

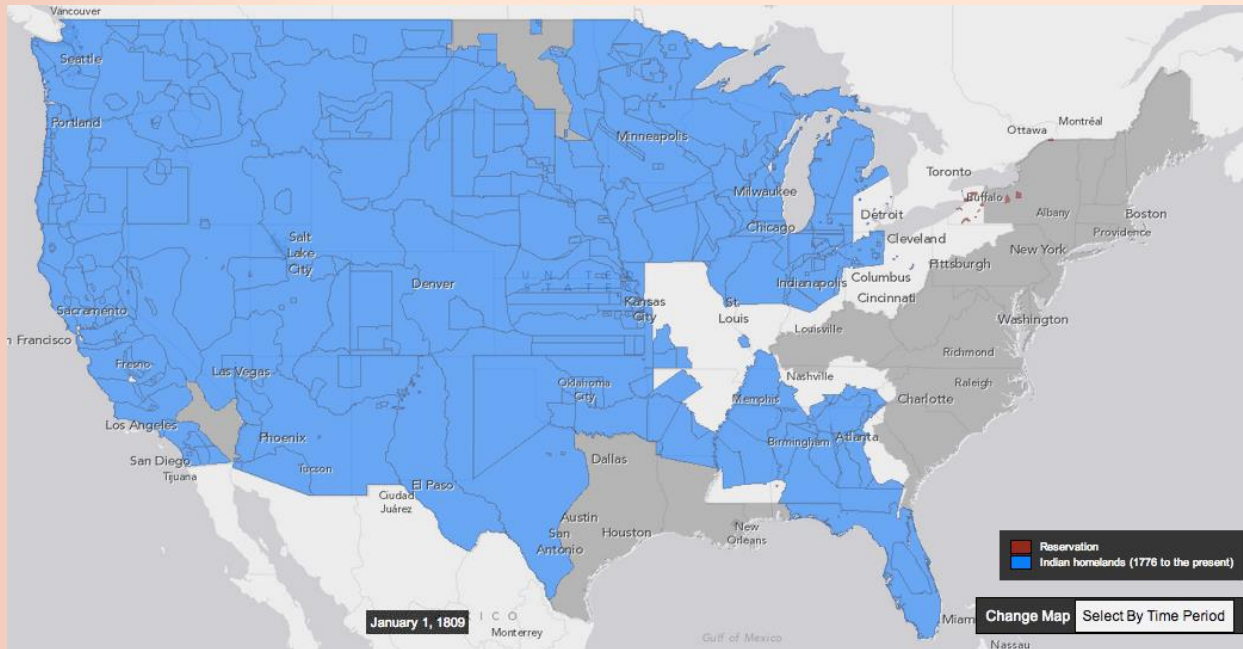


Eviction Prevention in Supportive Housing Programs

VINCE HENEGHAN – HE/HIM

JAKE BRADLEY – THEY/THEM

Land and First Nations Acknowledgment:

