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# You Can't Make Me: Why Voluntary Services Work

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# Agenda

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- Introductions
- What are Voluntary Services (VS)?
- Why Voluntary Services?
- Implementing Voluntary Services



## Who is here today?

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Service Providers

Housing Developers

Housing Managers

Consumers/Persons with Lived Experience

Shelter Providers

Transitional Housing Providers

Permanent Supportive Housing Providers

CoC Leads

Advocates

Funders

Consultants

Others?

# What are Voluntary Services?

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- Supportive services (SS) designed to be attractive to participants in a program/housing setting
- Whether to engage in services and service planning is a participant choice
- Engagement in SS is not a condition of continued participation in the housing/program
- Key feature of Housing First model

**Poll: How many of you work in programs where services are voluntary?**

# Why Voluntary Services?

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- Empowers participants by providing choices, trauma-informed
- Not standard practice to require supportive services as a condition of a lease – separate landlord from support role
- In general, psychologically, people resist mandates
- Voluntary services are one of the tenets/principles of the Housing First model, a well-reached evidence-based practice
  - <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Housing-First-Research.pdf>
- Shared Decision-Making Model has been proven through research to improve treatment outcomes
  - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3445676/>
- Internalize motivation to achieve goals – ultimately mandated clients must engage voluntarily for lasting change



# Voluntary Services is *not*....

....anything goes.

Landlord is responsible  
for enforcing the lease

Community & program  
norms/standards for  
safety apply



# Are there any requirements at all?

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- Yes, each person must follow the lease
  - Workers can use the lease to structure their work with people in housing-focused case management
  - Goal for every person to assume and meet full rights and responsibilities of tenancy
  - Teach tenancy skills
  - Offer support to address risks to tenancy/lease violations
  - Problems that threaten tenancy may motivate tenants to use services in order to keep their housing
  - Link solving tenancy issues to using services and achieving long-term goals

# Discussions

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- Turn to the person behind you and introduce yourselves to each other
- Think about a time you needed a service and had to choose among providers of that service.
  - Think primary care doctor, childcare, mechanic, therapist, home improvement contractor, gym, nail/hair salon etc.....
- Discuss what qualities made you select the provider you chose
- What keeps you with them?



# Implementing Voluntary Services

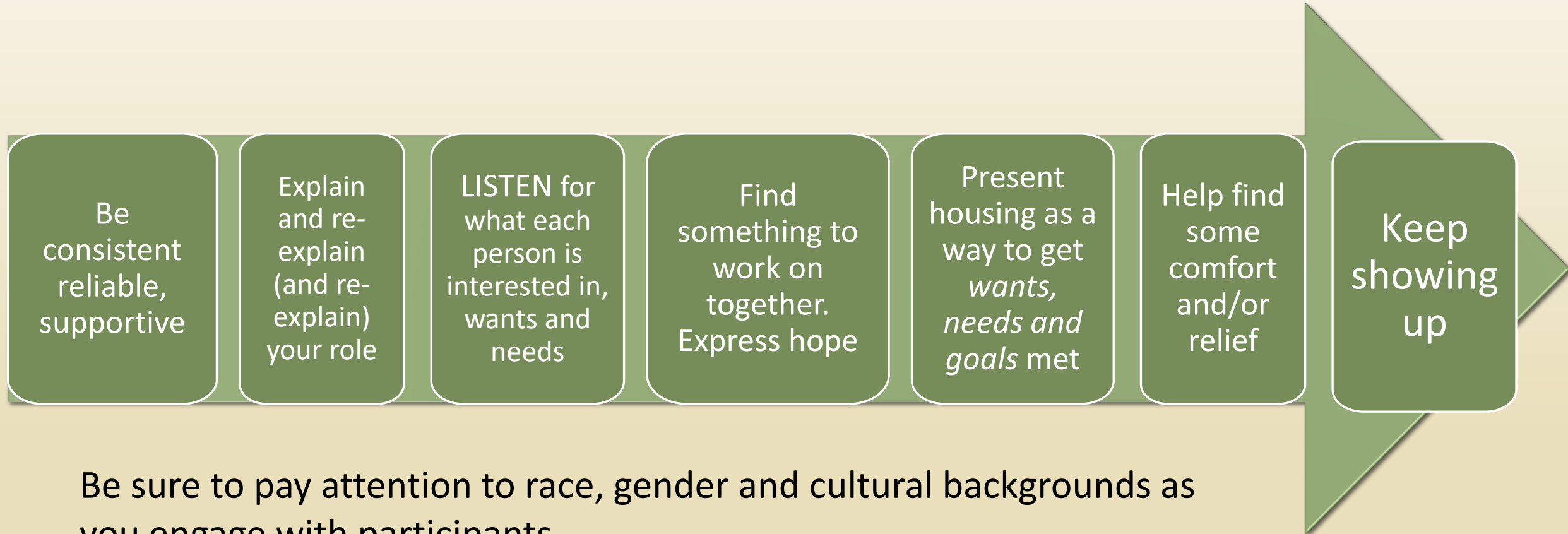
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- Choice to engage is based on person seeing benefit of the interaction benefits
  - Explain provider **and** participant roles and responsibilities.
  - What are you offering that people want?
- Use relationship to work toward mutually agreed upon goals
  - Engage a trusting relationship to work toward something together
  - Recognize skills and successes
  - Convey hope and optimism that people can succeed
  - Build confidence and sense of competence
- Assess and identify personal goals using shared decision-making model
  - Connect goals to housing access and retention; use lease to structure work
  - Engage in an evaluative conversation: what would work best for each person
  - Use Motivational Techniques to help people identify personally meaningful reasons for change, increasing likelihood of success
- Coordinate with landlords/property managers around tenancy risks/violations
  - Teach rights and responsibilities of tenancy



