

# Incentives For Landlords to Rent to Households Being Served Through Homelessness Assistance Programs



## Barrier Removal Payment

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The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania is publishing this document as a discussion guide for increasing partnerships with and providing incentives for landlords to rent to households overcoming homelessness.

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### WHY

The rental housing market is competitive. There are more renters in need of a place to live and rent than there are rental units affordable to them.

Therefore, landlords can screen out tenants, making it more difficult for those that have experienced homelessness that often have barriers such as poor credit, no income, income less than three times the rent, past evictions, and having a criminal record.

Homelessness assistance programs can use landlord incentives to help retain landlords and attract new landlords in renting to lower income individuals and families.

These incentives can offset the potential or perceived added time and costs of renting to households overcoming homelessness that may be otherwise screened out by a landlord due to their little to no income, poor rental history, and/or criminal history.

### WHAT

A barrier removal payment compensates a landlord for modifying their screening criteria for a tenant working with a homelessness assistance program.

The barriers that the financial incentive is intending to remove reasons that the landlord will not rent include tenants that is a registered sex offender, has a history of drug use, has bad credit, has had past evictions, or currently has no income.

This program is of considerable value in connecting the hardest to house to community-based affordable housing as quickly as possible, reducing the number of days a person or family has to be unhoused.

## WHO

The barrier removal payment is paid directly to a landlord by the nonprofit or other entity providing the program. The payment is meant to ensure that a landlord in full knowledge of the tenant background modifies their screening criteria to rent their units to low-income households receiving housing assistance from a specific program.

### Case Study

#### *Central Pennsylvania*

The Veteran Multi-Service Center (VMC) operates the Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) programs in 15 counties in central and eastern Pennsylvania. In early 2023 the Veteran's Administration authorized programs to include a landlord incentive to help veterans and their families connect to permanent housing solutions as quickly as possible.

Case Managers and Housing Coordinators work with veterans to identify the barriers that are hardest for clients to overcome and that elongate episodes of homelessness. Once barriers are identified, they are ranked, and a sliding scale was created with the most significant barriers receiving the highest payments. A landlord could potentially receive up to two times the monthly rent, depending on the barriers they are willing to overlook.

Laura Maggiorini, Program Manager, SSFV & HARP at the VMC expanded on the benefit of such a targeted landlord incentive. "We have been able to rapidly house veterans that would typically experience the trauma of homelessness for extended periods. Having a place to lay one's head increases their dignity and commitment to addressing all types of barriers that threaten housing stability. We are seeing smiles instead of down cast eyes!"

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The Housing Alliance is a statewide coalition working to provide leadership and a common voice for policies, practices, and resources to ensure that all Pennsylvanians, especially those with low incomes, have access to safe, decent, and affordable homes.

We promote common-sense solutions to balance PA's housing market and increase the supply of safe, decent homes for people who have low incomes.