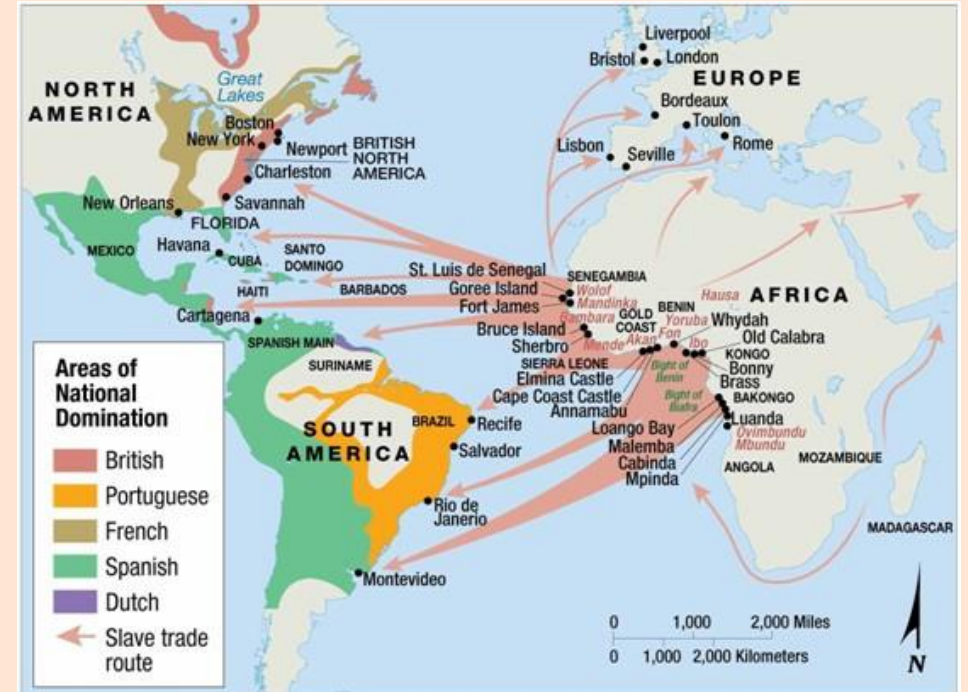


We honor the history and contributions of Native peoples in this land, and we recognize a legacy of broken treaties and covenants, and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.



Acknowledgment of Human Enslavement:

We acknowledge the kidnapping and enslavement of people from the continent of Africa and recognize that people of the African diaspora lost the knowledge of native languages and culture through that process. We acknowledge that as a nation, we have not yet begun to right the hundreds of years of oppression of the people who built this country with free labor and who continue to endure social and economic injustices. We acknowledge that we live and work within a system that was not designed for everyone and continues to result in the increased abuse and death of Black individuals and communities.



Invocation of our Personal Values:

equity

inclusion

hospitality

service

compassion

kindness

Anti-oppression

understanding

love

harmony

justice

Eviction Prevention Workshop Overview:

Welcome! Today, we will cover:

- An introduction to the concept of Eviction Prevention
- A quick review of main principles of Housing First, Harm Reduction, Trauma-Informed Care and Motivational Interviewing
- The main TEST of acuity of an issue related to housing security
- Eviction Prevention as a practice
- Assets-based, proactive, contextual troubleshooting
- Scenarios for discussion



The Concept of Eviction Prevention:



- Eviction Prevention is an intentional intervention designed to assist a participant with achieving and maintaining housing stability.
- It is a collaborative approach that seeks to find the optimal pathways for addressing participants' needs while meeting the obligations of their lease.

Key Components of a Successful Eviction Prevention Program:

- 🍃 Individualized
- 🍃 Collaborative
- 🍃 Proactive
- 🍃 Trauma-Informed
- 🍃 Strengths-based
- 🍃 Intentional
- 🍃 Focused on Harm Reduction
- 🍃 Creative
- 🍃 Solutions-focused
- 🍃 Built on earning trust
- 🍃 Involves a separation of duties



Trauma-Informed Care:

- The large majority of people we serve have experienced trauma in the form of sexual, emotional, and physical violence, exploitation, rejection, and often extremely impoverished and unstable backgrounds and support networks, in addition to many other losses and harms.
- This trauma has had profound implications for people's development.



Trauma-Informed Care:

- Our understanding of trauma and its impact helps us grapple with and respond sensitively and productively to people's conduct and presentation.
- Trauma-informed care also guides our efforts to support healing and a sense of "safe space."
- We cultivate and maintain calm routine in our service spaces, and stay aware of how people may experience post-trauma responses to triggers in their surroundings.



Trauma-Informed Care:



- We build supportive relationships and rapport, and cultivate and celebrate community and resilience.
- We work to promote a sense of informed choice, autonomy, and dignity for our clients, and are proactive in managing hopes and expectations.



Trauma-Informed Care:



- We are patient and sensitive in asking our clients for information, especially when the relationship is new or they might be under elevated stress.
- We respect the coping mechanisms people employ, and resist temptations to push them to disclose or process painful events or vulnerable subjects until they choose to, and unless we can orchestrate comprehensive care and support for them.



