

Higher Ground Minneapolis Tenant Selection Plan

Tenant selection process

Tenant selection reflects Catholic Charities commitment to housing very low-income people and those who are long-term homeless, at risk of long-term homelessness and have barriers to housing including disabilities, poor rental or credit histories, and criminal histories. Catholic Charities housing programs are low barrier and entry tolerant of rental history and criminal backgrounds.

1. Eligibility requirements

Tenants who are admitted into housing programs must be individually determined as eligible and suitable.

In order to meet the eligibility requirements for Higher Ground Minneapolis Housing, an applicant must meet one or more of the following criteria, which may be required by the funder:

Eligibility- meet homeless status requirement:	Number of units
<p>Households qualify as experiencing Long-Term Homelessness (Minnesota): Persons including individuals who lack a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years. Any period of institutionalization or incarceration shall be excluded when determining the length of time a household has been homeless.</p> <p>Doubled Up/Couch Hopping: Doubled up or couch hopping is considered an episode of homelessness if a household is doubled up with another household (and duration is less than one year) or couch hops as a temporary way to avoid living on the streets or an emergency shelter.</p> <p>Transitional Housing: Time spent in transitional housing (TH) is a neutral event. Housing history prior to or after transitional housing should be evaluated to determine if it meets the state’s LTH definition. For example, if a household was homeless eight months prior to entering TH and four months after existing TH, the household would meet the LTH definition. Note: Minnesota's definition does not require that the person have a disabling condition</p>	68
<p>Individuals qualify as HUD’s (Federal) definition of “homeless:” An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; b. An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or c. A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. 	17
<p>Individuals qualify as HUD’s (Federal) definition of “chronically homeless:”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A homeless individual with a disabling condition (adult) who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and (ii) Has been homeless and living as described in paragraph (1)(i) of this definition continuously for at least 12 months or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least seven consecutive nights of not living as described in paragraph (1)(i). <p>Stays in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute as a break in homelessness, but rather such stays are included in the 12-month total, as long as the individual</p>	17

was living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility; (2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or (3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuously homeless for a year or more, or • has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. 	
Households at Significant Risk of Long-Term Homelessness (Minnesota Housing): Includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • households that are homeless or recently homeless with members who have been previously homeless for extended periods of time, and are faced with a situation or set of circumstances likely to cause the household to become homeless in the near future, and • previously homeless persons who will be discharged from correctional, medical, mental health or treatment centers who lack sufficient resources to pay for housing and do not have a permanent place to live. 	68
Eligibility- meet income requirement	Number of units
Individuals have incomes at or below 30% of Area Median Income.	
Individuals have incomes at or below 50% of Area Median Income.	
Age requirements	Number of units
18 years of age and older	85
Group Residential Housing (GRH) requirements	Number of units
Individual is eligible for Minnesota Group Residential Housing if they meet a combination of eligibility requirements set by the Supplemental Security Income program or General Assistance program to qualify for assistance. There are also income and asset limits. Generally, the program serves people 65 or older or people younger than 65 who have a condition that limits their self-sufficiency (e.g., a physical or mental health disability, visual impairment or chemical dependency).	68
Base GRH units	68
Base rate plus service rate for clients with mental illness, substance abuse disorder, or co-occurring mental illness and chemical dependency	68
Base rate plus service rate for clients who are long-term homeless	68

Background check

A background criminal check will be conducted on all applicants by Rental History Reports.

Income requirements

Applicants must make two (2) times their portion of rent in order to qualify.

Verification documents

To apply for housing, applicants must be qualified and verified under the income limits and funding criteria established for the unit. No decisions to accept or reject applicants shall be made until all verifications prompted by the application form have been received.

Housing programs will use Minnesota Housing Finance Agency certification forms for homelessness verification and income and asset verification.

Housing program staff verify each living situation through third party verification. If third party verification is not possible for one of the living situations, the applicant may self-verify.

Client self-certification, combined with staff documentation of failed attempts to obtain third party verification, is the option of last resort to demonstrate HUD chronic homelessness. When documenting chronic homelessness as either 1) 12 months of continuous homelessness; or, 2) at least four occasions of homelessness totaling 12 months over the last three years, the following applies:

- At least 75 percent of chronically homeless individuals assisted by a housing site in an operating year may use no more than three months of self-report of living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter to document their homeless status.
- No more than 25 % of tenants served in an operating year may self-report more than three months of such living situations to document their homeless status. In all cases of self-report, intake workers must document the living situation of the individual seeking assistance and the steps taken unsuccessfully to obtain third party documentation prior to using self-verification.

The following documents are generally needed to verify eligibility:

- Application for Housing
- Long Term Homeless certification form
- Homelessness verification letter (if applicable)
- Disability verification (if applicable)
- Tenant Income Certification Form (HTC 14) including third party verification
- Tenant Asset certification forms
- Student certification forms (if applicable)
- Supporting documentation (e.g.,)

2. Interview and screening procedures

Consistent application of tenant screening standards

Catholic Charities requires the consistent application of tenant screening standards to all applicants.

Meeting eligibility requirements is the first step in the tenant selection process. Once an individual meets eligibility requirements, an interview will be conducted. In addition, every applicant must meet the tenant selection criteria. The applicant will be judged on ability to meet tenancy requirements and not on any attribute or behavior that may be imputed to a particular group or category of persons of which an applicant may be a member. All staff will conduct interviews using a pre-screened set of questions. A final decision on eligibility cannot be made until all verifications are complete.

