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New York City Supportive Housing: Staff Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

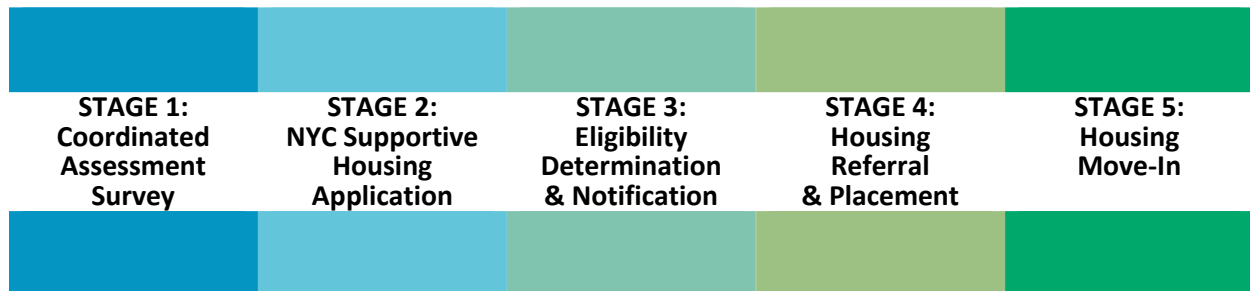
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NEW YORK CITY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING: STAFF FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROCESS



General Questions

Q: How do I best support my client(s) through the supportive housing process?

A: When helping people through the supportive housing process, it is important to be specific and transparent about each step. As with all good social services, meet people “where they are at” and provide person-centered services that honor client choice and self-determination, while grounded in trauma-informed care. The process includes many steps, so please take the time to be transparent and clear, define the roles of each party involved, explain why you are asking for information when completing the **Survey** and/or **NYC Supportive Housing Application**, and give updates as they are available. Additionally, be prepared to advocate for your client and support them in advocating for themselves throughout the process.

Q: How does the Supportive Housing process work?

A: The Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS) is the system that assesses individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, helping them and their case worker identify appropriate housing options. The goal is to create an efficient, equitable, and transparent process for accessing housing.

The supportive housing process includes five steps, most of which are done through CAPS:

1. Complete the **Coordinated Assessment Survey** in CAPS to determine potential eligibility for affordable or supportive housing, done by a homeless services provider agency on behalf of the client.
2. If potentially eligible for supportive housing, complete the **NYC Supportive Housing Application** (done by a homeless services provider agency on behalf of a client) and submit this in CAPS. This step will also offer an opportunity for a client to provide information on their desired housing choices.
3. Coordination of referrals by Placement Entities of eligible clients to available supportive housing. These referrals are based on availability of apartments, client program eligibility, client needs and priority relative to other eligible clients, and housing preferences.
4. Referral to Housing opportunity, including apartment or unit viewing with the housing provider and if accepted, completing all rent subsidy and other paperwork specific to the new housing unit.
5. Move client into their new home!

Please see the ***Client Guide to Supportive Housing***, which provides you with a detailed overview of the Supportive Housing process, as well as helpful tips for guiding clients through the process. The client guide along with additional CAPS resources, including the Policy & Procedure Manual and fact sheets, can be found on the [NYC Continuum of Care website](#).

Q: How do I know if my agency is able to complete a supportive housing application for my client?

A: To find out if your agency is authorized to submit ***Coordinated Assessment Surveys*** and ***NYC Supportive Housing Applications*** via CAPS for your clients, confirm with your agency management who the CAPS systems administrator is. That person can add new users and set up new programs in CAPS. If your agency is unsure if they have access, please contact Human Resources Administration CAS Support at hracassupport@hra.nyc.gov

Stage 2: NYC Supportive Housing Application

Q: What are the different supportive housing programs in NYC?

A: Please see the [Supportive Housing Description and Criteria](#) for an overview of the supportive housing types, clinical criteria, homeless criteria, and documentation requirements.