The Importance of Earning Trust:

- ❖ Earning the participant's trust is paramount for successful Eviction Prevention.
- ❖ Participants often have good reasons to be distrustful toward others, so make the effort to earn their trust in order to achieve collaboration.



Separation of Duties:



- One important aspect of earning trust is separating the task of Eviction Prevention from the other services provided for the participant. The staff member doing eviction prevention should not be their primary case manager/service provider. This is because Eviction Prevention inherently involves "rule enforcement," and can create confusion for participants.

Housing First:

- Housing is a human right, and all people deserve a safe, stable, legal place to live!
- It is neither ethical nor efficacious to expect people to pursue or accomplish health, sobriety, employment, educational, or any other goals while remaining homeless, or as a prerequisite for acquiring nor sustaining housing.



Housing First:



- All people who are experiencing homelessness are “housing ready,” and it is the job and mission of our staff to dismantle obstacles and to shelter and house people as quickly as possible, and then rehouse them as necessary.
- Health, vocational, educational or other goals can be engaged once a client has stable safety and basic needs, and according to a plan and pace a client identifies.



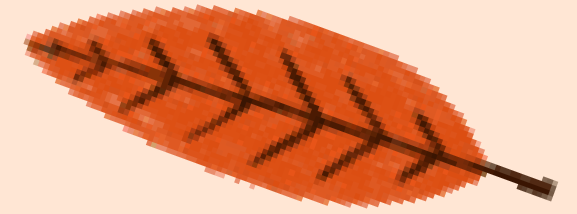
Housing First:

- We must not eject people from our programs unless we have concluded, after **exhaustive** efforts at remedy, that a person cannot be safely sheltered, housed, or served in the program.
- We prioritize our time and resources to those who are LEAST likely to acquire and maintain housing on their own without our supports and advocacy.

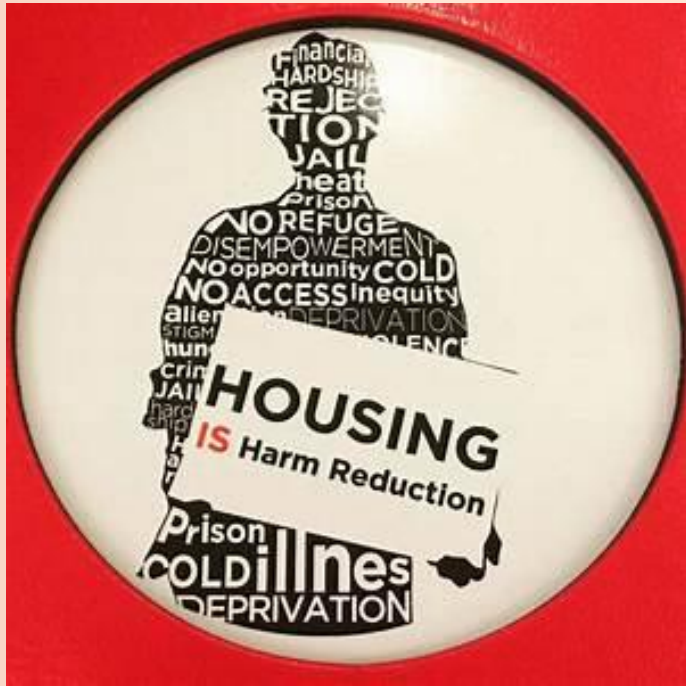


Harm Reduction:

- Harm Reduction centers on “meeting people where they are,” focusing on practical solutions and basic needs, and supporting each person’s self-care efforts and right to choose.
- Harm (including homelessness) is not necessarily a direct and automatic consequence of someone’s engaging in stigmatized behaviors, and we propagate information and supplies to reduce harm as much as possible.



Harm Reduction:



- Much of the harm that does occur is caused or exacerbated by shame, stigma, misinformation, and disenfranchisement compounded by abstinence-only thinking and programming.
- We work to identify and eradicate double-standards that exist between housed and unhoused people, or between those who are housed with or without agency connection.

