

PREVENTING EVICTION: THE KEYS TO MAINTAINING HOUSING

Collaborative Solutions, Inc.

Who are we?

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Learning objectives

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- For case managers, methods for preventing client eviction
- For housing providers and property managers, methods to prevent eviction within your program
- Understand the importance of prioritizing stable housing for all clients

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Eviction

Why are tenants evicted?

Reasons for eviction

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- Unpaid or late rent
- Criminal activity
- Unauthorized guests
- Neighbor disturbance
- Poor housekeeping
- Other breach in the lease

Reminder!

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It is illegal for a landlord to try and remove a tenant without use of the court system, and it should never be attempted no matter how dire a situation may be.

Landlords should never do anything like:

- ❑ Change a lock;
- ❑ Shut off utilities or permit a utility to be shut off;
- ❑ Remove any of the tenant's personal property from the premises;
- ❑ Threaten or use force to make a tenant leave; or
- ❑ Harass a tenant.

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Health and Housing Status

Housing status affects health

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HIV/AIDS research shows:

- Housing status predicts HIV treatment success or failure
- Access to housing enables PLWHA to get into care and stay in care
- These results are relevant to other client populations too – stable housing results in better health and mental health outcomes

Housing status predicts risky behavior

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- Homeless or unstably housed persons are 2 to 6 times more likely to use hard drugs, share needles or exchange sex than stably housed persons with the same personal and service use characteristics.
- Homeless women are 2 to 4 times more likely to have multiple sex partners as housed indigent women.

Housing status predicts risky behavior (continued)

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- Harm reduction and other behavioral prevention interventions are much less effective for participants who lack stable housing.
- Investments in supportive housing have been found to reduce emergency and inpatient health services, criminal justice involvement, and use of other crisis services.

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What is Affordable Housing?

Is your housing affordable?

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- The federal government has established a benchmark of 30% of income as the maximum amount a household should pay for housing and utilities.
- This level helps ensure that households can afford housing and other necessities such as food, health care, and clothing.
- Reasonable housing cost burdens, such as the 30% federal standard, are the exception among households in poverty.

Is your housing affordable? (continued)

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Rent burden example:

- Monthly rent & utilities = \$600
- Monthly household income = \$1,200
- $\$600 / \$1,200 = 50\%$

This household is spending 50% of its monthly income on rent and utilities. This is considered to be severely housing burdened.

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Preventing Eviction

Housing-based Case Management

Housing-based case management

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Goal: Helping clients to *secure and maintain stable, affordable housing*

- For clients not currently in safe, decent, affordable housing, the primary goal is to develop a strategy to assist them in securing housing
- For those already housed, the goal is to assure that adequate supportive services are in place so the client can maintain housing

Case management

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Defining case management:

- Engagement
- Assessment
- Setting goals
- Service Coordination
- Resource Development/Advocacy
- Follow-up
- Reporting

More about assessment...

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- Housing stability factors to consider in assessment:
 - Debt and other high expenses such as car payment(s)
 - History of past evictions
 - History of homelessness
 - Recent history of substance abuse
 - Mental health issues
 - Short time in current housing (< 6 mos.)

Eviction prevention activities in case management

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- ❑ Teach ADLs if necessary.
- ❑ Educate the tenant on lease conditions such as visitor/guest/roommate policies.
- ❑ Talk about how to build respectful relationships with neighbors.
- ❑ Provide information on maintenance – how to submit a maintenance request or work order; how to communicate with the property owner, and what to do when property owner does not follow up.
- ❑ Check in on a regular basis with tenants on all aspects of their lives and make regular home visits.
- ❑ Explain the consequences of lease violations and eviction.

Developing an Individual Housing Plan (IHP)

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- The housing plan should incorporate specific, measurable, attainable goals related to:
 - ▣ Obtaining sustainable housing
 - ▣ Maintaining housing
 - ▣ Issues of income, employment, and money management
 - ▣ Independent living skills
 - ▣ Obtaining needed treatment for substance abuse, mental health issues, etc.
 - ▣ Future-oriented housing goals

Individual goal setting /service planning

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- Just as engagement is an ongoing task with tenants, so is goal setting.
- The main purpose in goal setting is to help the client meet the obligations of tenancy and stay housed.
- When working with tenants to develop goals, be mindful that at times tenants may develop goals that we feel are unrealistic.
- Often we say tenants are in denial or resistant when they don't want to work on the goals we set for them. Goals must be related to what the tenant wants.

How do progress notes relate to the plan?

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- Describe any significant events that have occurred which relate to the tenant's progress towards meeting the goals and objectives of the IHP.
- Document changes in goals, objectives, and methods/services of the IHP, as indicated.
- Any significant issues that relate to the tenant's housing need to be documented.

Examples

Housing provider programs
designed to prevent eviction

Preventing eviction: Deborah's Place

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Deborah's Place, a supportive housing provider in Chicago, has been providing services for homeless women since 1985.



Deborah's Place (continued)

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Senior staff decided that placing a tenant back into homelessness defeats Deborah's Place's mission and is inconsistent with their agency vision of ending homelessness.



Deborah's Place (continued)

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Committees were formed to develop an eviction prevention plan and agreed upon a 4-step process:

1. Incorporating a homeless specialist (staff position) to work with each woman to determine and address eviction risk.
2. Adding special assessments and programs for clients, focused on preventing eviction.
3. Utilizing a volunteer prevention committee to develop guidelines, hear cases of pending eviction, and make recommendations.
4. Allowing any client with a pending eviction to select a staff advocate to partner with them on the process.

Deborah's Place (continued)

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After implementing an eviction prevention process, evictions dropped from 10 to 2 per year.

Preventing eviction: YWCA

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The YWCA Central Alabama has a variety of temporary and permanent housing options for single adults with and without children, seniors, and people living with disabilities.



Preventing eviction: YWCA (continued)

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- The YWCA proactively addresses issues such as late rent with a “Special Request Form”.
- A financial Special Request is usually a payment plan to allow the tenant up to 60 days to pay off a rent balance, without delinquency or eviction.
- No more than 3 financial special requests may be submitted by any tenant within a 12-month period AND no financial special request may be requested that extends for a period greater than 60 days.

Preventing eviction: YWCA (continued)

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Policies to consider:

1st use verbal and written warnings

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- Case managers may remind tenants about the risks of behaviors that may threaten their housing stability, including failure or lapses in housekeeping, inappropriate guests or noise, and tardiness in paying rent. Verbal reminders are not formal warnings, but are generally recorded in the daily notes.
- If a tenant continues to violate the terms of his lease, or if the violations are of a serious nature, the warning should be put in writing. If a property owner is the one who has raised the issue, the property owner should be encouraged to provide the tenant with a written warning.

Behavior contracts

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- If a tenant consistently endangers his housing situation, and verbal and written warnings have not produced a change, the case manager may choose to offer the tenant an opportunity to enter into a behavior contract.
- A behavior contract as a condition for retaining one's housing or a housing subsidy should only be used when the lease violations are **based on a pattern of behavior which can be reasonably expected to change.**

Community financial resources

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- Family and friends
- Emergency rent payment or utility assistance
- STRMU
- Red Cross
- Churches and religious organizations
- Utility companies (Alabama Power's Project SHARE)
- Others?

Contact information

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