Q: What needs to be included in the supportive housing application?

A: The ***NYC Supportive Housing Application*** requires a psychosocial assessment and, for mental health programs, a psychiatric evaluation. As you are helping clients complete the Supportive Housing Application, it is important to be forthright in answers to highlight the client’s strengths and preferences and provide an accurate assessment of supports they need. This section should be neutral and avoid personal judgement. A clinical team from HRA will assess client eligibility, service needs, and preferences based on the information written in this application. Information that is vague or incomplete may cause delays and you may be asked to clarify information so that an accurate and timely determination can be made.

Q: What key documents are required so my client can obtain housing? (e.g., driver’s license, birth certificate, etc.).

A: The ***Coordinated Assessment Survey*** will return any client documents that are on file with HRA, including identity documents, proof of income, social security cards, etc. The documents can be downloaded and saved. Missing or additional documents that may be needed for the ***NYC Supportive Housing Application*** can be uploaded in CAPS when completing the Supportive Housing Application.

The types of documents that may be needed for each household member include, but are not limited to:

- Current, legible Government issued photo identification
- Current income and asset documentation (including benefits award letters)
- Proof of social security number
- Proof of date of birth and citizenship (this may include a birth certificate)

Note that documentation requirements vary depending on the project. Proof of citizenship is not required for every supportive housing project. In some instances, alternative forms of required documentation may be allowable. Assisting clients with gathering this information and saving hard and electronic copies will be helpful. Please see the [Supportive Housing Description and Criteria](#) for an overview of the supportive housing types, clinical criteria, homeless criteria, and documentation requirements.

Stage 3: Eligibility Determination & Notification

Q: Do different programs have different eligibility requirements?

A: Yes. Each supportive housing provider has a unique combination of contracts and funding that allow them to provide services and affordable housing for clients. And while each is unique, there are many commonalities among funders around required documents. Please see the [Supportive Housing Description and Criteria](#) for an overview of the supportive housing types, clinical criteria, homeless criteria, and documentation requirements.

Q: How will I know if my client's application has been accepted and if they have been found eligible for supportive housing?

A: Applications are usually reviewed, and a determination made by HRA within 1-3 business days of submission via CAPS. In many cases, additional information is needed to complete the determination; this will lengthen the process.

Once the HRA clinical team completes their assessment, you will receive a **NYC Supportive Housing Application Determination Letter** in CAPS. For complete applications, the letter will indicate what types of supportive housing your client is eligible for and contact information for next steps. Once deemed eligible, clients can be referred to available units they qualify for, per instructions in the letter. See the **NYC Supportive Housing Application Determination Letter Guide** for additional details.

If your client is deemed ineligible for supportive housing, you can contact the HRA clinical reviewer for more information and next steps. Remember, supportive housing is for people who need ongoing housing assistance and services in order to secure and maintain stable housing. Clients who need affordable housing alone are not eligible for supportive housing.

Q: What do I do after my client receives a supportive housing determination letter?

A: To start, you can best assist your client by helping them understand the steps that are needed when applying for supportive housing or otherwise engaging in a housing search. For supportive housing, this requires patience and stamina as the wait may be a long time before a unit that your client is eligible for comes available.

Support can include the following:

- › Helping clients understand that supportive housing is a permanent housing option as well as learn about the supportive housing options available to them;
- › Preparing clients for the viewing (traditionally referred to as interviews) with a supportive housing provider and, if possible, attending viewings with them and helping them explore every available potential supportive housing option;

- › Helping clients understand and complete required housing application documentation and gathering additional documents as needed; and
- › When moving into their new home, making sure clients are connecting to supportive housing staff who can help orient them to their new housing and surrounding neighborhood.

Continue to work with your client on their housing goals until they are in secure safe, stable housing or are connected to another housing provider or support service. You or another housing or service provider should help clients as they transition to housing understand their housing rights and responsibilities, including how and to whom to pay their share of housing costs, where to access nearby community resources, and other supports to ensure a successful transition.

