



Illinois Department of Human Services  
Division of Mental Health

**Division of Mental Health  
Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative  
Bridge Subsidy Program**



**Resource Guide**

## **Welcome to the Division of Mental Health (DMH) Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Bridge Subsidy Program!**

We are pleased that you have chosen to participate in the Bridge Program and are providing this Handbook to give you information that can help you be successful. The following pages contain information on the Bridge Program specifically as well as more general information about being a tenant, maintaining a housing unit and working with a landlord. We hope that you will take the time to read the Handbook and will ask questions if there is information that you do not understand.

### **Who Do I Contact about the DMH PSH Bridge Subsidy Program?**

Every participant in the Bridge Program has a contact person at his or her local mental health center. In this handbook, we refer to this contact person by the general term of “care manager.” Your care manager is the main person you receive mental health services from. He or she is the first person you should contact with any questions or concerns that you have about the Bridge Program.

### **What is the DMH PSH Bridge Subsidy Program?**

The Bridge Program is designed to provide eligible DMH consumers (that’s you!) with help paying the rent on an apartment in the community. As part of the program you will also have access to a wide variety of supportive services that could include things like mental health or substance abuse services, help arranging medical appointments or reminders to pay the rent. You are not required to participate in any particular service in order to be part of the Bridge Program, but you may find that services can help you successfully maintain your apartment and/or achieve other goals that you have.

### **I Received My DMH PSH Bridge Subsidy Approval Letter, but What Happens Now?**

If you’re reading this handbook, you’ve already completed the referral and application process for the Bridge Program. You’ll begin by working with an organization that is filling the role of Subsidy Administrator for the Bridge Program in the area where you live. The Subsidy Administrator will work with you and your care manager to:

- Verify your monthly income
- Determine what size housing unit you’ll need
- Inform you of the maximum rent for a unit of that size in your community.
- Estimate how much rent you will be responsible for paying every month. This will be approximately 30% of your monthly income.

### **How Do I Find a Housing Unit?**

Once you’ve worked with your care manager and the subsidy administrator to determine what size housing unit you need and the maximum rent for a unit of that size in your community under the Bridge Program, you’re ready to begin your housing search!

The worksheet in Appendix 1 of this document may be useful to you and your care manager as you think about important features of a housing unit.

Once you have an idea of the size, location, and features you would like in your housing unit, you're ready to begin your search! Your care manager and the subsidy administrator will help you identify some potential apartments. Depending on your preferences, you may call landlords and visit apartments on your own or do these activities in partnership with your care manager.

For additional resources on the housing search process including a guide for making phone calls to potential landlords, visit HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange website at <http://www.hudhre.info/housingsearch/>

### **What if I Can't Get Approved for the Housing Unit that I Want?**

It is a good idea to visit multiple units during your housing search so that you can ensure the housing is a good fit for you and meet the landlord. It is also possible that you will not be approved for every apartment you apply for. This is a normal part of the application process. Sometimes your credit, housing, or criminal history may make the housing search process particularly challenging. Your care manager will work with you to discuss ways to make landlords feel comfortable with these issues.

### **Once I am Approved for a Unit, What Happens Next?**

After you have located and been approved for a housing unit, your care manager will contact the subsidy administrator to request that the unit be inspected. This inspection is done in order to make sure that the unit is safe and secure. If the unit fails the inspection, the landlord will have the opportunity to fix any failing items within a certain period of time. You cannot move in or pay any money toward an apartment until it has passed inspection!

When you have been approved for an apartment and the apartment has passed inspection, you will be asked to sign a lease. A lease is a legal document and it is important to review it carefully and ask any questions you may have before signing. A lease will typically state:

- The amount of the rent.
- How long the lease will last.
- How the lease should end.
- How to renew the lease.
- How much will be charged if rent is paid late.
- Who is responsible for repairs and how to get repairs made.
- When the landlord can enter the apartment and what type of permission, or notice to you is needed.
- Any other promises made by the landlord.<sup>1</sup>

The document in Appendix 2 may be helpful to you in summarizing key provisions of your lease. If you would like to view a sample of an apartment lease please click on the following link <http://www.cicchicago.com/htdocs/training/documents/CHICAGOAPARTMENTLEASErev12.17.doc>

---

<sup>1</sup> These bullet points taken from "What Should I Know about Leasing an Apartment?" at [http://www.illinoislegalaid.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.dsp\\_Content&contentID=372](http://www.illinoislegalaid.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.dsp_Content&contentID=372)

## **Will I Have to Pay Money to Move in to my Housing Unit?**

As part of the move-in process, a landlord may require you to pay a security deposit. Although there is not a minimum or maximum amount for the security deposit, it will typically be equal to one to two times the monthly rent. When you move out of your apartment, your security deposit will be returned unless you have caused damage to the unit that is not due to normal use. Additional information can be found on the website of the Illinois Tenants Union at <http://www.tenant.org/default.asp> and on the website of Illinois Legal Aid <http://www.illinoislegalaid.org/index.cfm>

## **What if I Don't Have Enough Money to Pay the Security Deposit or to Buy Furniture?**

As part of your participation in the DMH PSH Bridge Subsidy Program, you have access to housing transition funds in order to assist you with the move-in process. If you do not have other funds available, you can use up to \$2000 in transition funds to assist you with paying security or utility deposits and buying household items such as furniture. You and your care manager will fill out some worksheets in order to request these funds. Any purchases made with transition funds have to be approved before you and your care manager can buy anything.

