

## HARD TO HOUSE

### Who we are talking about:

The goal of this effort is to house those who are hard to house, not the hardest to house. We are discussing those who can be supported in the community with emergency/supportive services when they have the resources and are engaged.

### Who is talking:

VHCB, VHFA, AHS, Housing VT, a PHA, 2 homeless housing and service providers, and 2 housing managers have met once so far to discuss this topic and will be meeting again in June.

### Our first goal is to create a tool for analyzing rejected applicants for housing.

We hope to work with a facilitator to survey housing managers/landlords/PHAs and ask them about their tenant eligibility process and why they set the bar where they do. This would determine the basis and process for rejecting tenants. From there we can better understand if tenants being rejected are truly risky or if there are ways the policies are excluding people unintentionally.

For example, how do we know if “criminal history” is really someone writing a bad check because of health expenses? The check may not be written to a doctor, but if there were a health crisis 2 weeks before the bad check, it still may be the precipitating event.

We will ensure that the managers surveyed represent:

1. Small vs. large geographies covered by a single management company
2. Geographic diversity
3. For profit vs. non profit
4. Those entrenched in the community where the housing is vs. those managing from afar

### Other research – to better understand why people are in these positions.

We may ask PHAs the top reasons people aren't leasing up Section 8 vouchers: *Are people not finding units when they do their housing search because there's a lack of housing supply, high rental costs, or tenant-related such as poor credit or bad references?*

We may ask agencies that provide housing search to describe what works and what doesn't:

1. *What are the characteristics of successful placements when you help people find housing? What are the reasons people are usually unsuccessful?*
2. *When someone cannot find housing, or is unsuccessful after a few months in housing, is the problem the lack of extended case services or financial resources?*
3. *Is success more dependent on the type of household (easier to house individuals than families, for example) or the household's housing resume (credit and references). Explain.*

We may review (legally) what criminal history is not allowed based on funding (federal) rules, versus what is up to the discretion of the housing manager/PHA?

### Final product:

We aren't sure about this yet. If we find some promising practices on eligibility screening criteria we might use that to encourage more managers to adopt that type of policy. We might realize there are regional disparities in the reasons people are not able to access current subsidized housing (income vs. lack of stock are two different reasons). We might find that different types of management companies have different approaches for very good reason.

Once we better know what is currently happening we can address what the next steps might be.

We do know that the topic of the Hard to House will be a workshop during the VT Housing Manager's Association conference in November.