



EVIDENCE-BASED  
PRACTICES

**KIT**

Knowledge Informing Transformation

# Tools for Tenants

## Permanent Supportive Housing



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Mental Health Services  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)





# Tools for Tenants

## Permanent Supportive Housing

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## Tools for Tenants

The Evidence-Based Practices KITs, a product of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), give states, communities, administrators, practitioners, consumers of mental health care, and their family members resources to implement mental health practices that work.

The emphasis on implementing evidence-based practices (EBP) stems from a consensus that a gap exists between what we know about effective treatments and the services currently offered.

# Permanent Supportive Housing

This KIT is part of a series of Evidence-Based Practices KITs created by the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This booklet is part of the Permanent Supportive Housing KIT, which includes eight booklets:

**How to Use the Evidence-Based Practices KITs**

**Getting Started with Evidence-Based Practices**

**Building Your Program**

**Training Frontline Staff**

**Evaluating Your Program**

**The Evidence**

**Tools for Tenants**

**Using Multimedia to Introduce Your EBP**

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# **Permanent Supportive Housing**



## Tools for Tenants

### **Tool 1: What Is Permanent Supportive Housing?**

If you have been homeless, lived in group homes, or spent a long time in the hospital, Permanent Supportive Housing can help you get a home of your own. People who have serious mental illnesses can live in their own houses and apartments, just like anyone else. Sometimes they just need a little help to find a place, rent or buy it, move in, and keep up with everything.

That's where Permanent Supportive Housing comes in. Here are some of the ways that staff can help you:

- **Finding a place that meets your needs:** Certain buildings might have apartments set aside, or staff might help you find an apartment, room, or house in the community.

- **Applying for housing:** Staff will help you with applications and do what they can to convince a landlord to rent to you.
- **Getting settled:** Staff might help with anything from getting the power turned on to making a shopping list.
- **Keeping your housing:** Staff wants to make sure you keep a home of your own, so they will help you manage your money, get along with neighbors, keep up with needed chores, make friends, and get whatever services you need.





## Tools for Tenants

### **Tool 2: How Can You Afford a Place of Your Own?**

A home of your own might seem out of reach, but it might not be. If you rely on disability income or don't earn much at work, you might be able to get help paying your rent.

Permanent Supportive Housing includes a commitment to help people with psychiatric disabilities get housing that is affordable. That means you only pay a percentage of what you earn (usually 30 percent) toward rent and basic utilities (electricity, gas, and water).

How does this work?

- Some people live in buildings that are set aside for affordable housing. Usually, the owner of the building gets government money to rent units to people with low incomes.
- Some people live in public housing, which is run by a public housing agency (PHA) using money from the federal government.
- Some people have vouchers that pay part of their rent in housing they choose. The most common type is "Section 8," now called *housing choice vouchers*, which are also given out by a public housing agency.





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### **Tool 3: Your Housing Preferences**

Part of Permanent Supportive Housing is helping you find a place that you like. You probably won't get everything you're looking for, though. You have to set priorities.

What's most important to you? These questions can help you decide. Answer the questions, then rank their importance from 1 to 10, with 1 being *most important*. Talk about your answers with the Permanent Supportive Housing staff.



	Comments	Importance
<b>Living arrangements</b>		
Would you like to live in a house? An apartment building with just a few units? A building with many units?		
Would you prefer living by yourself or with other people?		
Would you like to live with specific people—a girlfriend or boyfriend, family members, or a friend?		
Would you share an apartment if you had your own room?		
If you had a roommate, what would you want the person to be like?		
Is a building with private bedrooms and shared kitchens acceptable?		
Is a shared bathroom in the hall acceptable?		
Would a bathroom shared only with one or two other people be all right?		
Do you prefer living with all women (or men), younger people, etc?		
Would you prefer to live around other people who have psychiatric disabilities? Would you prefer not to?		
<b>Features</b>		
What features in a home are important to you—air conditioning, dishwasher, onsite laundry, etc.?		
Do you need any special accommodations for a physical or sensory disability, such as ramps, elevators, or doorbell signalers?		
<b>Neighborhood</b>		
Do you want to live in a specific neighborhood?		
What features of the neighborhood are important to you? Examples of things you might want are a quiet environment, parks, well-lit streets, shopping, libraries, or public transportation.		
Do you need to have easy access to any specific place—for example, your job, treatment facility, place of worship, or family home?		

	Comments	Importance
<b>Support needs</b>		
Would you like to have onsite staff available any time of the day or night?		
Would you prefer to live in a place that has no staff onsite and have staff visit you instead?		
<b>Security and visitors</b>		
Do you like having company? Do you want to have overnight guests? How often?		
How do you feel about having your guests screened at a front desk? Do you like knowing that other people's guests are screened?		
<b>Alcohol and other drugs</b>		
Is a community that strongly supports sobriety important to you?		
How do you feel about being in a setting where some people may be using drugs or alcohol?		
<b>Activities</b>		
Would you like to have access to in-house groups?		
Do you like the idea of having staff-sponsored activities like trips and movies?		
<b>Pets</b>		
Do you have a pet?		
Would you like to have a pet?		





## Tools for Tenants

### Tool 4: What Is a Lease?

Living in Permanent Supportive Housing is different from living in a group home or other types of “mental health” housing.

In Permanent Supportive Housing, you sign a document called a *lease*. This is the same piece of paper anyone else who rents a house or apartment signs. A lease gives you rights under the law. It also makes you responsible for certain things.

When you have a lease, you cannot be kicked out just because you refuse treatment or other services. You can keep your housing as long as you meet your responsibilities:

- Paying your rent;
- Keeping your space clean;
- Making sure your house or apartment is not damaged; and
- Being a good neighbor.