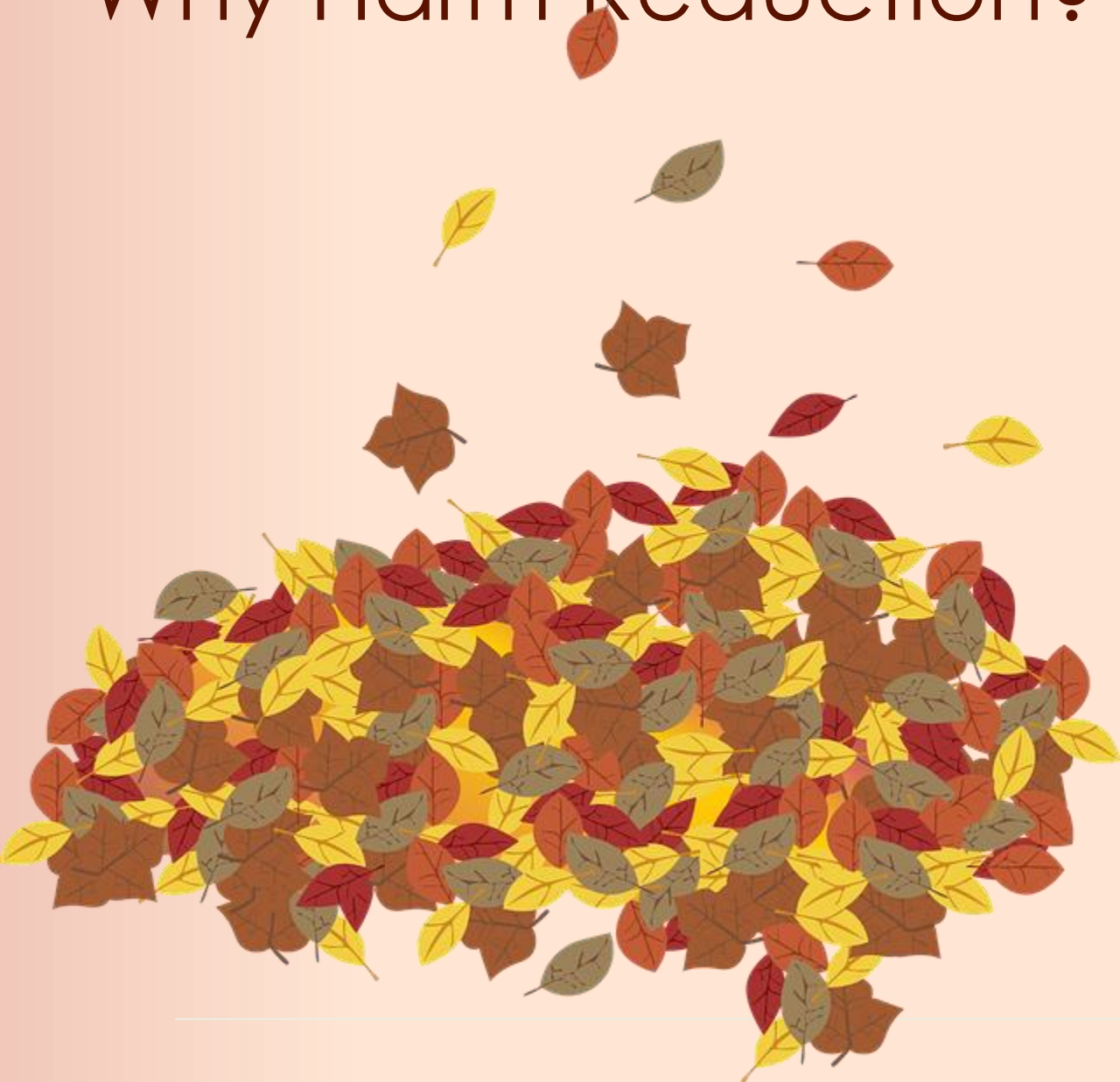


Harm Reduction:

- Abstinence from risky or stigmatized behaviors or circumstances is not the goal of our interventions, unless the client chooses that goal.
- We constantly seek to learn from each other, our clients, and the massive body of evidence demonstrating the ethical basis and efficacy of Harm Reduction.



