



Housing Retention: Helping Your Client Maintain Their Housing

Welcome & Introductions

- Review Zoom guidelines
- Thanks to BHDDH and our BHHP Training Group, also Ashley Bunker & Nicole Interlini, former Housing First interns!
- Please put your name, organization and email in the Chat
- This training has a companion online [Tool Kit](#)

Small group discussion

- Watch [Sam Tsemberis clip](#) on role of the case manager in Housing First
- In small groups:
 - Your name
 - Your organization
 - Your role at your organization
- Your reaction/response to the video clip
- Share with the larger group

Review Agenda

- New Home
- Tenant Rights & Responsibilities
- HUD/State Requirements
- Household maintenance
- Finances of a new home
- Eviction prevention
- Resources section



Your client is moving in!

- Case Manager post move in

- Important that the client knows who their Case Manager is post move in
- Remind the person that the Housing First program requires a weekly visit
- Myth of “We shouldn’t work harder than our client”

- Contact information for the client

- Put on fridge the housing/ landlord/property manager contact numbers for the client
- Make another list of key numbers for them to have

Understanding the Lease

- Take the time to go over the [lease](#) with your client
 - Make a copy for the client
 - Remind them it is a legal and binding agreement
- Understanding pet policy
- Understanding smoking policy
- Understanding “guest” policy of the lease
- Helping your client set boundaries about guests
- Squatter’s Rights – how this can negatively impact your client
- Trash and recycle days

Understanding the lease

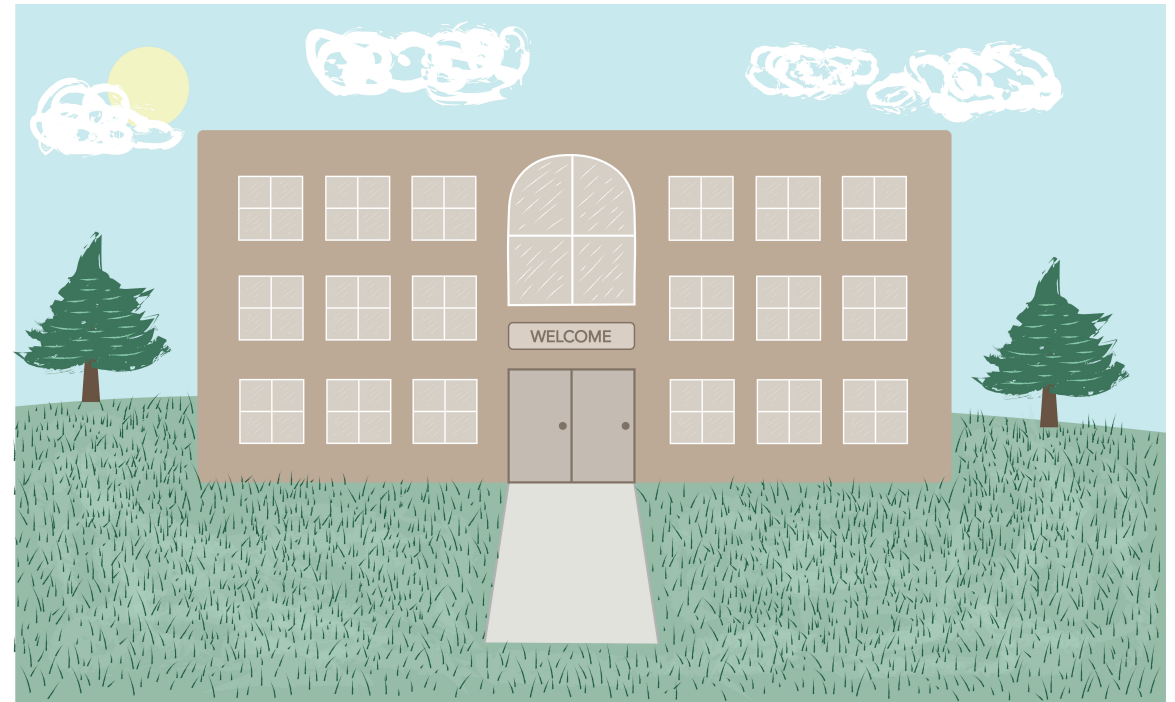
- In Rhode Island lease becomes month to month after year
 - Unless otherwise negotiated the first lease is a yearly lease which becomes month to month after the first year
- If after the first year the landlord doesn't want to rent to your client there is a process for him/her to vacate your client
 - 30-day notice of termination is required
 - Has to be sent in writing by certified mail
- Good idea to have your client be in touch months before year anniversary to discuss with landlord the upcoming year

Renter's Insurance

- Explain to client about Renter's Insurance
 - Why someone might want to explore getting Renter's Insurance
- Where to get Renter's Insurance
 - Progressive Insurance
 - AAA
 - Geico
- Help your client make that call

Making it their home

- Making the new apartment “home”
- Basics that the new apartment should have
 - Page 59 of Housing First book
 - [Move-in check-list](#)
- How to make it feel like “home”
 - Help clients get those items too
- Ask your client what would make the apartment feel like home
- Assist client in making the house a “home”



Mapping the new community

- Helping clients get to know their community
 - Bus stops
 - Grocery stores
 - Place of worship
 - NA/AA group
 - Library
 - Bank
 - Farmer's Market
 - Places to eat
 - Community spots