# Engagement and the Offer of Service

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Be sure to pay attention to race, gender and cultural backgrounds as you engage with participants.

# Voluntary Services in Housing First



Quick access to housing while providing needed services. Low barrier to access but high expectations for stable tenancy



Housing is not contingent on compliance with services; but rather lease compliance




Services are voluntary for tenants, but not staff – **assertive engagement**



Services assist in meeting lease obligations and work with landlords & tenants toward that goal

# Teach Obligations of a Lease/Tenancy

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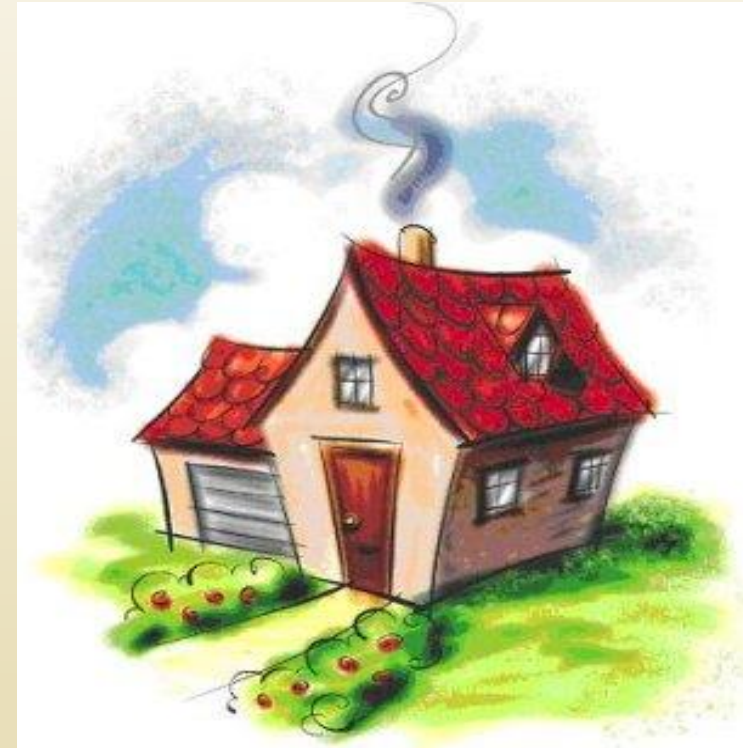
Allow other tenants the peaceful enjoyment of homes
Make required rent payment on time
Keep unit free of health and safety hazards
Only allow people on the lease to live there
No criminal activity in unit, common areas or grounds
Keep utilities current and paid



# Teach Rights of Tenancy

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- Right to privacy – no entering unit without permission or emergency
- Right to safe and well-maintained unit – repairs and safety considerations
- Right to due process – no eviction without proper process



# Active Coordination with Landlords/Property Managers

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Landlords are responsible for consistently enforcing the terms of the lease.