Your landlord (who owns the housing) has responsibilities, too:

- Keeping the property safe (working locks, no dangerous conditions);
- Making sure heat and plumbing work; and
- Entering the property only for specific reasons (like repairs) after telling you.

These are just general examples. Your lease might say other things. For example, your lease may limit people moving in with you. Permanent Supportive Housing staff will help you understand your lease.





## Tools for Tenants

### **Tool 5: Your Support Needs**

Permanent Supportive Housing staff can do all sorts of things to help you choose, get, and keep a home in the community. Check the things you think you might need help with. Talk about these things with staff.

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#### **General Supportive Services**

- Moving in and getting settled in your new home
- Setting goals and making plans to meet your goals
- Meeting your responsibilities and avoiding eviction
- Escaping domestic violence and staying safe
- Speaking up for yourself
- Getting involved in issues that affect other tenants and you
- Finding fun activities
- Making friends
- Becoming involved in a place of worship



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## Vocational Services

- Learning job skills
- Finding a job
- Enrolling in computer classes
- Keeping a job

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## Independent Living Skills

- Making sure you pay your rent on time
- Budgeting your money
- Preventing and resolving conflicts with your landlord or neighbors
- Shopping for groceries
- Planning and cooking meals
- Keeping your home clean and safe
- Taking public transportation and getting around the community
- Applying for and maintaining disability benefits

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## Health/Medical Services

- Scheduling visits to a doctor or dentist
- Learning to eat healthfully

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## Mental Health Services

- Scheduling visits to a therapist or psychiatrist
- Learning about mental illnesses, medications, and treatments
- Taking your medication the right way
- Talking to your doctor about side effects

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## Substance Abuse Services

- Scheduling alcohol or drug treatment
- Finding drug- and alcohol-free recreational activities
- Finding self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

## Tools for Tenants

### Tool 6: Being a Good Tenant

The most important part of being a good tenant is paying the rent on time. It's usually due on the first day of the month. You might have a *grace period*, but remember that the rent is due on the first, and if you go beyond the grace period, you could lose your home.

Know the rules about people moving in with you. Remember, if your name is on the lease, you are the one who is responsible for paying the rent. If you have roommates, all of the rent is due, not just "your share."

Set aside time for needed cleaning and household tasks. Usually, if something fails on its own, like a leaky roof or a

broken furnace, it's the landlord's job to fix it. But it's your job to keep up the place and prevent damage. Remember:

- You are responsible for any damage you cause.
- You are also responsible for any damage your guests cause, so think about who you invite.
- Don't clog the toilet. (Keep paper towels, sanitary napkins, cigarette butts, toys, etc., out of the toilet.)
- Don't clog the kitchen sink. (Keep grease and excess food out of the drain.)
- Change your light bulbs and the batteries in your smoke detectors.
- Keep your refrigerator and oven clean.
- Tell your landlord about any problems before they get worse.



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## Respect your neighbors

- Keep your music or TV volume down.
- Be polite. If you don't want to talk, a quick "hello" helps keep things civil.
- Respect common areas (like laundry rooms or lobbies). Be quiet, don't smoke or drink alcohol, and keep the area clean.

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## Don't let problems get out of control

- Politely mention any issues (like someone playing loud music).
- Don't let people take advantage of you (frequently borrowing or asking for favors). It's natural to want to help, but there are limits.
- If problems continue, Permanent Supportive Housing staff might be able to help.

## Tools for Tenants

### **Tool 7: Time to Move On?**

People move. It's a part of life, even in Permanent Supportive Housing. If you are moving out, do it the right way. Your references from past landlords are important!

- **Find out how much "notice" is required.** That is, how long before you move do you have to tell the landlord? Send your landlord a letter with the date that you plan to move out.
- **Fix any damage you or your guests have caused.** The local hardware store sells supplies for fixing nail holes in walls, for example.
- **Clean everything.** This includes the oven and the refrigerator.
- **Walk through the house or apartment with the landlord.** This helps prevent surprise charges for cleaning or repairs.
- **Make sure your landlord has a forwarding address for you.**





## Tools for Tenants

### **Tool 8: Fair Housing Is Your Right!**

In a case called Olmstead, the U.S. Supreme Court has said that people with disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than in institutions. You also have the same right to buy or rent housing, without discrimination, regardless of what type of disability you might have. That means a landlord cannot do the following:

- Refuse to show you available housing;
- Steer you only to certain units or buildings;
- Make you pay an extra deposit;
- Put conditions in your lease that aren't in other people's leases; and
- Ask inappropriate questions about your disability.

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#### **What are some inappropriate questions?**

- What kind of disability do you have?
- Why do you get disability income?
- Do you take medications?
- Have you been in the state hospital?
- Have you ever lived by yourself before?
- Do you know how to take care of yourself?



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## What if I have special needs?

Landlords might be required to make what is called a reasonable accommodation, or do something slightly out of the ordinary, to meet your needs.

Some examples include the following:

- Letting a case manager help you with the rental application; and
- Letting you pay your rent by mail because you are nervous about going to the rental office.

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## What types of housing are covered by federal law?

Three important federal laws cover most types of housing:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to housing funded by the city, county, or state;
- The Rehabilitation Act applies to housing receiving federal funds; and
- The Fair Housing Act applies to most housing.

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## What's not covered?

Generally speaking, the following are not covered:

- Units in a building where the landlord lives; and
- Housing designed specifically for people with disabilities.

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## What can you do if you have been treated unfairly?

- Talk to your case manager or other supportive housing staff; and
- Call the federal government's toll-free hotline: 1-800-669-9777 (voice) or 800-927-9275 (TTY).



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