Why Harm Reduction?



- Our goal is **NOT** to eliminate "problematic behaviors!"
- Our goal **IS** to prevent one harmful outcome stemming from a behavior
- Harm reduction "streamlines" our approaches so that they are laser focused on mitigating the risk of being harmed by an eviction.

The first question to consider:



- ❧ "Is this behavior literally placing this person at risk of becoming homeless in the immediate future?"
- ❧ If the answer is "No", then an Eviction Prevention intervention is not required. If the answer is "Yes", then it is. If the answer is "Maybe", then proactive steps should be taken to mitigate the risk of it becoming a "yes".





Eviction Prevention as an Intervention:

- ✦ It is extremely important to establish right from the outset the shared goal of helping the client stay housed.
- ✦ This is because their housing stability cannot be a goal of our own that we are projecting onto a client who doesn't actually want to remain housed.

Eviction Prevention as an Intervention:

- It is certainly possible that a client truly doesn't wish to remain housed anymore, or that it isn't their only or highest priority. For such a client, they may change their mind once they become homeless, at which time we would work to rehouse them. However, we need to respect their autonomy.



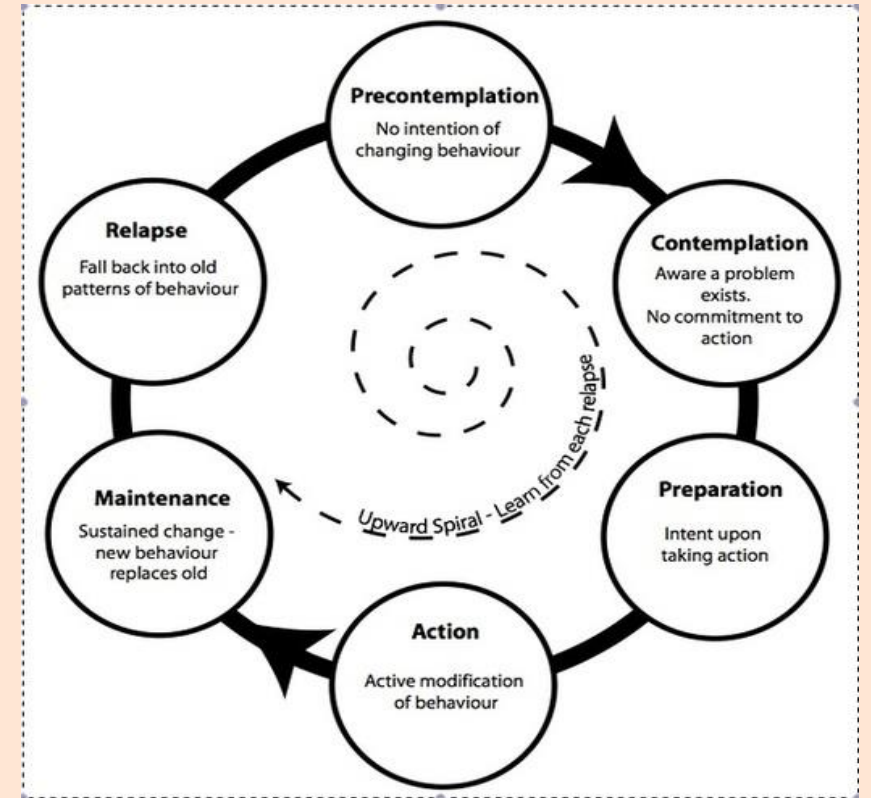
Motivational Interviewing:

- Motivational Interviewing addresses ambivalence that traps us in self-defeating behaviors.
- Ambivalence is normal. People always have compelling reasons to maintain the status quo, in addition to reasons to initiate and sustain change.
- A person's reasons for not changing are seldom to do with a lack of knowledge, nor a lack of awareness of risks of not changing.