Assertive approach

Issue notices in writing, copy support services providers

Can use stipulations to require services



Services staff provide and arrange for services to maintain housing.

Function as advocates for tenants.

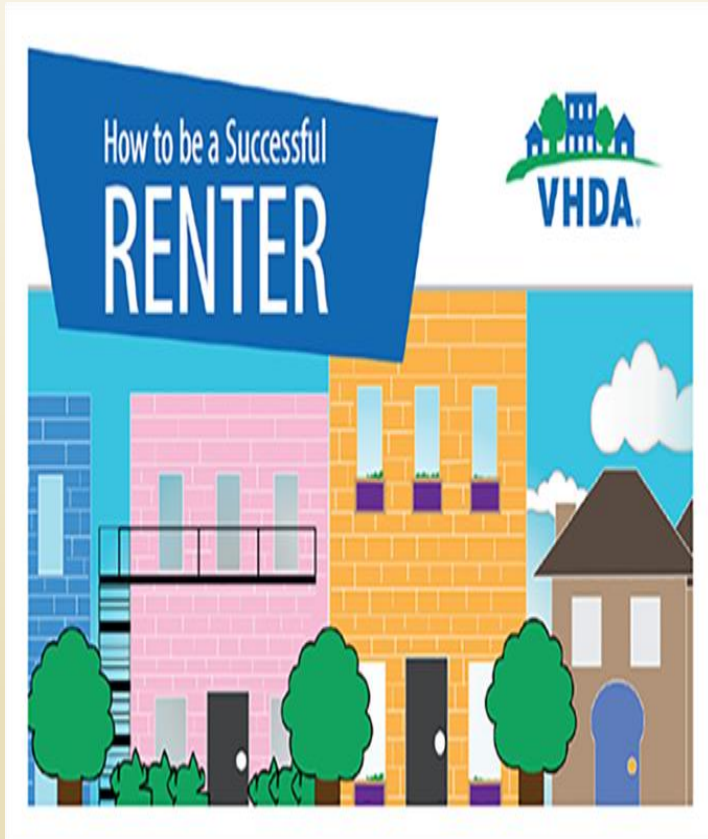
Teach/assist to meet tenancy obligations

Teach negotiation and problem-solving skills with the landlord

**Monthly check-ins with landlords highly recommended!**

# Resources for Tenancy Education

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- PA Resource for Tenants:  
[Consumer-Guide-Tenant-Landlord-Rights-OAG - State of PA](#)
- A resource to teach tenancy skills:  
[RentWise Workbook: University of Nebraska](#)

**Poll: Tenancy Education**

# Discussions

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- Turn to the person next to you and introduce yourselves to each other
- Think about a time you chose to end a service or changed the provider of a service
- What made you change?
- Could they have done something differently to keep you engaged?





# Purpose of Engagement - Get agreement on something to work on – a goal

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- Goal setting is an individualized process
- Work from each person's own experience and values.
- Elicit and listen to the person and reflect back to clarify and check understanding.
- Empathize about goal setting and unmet goals.
- Listen to people's perception of past successes and struggles in reaching goals.
- List and discuss strengths that may facilitate reaching goals.
- Connect goals to stable housing.
- Use success on service plan goals to build confidence for making other changes.

# Setting Goals

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- Goals set as a team of participant and worker – Shared Decision-Making
- “So that” principle – connect to housing stability
- Focus on the issues that affect stability in the community – base on the current crisis and previous episodes of homelessness/ housing instability
- Immediate and longer-term goals clear
  - Steps to reach goal clearly defined and measurable
  - Identify needed connections to sustainable resources and supports



# Changing Expectations

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## Strong Expectation that Person becomes Integral Part of Community

- Help assume role and meet expectations of tenancy and community
- Life has structure and purpose and activity
- Develop and recover valued life roles
- Help people believe that these things are possible – convey hope and optimism



Final Thoughts? Questions? Comments?