The applicant interview will assess the likelihood that the applicant will be able to meet all of the following the essential requirements of tenancy, as expressed in the lease, and include:

- Ability to pay rent and other charges under the lease in a timely manner;
- Ability to care for and refrain from damaging the unit and common areas; ability to use facilities and equipment in a reasonable way that does not create health or safety hazards;
- Ability to reasonably report significant maintenance needs;
- Respect for the personal and property rights of others;
- Ability to refrain from engaging in criminal activity that threatens the health, and/or safety of other tenants or staff; as well as refraining from engaging in drug-related criminal activity on or near the premises; and,
- Compliance with health and safety codes and necessary and reasonable rules and program requirements of HUD, and/or other government entities, and/or the housing provider.

Important Note: Any evaluation of an applicant must be disability-neutral and will not seek any information beyond the minimum required to clarify specific eligibility and screening issues, and will not be based on any disability-related presumptions about the applicant's ability to meet the essential obligations of the lease.

The property manager or designee is usually the lead interviewer on the applicant interview; all other applicable staff will be properly trained and prepared to participate. Program staff are encouraged to seek the assistance of on-

site support services staff to help applicants understand and complete the interview process. At a minimum, the applicant interview should include at least one representative from the support services team or other tenant representative. In general, the interview's focus will be on the ability for the applicant to comply with the terms of tenancy as stated in the lease or rental agreement as well as the supports (if any) identified as needed by the applicant for such compliance,

Ineligible tenants

Applicants convicted of level 3 sex crimes are ineligible for Catholic Charities' Supportive Housing programs, due to the vulnerable status of the clients served.

Potential tenant disqualifiers

In line with Housing First principles and Catholic Charities' mission to serve those most in need, neither criminal history nor evidence of use of alcohol or illegal substances shall specifically and explicitly be grounds for disqualification.

However, individuals may potentially be disqualified if, based on multiple factors, they are determined to pose a risk to the safety of others in the building. This evaluation will be in consultation with General Counsel, and will consider multiple factors including the nature of the population served in the particular building, prior restrictions from other Catholic Charities' sites and/or programs, the nature and seriousness of the act(s), circumstances related to the act(s) including mitigating factors or social conditions surrounding the commission of the act(s); the age of the individual when committed and timeframe of the act and all other competent evidence of rehabilitation.

Application decisions

Applicants will be notified if **they are approved or denied housing within three business days** after verifications are returned. If approved, the applicant will be sent a tenant acceptance and an intake appointment will be scheduled. If they are denied housing, the applicant will be provided with an applicant rejection letter **written in the applicant's primary language**. Also, see appeals process below.

Tenant applications, Coordinated Entry, referrals and wait list

Applicants for supportive housing usually will come through the coordinated entry process, except those programs that are exempt and keep their own waiting list. After receiving referrals from Coordinated Entry, the property manager will conduct the screening and select applicants according to the tenant selection criteria for the housing units. Some programs also receive specific referrals from other partners for example, the medical respite units receive referrals from hospitals and other health care providers.

Waiting list

The Coordinated Entry Process will maintain a waitlist for homeless individuals who need housing. Catholic Charities will coordinate with this waitlist. Catholic Charities may keep a short waitlist of applicants for special units: medical respite and late stage alcoholics.

Reasonable accommodations

Where applicable, no qualified individual with a disability shall be discriminated against by the denial of or full enjoyment of the services and facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations furnished by Catholic Charities. The housing application, eligibility, verification and interview process will be accessible to all applicants, regardless of physical, mental, or learning disability. Staff will assist and/or arrange for the assistance for applicants with disabilities in completing the application form, obtaining verification documents, and participating in the interview process. Pursuant to law, Catholic Charities will make reasonable efforts to accommodate clients with disabilities. The tenant handbook will include a statement informing applicants of their right to reasonable accommodation.

Limited English Proficiency

Catholic Charities will deliver services in a culturally-appropriate manner to applicants/residents. Culturally-appropriate is defined as services that are delivered to reflect the unique individual needs of the recipients, such as language and race/ethnic background. Catholic Charities will make reasonable efforts to have staff delivering services reflect the diversity of the clients receiving services.

Tenant appeals process

All rejected tenants will be given an opportunity to request an appeal to the rejection. The appeals process mirrors the procedure outlined in Catholic Charities' Client Complaint-Grievance Policy, with defined levels of reviews and time frames for responding. This appeals process is outlined, as follows:

1. The applicant submits a request for an appeal in writing, or verbally to a staff member, who may write the appeal for the applicant. Staff will offer assistance in compiling/preparing information to be used as basis for appeal of decision.
2. The appeal will be reviewed by a senior program manager or division director not involved in the initial admission decision. The manager or director will review additional/mitigating information provided by applicant and additional materials. The manager or director may seek advice of General Counsel. After conducting a thorough review, a written response of the results of the appeal is provided to the applicant within five working days.
3. The applicant receives instructions regarding how to submit the appeal for another level of review if the applicant is dissatisfied with a response from the appeals process by the manager or director. This second level of review is conducted by the Senior Vice President of Client Services and Community Partnerships. After conducting a thorough review, the Senior Vice President of Client Services and Community Partnerships will provide a written response of the results of the review to the applicant within five working days.