Motivational Interviewing:

- Motivation ebbs and flows from one time or context to the next, but is intrinsic and personal, and must be evoked rather than imposed.
- People only really change when they believe that they can, and that the change will serve them better than not changing.
- The ultimate goal of Motivational Interviewing is to create a situation in which individuals **persuade themselves to change**.



Understanding why the behavior is occurring:



- ☛ All behaviors are an attempt to get a need met. Any interventions that seek to alter a behavior without seeking to meet the underlying need that behavior is intended to meet are interventions that are destined to fail.
- ☛ The participant is the expert on why they are doing what they do, so listen to them.
- ☛ Work together to come up with alternative ways to get the need met that do not violate the lease.

Translating the Rules:

- ✦ Often, participants aren't even fully aware of the possibility that a behavior may violate their lease.
- ✦ Explain the lease terms in plain, simple language.
- ✦ Whenever possible, reframe the lease terms as a benefit to the participant (reason for quiet hours, etc.).
- ✦ This intervention can be done at every initial and ongoing lease signing to prevent lease violations that occur from simply not knowing the rules.



Creative Solutions:



- ☛ Sometimes getting a need met without violating the lease terms seems impossible, but it often really only requires a little creativity!
- ☛ For example, you're working with a person who is punching holes in their wall to vent their anger. You've tried setting up a punching bag, but they shared that, for them, they only feel the tension and anger get released when their hand busts through the wall. What might you do?

Creative Solutions (continued):

- ❖ One possible solution would be to get a bookshelf and screw some drywall onto it. Then, when the person gets angry, they can punch a hole through that false wall rather than the wall of their apartment.
- ❖ In this intervention, the behavior doesn't actually change. The only thing that has changed is that the risk of eviction stemming from the behavior is eliminated by virtue of creating a false wall.



Things to Avoid:



- ✦ Getting into a power struggle
- ✦ "Rescuing" the participant
- ✦ Getting angry at a "bad landlord" on behalf of the tenant
 - ✦ This increases the chances of an eviction/lease non-renewal, so don't **ever** do this
- ✦ Getting distracted from the goal of preventing eviction
- ✦ Being prescriptive

Things to Do:

- 🍃 Empower the participant by providing them with choices.
- 🍃 Let the participant lead the process.
- 🍃 Provide support.
- 🍃 Allow participants to make mistakes, because we learn from mistakes.
- 🍃 Use motivational interviewing techniques when participant is deprioritizing housing.



Let's Practice!



Scenarios to discuss in groups:

- ☛ Challenges and complaints brought about by guests / visitors
- ☛ Hoarding
- ☛ Poor apartment conditions or damage caused in the unit
- ☛ Negative neighbor attention or interactions
- ☛ Unacceptable levels of noise, especially late at night
- ☛ Non-payment of rent

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the issue that you and/or your client are struggling with?
2. Is this issue literally endangering the person's housing acquisition or retention right now? Or is this an attempt at early intervention?
3. Is this issue acutely compromising the CURRENT safety and wellbeing of the person? Do THEY perceive / affirm this for themselves? How might you determine if / when the situation is worsening?
4. What are rules, policies, or your own or others' behavior that are escalating this problem or making it worse?
5. What sorts of emergencies or crises might be associated with or spring from this issue? How might you plan for and/or prevent those now?
6. What survival functions, needs, or harm reduction aims does it seem the person is addressing with the behaviors or situations that concern you? How is the person already reducing or attempting to reduce harm in their life?
7. What are some incremental improvements you might be able to negotiate with the client / Landlord? What are some harm reduction strategies you can support the client in trying?
8. How might you reduce harm even if the person doesn't want to change anything?
9. Are there any kinds of supplies, gear, equipment, tools or resources that might help preserve the client's safety and housing? What sorts of training or resources do you need to help come up with solutions?
10. Who are other stakeholders you could brainstorm with or get support from? Can you engage in case consultation with your supervisor, coworkers, or others in the region?