Stage 4: Housing Referral & Placement:

Q. How does a referral to a supportive housing opportunity happen?

A: Referrals to supportive housing are coordinated closely between the housing provider and the designated placement entities. This ensures that the housing provider is receiving eligible referrals who meet all contract requirements and are not overwhelmed by many individuals reaching out. HRA's Office of Supportive Affordable Housing and Services (OSAHS) serves as the liaison and placement entity for different supportive housing providers, contracting agencies and DHS contracted shelters. Other entities, such as the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), HRA's HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA), and the Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS) also serve as a liaison and placement entity for certain types of supportive housing and related providers. The placement entity pulls from CAPS applications of households already determined to be approved for supportive housing and that meet the housing provider's specific funding/eligibility requirements. Referrals take into consideration those that have been eligible the longest, and that are interested in the borough and unit configuration that is available. Placement entities will notify you when a unit is available that your client qualifies for and meets their needs. You do not need to reach out to OSAHS or other placement entities. The OSAHS team will also ensure that clients across all shelters and street outreach programs have equal opportunity to be referred to available units.

Q: How do I prepare my client(s) for a housing viewing?

A: CUCS has a useful tool called [Tips for Applicants Preparing for Housing Interview](#) that can be used to help clients. Remind clients of the date and time of their viewing. One thing that may prove useful would be to role play questions and responses with your client, as well as offering to attend the meeting with the client. If the meeting will be over Zoom or Teams, practice using the platform in advance and log into the meeting early. Please remember, housing providers are not allowed to ask clients about race, religion, familial status, national origin, or age. They are also not allowed to ask if clients have ever been arrested (for Section 8, providers can run a criminal background check to verify whether clients have been convicted of specific crimes). Applicants will often also be required to submit current income and asset documentation in addition to their vital documents which are reviewed for unit compliance requirements, such as requirements for housing tax credits and rental subsidies.

Q. What happens if my client is accepted?

A: Clients who are accepted may need to complete another round of paperwork that will help the housing provider complete a background check and rental subsidy application. These are standard steps that take place for all affordable housing. If your client is not already on cash assistance, they may need your assistance or support to apply for one-shot financial assistance for initial move-in expenses. The placement entity will let you know if there are additional documents needed from the housing provider so the final approval of move in can be completed.

Q. What happens if my client is not accepted?

A: When units come available, there are typically 3 eligible households offered the opportunity to view the unit. If your client is not offered housing, more information regarding that decision can be obtained from the placement entity that set up the original referral. It is most often the case that there were not enough units for everyone who participated in a viewing. If your client rejected the unit, please discuss their reasons, and use this information to learn more about what your client is looking for in housing and how to help them when the next opportunity comes up.

Stage 5: Housing Move-In

Q: What are my client’s rights in supportive housing?

A: Supportive housing tenants’ rights are important! In New York City, supportive housing providers must notify tenants of their rights and help protect them. For more information about supportive housing tenant’s rights, refer to the [Supportive Housing Tenant’s Notice of Rights Template](#). Supportive housing providers must provide this notice to prospective and permanent tenants:

- At the time of the viewing (traditionally referred to as an interview);
- At the time of initial occupancy of a unit;
- At each lease or program agreement renewal; and
- Upon request.

Q: How can I best support my client once they are accepted for a supportive housing unit?

A: Once a client has been accepted for a unit in supportive housing, the best support you can provide is to ensure clients are connected with their new supportive housing team. This may include helping clients remain connected with current providers where they regularly receive services and identifying how they can still access those services from their new home. While most supportive housing sites provide furniture, clients may also need assistance to set up their new home. Coordinating supports with the supportive housing case manager is critical to ensure a successful and smooth transition to new housing.

Moving to any new home can be overwhelming and stressful. When you help your client move, be sure they know where all important documents, medicines and phone numbers are so they can truly rest and settle into their new home. And wish everyone well! You can set a wonderful tone as your client starts their new chapter!