

COMMUNITY HEALTHCHOICES (CHC)

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #2020-04

SUBJECT: Housing Supports for CHC Participants

TO: CHC-Managed Care Organizations (MCO)

FROM: Bureau of Policy Development and Communications Management

DATE: August 5, 2020

PURPOSE

Housing is a social determinant of health, and housing support plans are an integral component of the Person-Centered Service Plan (PCSP) for Participants. In accordance with Section V.A.19. of the CHC Agreement, the CHC-MCOs are responsible for assisting all Participants in searching for, identifying, applying for, obtaining and/or retaining safe, affordable, and sustainable housing in the community of the Participant's choice. CHC-MCOs are also responsible for assisting the Participant in identifying behaviors of good tenancy and developing risk mitigation strategies to ensure housing sustainability. This Operations Memorandum describes procedures for the CHC-MCOs to follow when meeting requirements associated with assisting Participants with housing needs.

PROCEDURES

CHC-MCOs must adhere to the following processes in assisting Participants with housing needs.

Connecting Participants to Housing

Participants may need help locating and applying for affordable, integrated, accessible, and supportive housing in their community. The CHC-MCOs will work with the Local Referral Network (LRN) to assist Participants with addressing this need. LRNs are local coalitions organized by the Local Lead Agency and Regional Housing Coordinators (RHC) which serve as a network of resources, information, and referrals to housing in the community. The LRN is comprised of Local Lead Agencies, human

services organizations, service providers, housing providers, and RHCs. The CHC-MCOs will assist with or coordinate training with Participants to develop or restore skills on being a good tenant and develop risk mitigation strategies to ensure housing sustainability using the resources outlined in this Operations Memorandum.

Pre-tenancy and Transition Supports

For Participants residing in a facility, or other non-permanent living situation, who want a permanent residence in the community, the CHC-MCOs will provide housing pre-tenancy and transition supports that prepare and support a Participant's move into the community. These supports include:

Housing Assessment and Planning

The CHC-MCOs will conduct a comprehensive housing assessment. This involves:

- working with the Participant to assess the desired housing type, location, and other features that meet the Participant's needs; and
- identifying possible housing transition and retention barriers, such as accessibility needs, transportation needs, criminal background, ability to pay rent, and necessary services and supports.

The CHC-MCOs will develop a housing support plan based on the comprehensive housing assessment and work with the Participant to choose the types of housing-related services and supports the Participant will need to live in the community. The plan will include short-term and long-term measurable goals and objectives of the Participant to address any potential barriers to ensure a successful tenancy. The plan will identify who provides the services and supports and will clarify provider roles and responsibilities.

The CHC-MCOs will also develop a housing crisis plan by working with Participants to identify situations that could jeopardize their housing and identifying and developing appropriate interventions to respond early to these situations. The plan and interventions must be adjusted as needs change.

Housing Search

The CHC-MCOs will assist Participants in searching for housing, including reviews of housing resources such as newspapers, websites (e.g. pahousingsearch.com), or other housing search databases. The CHC-MCOs will use available referral sources such as community clearinghouses, the LRN, RHC, and housing authorities to help locate potential housing. If requested by a Participant, the

CHC-MCOs will provide accompaniment and/or facilitation to support a Participant's visit to potential housing options and assistance in making a housing choice.

The CHC-MCOs will assist Participants with:

- collecting required documentation that is needed to apply for housing, including personal identification, proof of income, references, and credit history; and
- obtaining, completing, and submitting applications to secure rental assistance, applying for housing, and, if necessary, requesting reasonable accommodations.

Move-In Preparation

The CHC-MCOs will assist Participants with:

- identifying various types of expenses related to housing move-in and start up, such as security and utility deposits, adaptive aides, home adaptations, moving company costs, furniture/furnishings, household supplies, etc.; and
- identifying and applying for the necessary resources to cover expenses related to the move, such as Community Transition Services and other formal or informal community resources.

The CHC-MCOs will conduct or facilitate a physical inspection to ensure that chosen housing is safe, clean, and ready for occupancy, and that all move-in coordination activities are complete. The CHC-MCOs will assist the Participant in housing preparatory activities such as, scheduling the moving company, turning on utilities, submitting a change of address, and purchasing furniture/furnishings and household supplies.

Tenancy Sustaining Supports

For Participants currently in the community, the CHC-MCOs will provide tenancy sustaining steps that support a Participant's desire to remain in their community. The steps are designed to assist Participants in retaining their housing, fostering independence, and integrating into their community. These steps include:

Conduct an Assessment

The CHC-MCOs will assess the Participant's current housing situation to identify barriers and needs and will determine what formal and informal housing services and supports are necessary to maintain community living. Topics may include:

- Community relationships/ accessing community resources,
- Financial education/ budgeting,
- Affordability of the current home,

- Understanding terms of the lease or mortgage agreement,
- Past rental history,
- Home adaptations,
- Transportation,
- Habitability/repairs, and
- Important contacts and crisis communication contact list.

Develop a Housing Support Plan

The CHC-MCOs will utilize the assessment to work with the Participant in creating a Housing Support Plan that identifies what housing services and supports are needed to address the barriers and needs that were identified. If no barriers and needs related to housing were identified, a Housing Support Plan is not required. Through the Housing Support Plan, the CHC-MCOs will:

- assist or coordinate training to develop or restore skills on being a good tenant and/or neighbor and accessing community resources;
- help the Participant develop or restore skills to advocate for him or herself with the landlord or property manager and to develop and maintain positive relationships to foster successful tenancy and community living;
- assist the Participant in restoring and/or developing skills related to identifying and connecting to community resources, such as legal aid, food banks, employment assistance, and utility assistance, etc.;
- assist in skill development or restoration of natural/community networks of support, such as relationships with family, friends, and neighbors, or accessing social activities, recreational facilities, and local churches;
- assist the Participant in identifying and accessing transportation, including public transportation, private vehicles, Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), non-medical transportation, Shared Ride Program, etc.;
- assist with or coordinate training on necessary life skills such as budgeting and routine home maintenance;
- assist the Participant with financial skills, such as developing a sustainable budget and paying bills, including home maintenance items such as lawn care, snow removal, etc., and how to budget for unexpected events (resources available to assist the Participant include financial education curriculums such as Cents and Sensibility, Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's (PHFA) financial education resources, Pennsylvania Treasury Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's (FDIC) Money Smart, and the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP));
- work with the Participant to identify behaviors that may put the Participant at risk of losing their housing, such as late rental payments or other lease violations;

- assist the Participant with understanding the terms of a lease or mortgage agreement;
- ensure the Participant understands their rights and responsibilities, as well as those of the landlord, under the terms of the lease agreement, including utility-related obligations and the potential consequences for violating the agreement;
- ensure the Participant understands their rights and protections under the law, such as those afforded by the Fair Housing Act;
- assist the Participant to complete housing recertification, including securing the necessary documentation and completing applications in a timely manner;
- monitor and update the Participant's Housing Support Plan as requisite housing skills and needs change;
- develop a risk mitigation section of the Housing Support Plan to address emergencies such as utility outages, unplanned hospital visits, natural disasters, home damage, etc.; and
- include an emergency contact list in the Housing Support Plan.

Update Housing Support Plan

The CHC-MCOs will monitor and update the Participant's Housing Support Plan as needs and barriers change.

NEXT STEPS

1. Review this information with appropriate staff.
2. Contact the Bureau of Coordinated and Integrated Services if you have questions.