Scenarios:

Challenges and complaints brought about by guests / visitors:

Lisa (she/her) has been housed for about 3 months, but her landlord is threatening to evict her due to problems with her visitors. Her boyfriend is pretty “pushy,” and she doesn’t feel like she can prevent his coming whenever he wants, but he gets very drunk and neighbors have complained that he’s disruptive. Her friends are either homeless, new to housing, or otherwise in flux, and she is not willing to “turn her back on them,” but sometimes they get rowdy or come and go a lot, and the neighbors are complaining about that, too. The worker has tried to convince Lisa that she needs to turn away the visitors, but she’s not willing to talk about it. She doesn’t want to lose her housing, but feels resigned to that if it’s what happens.

Scenarios:

Hoarding:

Your client **Haley** (he/him) LOVES books, magazines and newspapers. He saves articles to discuss with you every time he sees you, and also has articles to discuss with everyone else he knows. He probably doesn't actually read very well, and almost certainly doesn't read the books he collects. He has two storage lockers full of books, and also his whole apartment is now filled with books, magazines and newspapers. He has a very hard time getting around due to a broken leg that didn't heal well, arthritis, open wounds on his legs that won't heal, and the loss of several toes to frostbite. It seems likely that he depends on the books and newspapers to give him plenty to talk about with others and to feel smart and well-read, as he is socially anxious and often inclined to feel bad about himself. Haley is very likeable and wants to be cooperative, and his landlord is generally content with him so far, but you have noticed mice, ants, and mold in his apartment during recent home visits.

Scenarios:

Negative neighbor attention or interactions:

Little John (he/him) recently got housed in a scattered site, mixed-income building through a PSH program. He's a friendly and outgoing guy who takes pride in the fact that he is "no nonsense" and doesn't "try to pretend he's better than other people." He is used to having had a lot of people around him while he was unhoused and mostly unsheltered for many years, and he often hung out at busy spots "just to people watch and socialize." Now that he is housed, he often sits on the entry stoop of the building and greets everyone who enters and exits. He sometimes asks people, including kids, what their name is, which unit they live in, etc. People have been increasingly rude and confrontational with him, and have complained to the landlord about "that homeless guy" or "that bum." They complain about Little John's appearance and hygiene, and insist that he is always drunk, though they admit they haven't ever seen him drinking. The landlord calls you to complain, and says she's afraid people are going to move out of other units, or call the police more often, or complain to someone and get her in trouble.

Scenarios:

Unacceptable levels of noise, especially late at night:

Landry (he/him) is a PSH resident who has serious PTSD from his combat tours in the military, and from years of life on the streets. He is highly motivated to maintain housing, but gets very frightened when alone, especially at night. He believes that there are rats and bats “and other critters” in his apartment, and in the walls, and above the ceiling, and below the floor. He shouts at them, swats at the walls, floor and ceiling, and drops or throws heavy objects in attempts to make the critters go away and leave him alone. There has been some damage to the floors and walls, but the biggest problem is that neighbors have complained to the landlord, who is threatening to evict him. There have been some confrontations as Landry argues with neighbors and the landlord about whether or not there is a pest problem, and the neighbors have started calling Landry “crazy,” and the landlord is suggesting he is dangerous to others because of his mental status. It’s late fall, and the turning on of the building’s noisy steam radiators has only escalated Landry’s fears and all the repercussions.

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Scenarios:

Non-Payment of rent:

Jodi (she/her) is a 47-year-old female-identifying person in a rapid rehousing program. She has had multiple previous evictions for non-payment of rent and is currently two months behind on her portion of the rent. The landlord has reached out to you to try to assist. The landlord is willing to work with the participant if they will begin paying current rent and making reasonable payment toward the back rent.