## **Do I Have Access to Support Services as Part of this Program?**

You may find that utilizing services can be helpful to you in achieving goals and maintaining your housing. These services may include the following:

- Mental health counseling or treatment
- Substance abuse counseling or support groups
- Financial management (budgeting, paying bills, etc.)
- Medical services
- Vocational training or assistance obtaining employment
- Independent living skills (could include help with managing your household, shopping, cooking, etc.)
- Other services as needed

Your care manager at the Division of Mental Health contracted mental health center will help you in coordinating any of the above services or any additional services you may need.

## **What are my Rights and Responsibilities as a Tenant?**

You have the right to expect the landlord to:

- Keep the home up to local building code
- Keep the home so that you can safely live in it
- Give you written notice before ending the lease
- Not enter the home without telling you in advance, unless it is an emergency.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> These bullet points taken from "What Should I Know about Leasing an Apartment?" at [http://www.illinoislegalaid.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.dsp\\_Content&contentID=372](http://www.illinoislegalaid.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.dsp_Content&contentID=372)

In return as a tenant you agree to:

- Keep the home clean
- Not change the home unless the landlord says it is okay
- Pay rent when due
- Give the landlord notice before moving out
- Obey the lease
- Tell the landlord about any problems with the home<sup>3</sup>

If you have questions about your housing unit or are not sure if you should get in touch with your landlord, you should contact your care manager. Your care manager will be able to assist you in correcting any problems with your unit and dealing with your landlord.

### **Where are Services Located in my Community?**

As you move into your new housing unit it may be helpful to you to take the time to learn about your neighborhood. Your care manager can work with you to fill out the blanks in this section:

My nearest grocery store is located at: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My nearest bank is located at: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I can access public transportation (if applicable) at: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My nearest pharmacy is located at: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My nearest public library branch is located at: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **How Long Can I Stay on the Bridge Subsidy?**

The amount of time you will use the Bridge Subsidy is flexible depending on your individual situation. The Bridge Subsidy is designed to last until you have another permanent rental subsidy, such as a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or comparable rental subsidy, or can pay for your own housing independent of support. The DMH Bridge Subsidy Program has been deliberately designed as a Housing Choice Voucher “look-a-like” program to help ensure that the transition from the Bridge Subsidy to a permanent voucher is as close to seamless as possible. Your care manager will work with you throughout this process to make sure that you can continue to reside in your housing unit if you choose to do so.

\_\_\_\_\_  
<sup>3</sup> Ibid

## Appendix 1

### Housing Preferences Worksheet<sup>4</sup>

Apartment	I Must Have	I Would Prefer	I Could Do Without
One bedroom (as opposed to an efficiency)			
More than one bedroom			
Furnished unit			
Washer and dryer in unit			
Dishwasher			
Air conditioning			
Utilities included			
Closets and storage			
One level (no stairs)			
Private apartment (versus renting room in shared house)			
Private bathroom			
Other:			
Other:			

Building	I Must Have	I Would Prefer	I Could Do Without
Specific type of building (single family, duplex, multifamily)			
Secured entrance			
On-site laundry facilities			
Yard/playground			

<sup>4</sup> All information in the Housing Preferences Worksheet copied from the HUD Homelessness Resource Exchange:  
<http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewResourcesByTopic&topicId=9#Housing%20Search%20and%20Placement>

Off-street parking			
Handicap accessibility			
Elevator			
Pets allowed			
Storage space			
On quiet street			
Other:			
Other:			

<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>I Must Have</b>	<b>I Would Prefer</b>	<b>I Could Do Without</b>
Near public transportation			
Near major roads/highways			
Near schools/daycare			
Near work			
Near healthcare and supportive services			
Near parks/play areas/public library			
Near family/friends			
Near grocery store & shopping			
Near religious and recreation facilities			
Safe			
Children can play outside			
Quiet			
Other:			
Other:			

## Appendix 2

### What Does My Lease Say?<sup>5</sup>

**Directions:** Bring a copy of your lease to your case manager so that you can review it together. Use this worksheet to write down the rules about your lease, and keep it in your files so you can review it if you need to. It is important that you understand your lease, because if you break any of the rules, you could be charged extra fees or even evicted.

PAYING FOR MY APARTMENT	
How much rent do I pay each month?	
When is my rent due each month?	
Where do I send my rent payment?	
How much is the damage/security deposit?	
If the rent is late, is there a late fee? How much is the late fee?	
When does the landlord start charging a late fee?	
If my check bounces, does that mean it's a late payment?	
When does the landlord start eviction if the rent is not paid?	
What utilities do I have to pay?	
What else do I have to pay? (For example, extra charge for pets, garage, laundry, key deposit, service fee if my check bounces?)	
RULES FOR MY APARTMENT	
What are the rules about noise?	

<sup>5</sup> All information in the "What Does My Lease Say?" Worksheet taken from the HUD Homelessness Resource Exchange at [http://www.hudhre.info/housingsearch/What%20Does%20My%20Lease%20Say\\_v2\\_Aug06.doc](http://www.hudhre.info/housingsearch/What%20Does%20My%20Lease%20Say_v2_Aug06.doc)

What pets are allowed? (kind of pet, number of pets, size of pets)	
Are there rules about how I have to do my housecleaning? Do I have to do any yard work?	
What happens if something breaks or someone damages my apartment? What should I do?	
Can the landlord come into my apartment anytime he wants to?	
What are the rules about someone living with me? How long can someone visit me (if they aren't living with me)?	
What happens if there is a police call to my apartment or someone in my family is arrested?	
What happens if someone in my apartment uses illegal drugs?	
How long is my lease? What happens if I want to move before my lease is up?	
What happens when my lease expires?	
If I want to move out, how soon do I have to tell my landlord?	
What do I have to do to get my damage deposit back?	