Responsibilities

These are our responsibilities to you as your provider:

- Work to understand your needs and hopes to provide meaningful supports to help you achieve your goals.
- Treat you with dignity and respect.
- Provide you with information so you can make informed decisions about your housing and services.
- The program will never coerce or force you to participate in things like treatment, medication or sobriety as a condition of keeping your program assistance. It is your choice if and when you want to participate in those types of services.
- Help connect you to services and resources if our agency does not provide what you need.
- Support your safety. In cases of domestic violence, the program does not allow known abusers to join or remain in a unit with a program participant who is the survivor of the abuse.
- Help you find housing that works for you.
- The program will pay to move you into housing and pay all or a portion of your rent ongoing.
- Help you understand your lease and your landlord's rules.
- Schedule regular home visits on days and times that work for you.
- Help you increase your income through SSI or employment.
- Help you calculate your monthly rent contribution and complete the recertification process.
- Work with you to make a plan to keep your housing if you are ever at risk of losing housing.
- Provide you with verbal and written notices if you are ever exited from the program.
- Explain how you can file a grievance should you feel you are ever being treated unfair or want to voice a complaint.

Participant Rights

Your rights as a tenant and a participant in the program include:

- The rights afforded to tenants in the State of FL (FL Landlord & Tenant Act ([Chapter 83 of the FL Statutes](#)))
- The right to request and receive an inspection of the unit if you believe there are unsafe conditions needing immediate repair or if there are non-emergency conditions that the landlord is responsible for repairing.
- The right to be treated at all times with respect and dignity within a setting that provides the most privacy possible.
- The right to freedom from discrimination under federal, state and local law because of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, familial status, actual or perceived marital status, actual or perceived gender identity or actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender expression, veteran status, or source of income. More details on these rights can be found on the **Fair Housing Notice**.
- The right to protections under the law if you are the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Protections include not being evicted or exited from the program due to Domestic violence activities, being allowed to move for safety related to domestic violence, or having an abuser removed from your lease. More details about these rights can be found on the Notice **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**. VAWA protects everyone regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. If you are ever experiencing domestic violence, talk to the program so we can help you with your options under the VAWA protections.
- The right to access and receive a copy of policies, procedures and records related to your participation in the program within a reasonable time.
- The right to make your own decisions about your care, including treatment, medication, or deciding to remove yourself from the program.
- The right to name an advocate to speak on your behalf, after a release of information is provided.
- The right to inspect and receive an explanation of income calculations and your rent portion.
- The right to confidentiality as noted under state and federal law. Program participants are required to have their information entered in our community's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) which shares information with other agencies providing services. You may be asked to sign other consents to allow information sharing with other service providers that you request service from.
- The right to receive written notices regarding any changes to your assistance.
- The right file a grievance and to receive a timely response without fear of retaliation.

Participant Responsibilities

These are your responsibilities as a program participant

- Maintain monthly contact with your Case Manager, including regular home visits:
 - No contact for over 30 days may result in being exited from the program.
 - Assistance can last up to 90 days if we know you are in a hospital, treatment program or jail.
- Work on things that are important to you that will help with your housing stability and increased independence, in partnership with your Case Manager.
- Inform the program of any problems related to housing or services and work together in resolving any issues.
- Inform the Program about changes to any household members or income within 15 days of the change, including:
 - Someone increases or loses income, like SSI or employment.
 - Someone wants to move in or move out, like a child or partner. *All household members requesting to join the program or lease must be approved by the program first.*
 - You are in need of a live-in aide. *A live-in aide must first be approved by the program in writing.*
- After income or household change is reported or at Annual Recertification, supply documents needed to verify your rent portion or continued eligibility within 30 days of request. *Providing false information in connection with federal assistance is fraud and can result in an exit from the program.*
- Do not allow people to reside in your unit who are not approved by the program and on the lease.
- Avoid threatening or harassing behaviors, drug-related, violent, or other criminal activity that threatens the health and safety of other tenants, property staff, or program staff. *Engagement in these activities by you or your guests may result in immediate exit from the program.*
- Avoid using derogatory language towards staff related to race, gender, sexual identity, religion, etc.

These are your responsibilities as a tenant that will help you stay housed

- Pay your portion of rent and utilities on time, once you have income.
- Avoid damaging your unit and submit maintenance requests when needed.
- Allow workers to conduct unit inspections at reasonable times and after reasonable notice.
- Maintain residence in your unit through the lease term. If you want to leave, talk to your case manager about your options. The program will not fund the unit if you leave for over thirty (30) days, unless you are in a hospital, treatment program, or jail.
- Do not bring in animals unless it has been approved by the landlord.
- Avoid disturbing your neighbors (ex: yelling, loud noise, harassment, violence, drug activity, damage to or theft of others' property, blocking or cluttering common areas or walkways) by you or your guests.

Exiting the Program

- Sometimes people exit the program because they are able to live more independently, and other times it is because they struggle to follow their lease and participant responsibilities.
- Staff will try working with you on challenges you have in the program.
- We'll provide verbal and written notices for any issues that impact safety, housing or eligibility. And we'll do our best to provide support to resolve the situation.
- Depending on the severity of the situation, you may be given more or less time to resolve things before an exit is determined.
- The program will consider all circumstances in determining when an exit is needed so that assistance is ended only in the most severe cases.
- If it is determined that an exit is necessary, you will be given a written Program Exit Notice detailing the reason for the exit and the steps you can take to file a grievance if you disagree.

Reasons for Exit

❓ *Some general reasons someone may be exited include*

- Stably housed, no longer in need of Case Management and ready to Move On from PSH.
- Have increased income over 50% Area Median Income (AMI).
- Relocating elsewhere to live with friends or family.
- Voluntarily removing self from program.
- No more housing options in our community due to multiple evictions or non-renewals caused by repeated lease violations.
- Serious lease violations.
- Violating the Participant Responsibilities as noted in this handbook.

Program Grievances and Appeals

- You will receive our agency's grievance policy as a part of intake.
- The grievance policy explains how you can communicate your grievances or complaints and the steps our agency will take to address your concerns.
- You have a right to file a grievance regarding your assistance, including, but not limited to:
 - not being treated with fairness, respect,
 - your eligibility
 - length of time of assistance; or
 - being exited from the program

If you are ever exited from the program and you disagree with the exit, you should file a grievance with our agency. Your grievance should include why you disagree with being exited. It will be reviewed to determine if the exit was appropriate or if it should be appealed. If the exit is determined to be appropriate, the exit will stand. If the exit is appealed, you will be given written notice of the decision and options for moving forward.

Acknowledgment of Rights, Responsibilities and Program Enrollment

I, _____, acknowledge that:

- I am enrolling (or recertifying) with a permanent supportive housing program consisting of rental assistance and supportive services.
- I understand how the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program works. I have received a copy of this Handbook and have had the opportunity to go over the contents with program staff and to ask for clarification if needed.
- Contents covered with me include:
 - Program Overview
 - Program and Participant Rights and Responsibilities
 - My Fair Housing Rights (Including full Fair Housing notice)
 - My Rights under the Violence Against Women Act (including full VAWA Notice)
 - Program Exit Process
 - Agency Grievance Policy
- I will follow my participant and tenant responsibilities as outlined in the Handbook in order to maintain assistance.

Participant's Signature

Date

I issued the PSH Participant Handbook to the above participant and reviewed the contents of the Handbook with them.

Program Staff Signature

Date

Staff Printed Name: _____

--Complete at intake and annual recertification. Upload copy in HMIS and keep copy in hard file. Provide original to participant. --