The participant says they are unable to pay their portion of the rent, which is calculated at 30% of their adjusted income, because they have too many other expenses. You start working on a budget with the person and, while reviewing their accounts with them, you notice that they have an autopay set up for a storage unit that is \$50 more expensive than their monthly rent calculation.

Scenarios:

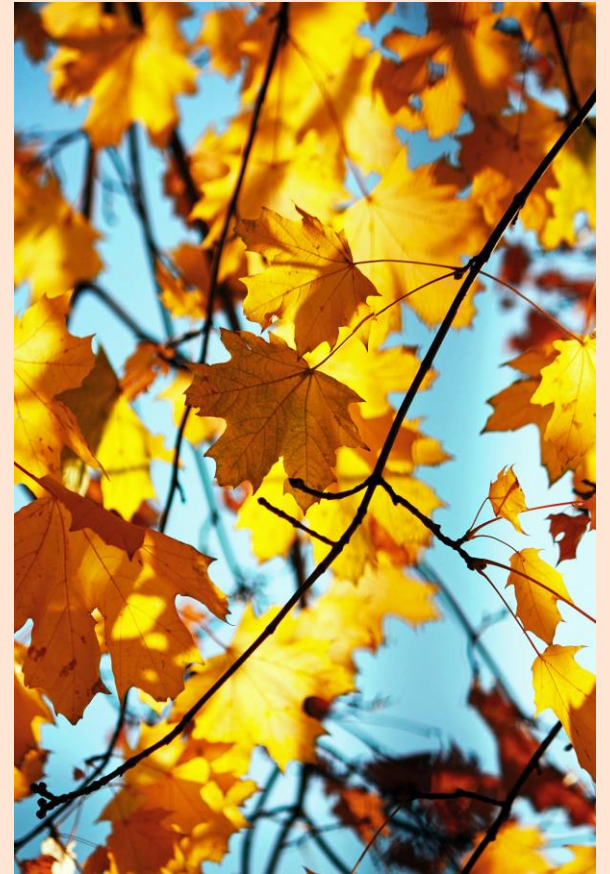
Poor Apartment Conditions or Damage to Unit:

Raymond (he/him) is a 60-year-old male-identifying veteran with 20+ years of chronic homelessness. His prior living situation was alone in a forest preserve where he resided for over 10 years. He has been diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder and experiences frequent auditory and visual hallucinations as well as paranoid symptoms. He also experiences bouts of intense rage where he will punch holes into his walls. He says that punching the walls provides him with “a release for his anger” and says, “Punching the walls is better than punching a person, isn't it?”

There have been a few occasions where neighbors have complained to the landlord about screaming and loud banging coming from his unit during daytime hours. Overall, his apartment tends to be cluttered and messy, and he will often choose to live outdoors again on the days when the weather is nicer, sometimes leaving his apartment vacant for a week or more at a time.

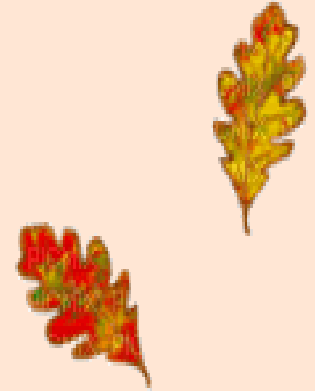
Some tools that might be useful:

- 🍃 Guest / Visitor Plan
- 🍃 Crisis Plan (and non-crisis action steps)
- 🍃 Weekly Plan of Meaningful Daily Activities
- 🍃 Realistic Monthly Budget
- 🍃 Housing Pros and Cons Worksheet
- 🍃 Readiness Ruler / 10 Point Scale
- 🍃 Decisional Balance Sheet
- 🍃 Worst Case Scenario Worksheet
- 🍃 Know Your Legal Rights training or poster
- 🍃 Instruction pages with pictures about how things work in the apartment



You can get all these things and more from us [at this link!](#)

Questions?



Thanks for your participation!



Our contact info:



🍁 Vince Heneghan – mvheneghan@impactbehavioral.org

🍁 Jake Bradley – jake@suburbancook.org