Building Relationships



- **With your landlord/property manager**
 - Make sure your client has the landlord's contact
 - Introduce client and landlord
 - Assertive/aggressive
- **With your neighbors**
 - Don't have to be best friends but be friendly
 - Golden rule applies here!
- **Harm reduction**
 - Don't invite trouble

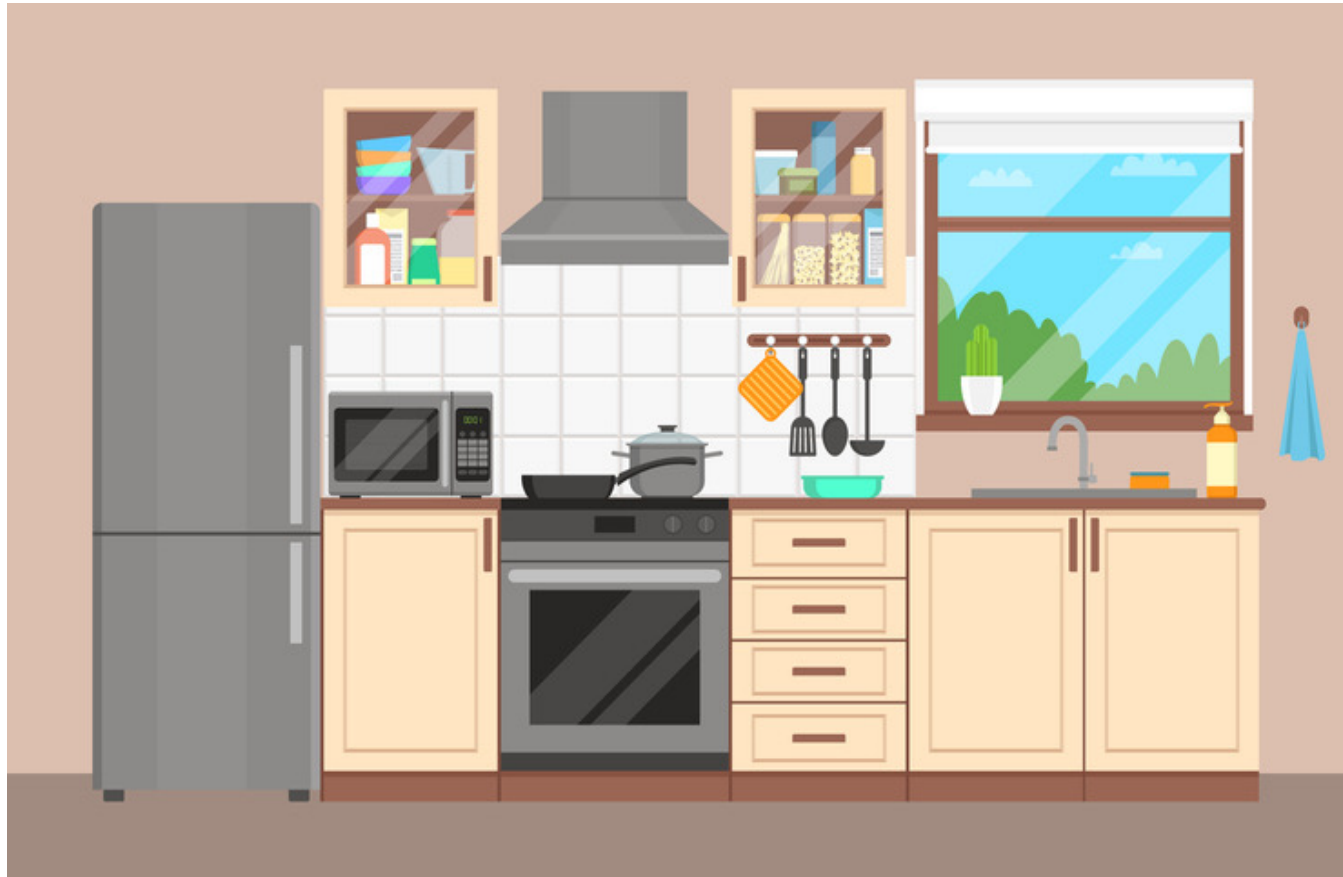
Tenant Rights & Responsibilities

- Important to let your client know they have rights as a tenant
- Share with your client the [Landlord Act](#) and [Fair Housing Act](#)
- Download and print out a copy of the [Landlord/Tenant Handbook](#) for your client
- Rhode Island's new [Source of Income law](#)
- 2-way street – also a good opportunity to also talk about the responsibilities that come with being a tenant

Tenant Rights & Responsibilities

- Your client has the right to “peacefully enjoy” their apartment
- Your client has the right to a “safe apartment”
 - Safe heating, safe electrical and safe plumbing
- Landlord must provide outside garbage bins
- The landlord does not have the right to enter the apartment at any time
 - Law requires 48-hour notice unless there is an emergency, fire, smoke or running water

Code Requirements - Kitchen



- [Sink in good working condition with both hot and cold water](#)
- Plumbing must be in good working order (no leaks)
- Cabinets for food storage
- Connections to hook up stove and refrigerator
- At least two electrical outlets
- At least one electric light fixture

Code Requirements - Bathroom



- [Toilet in good working condition](#)
- Sink in good working condition
- Tub or shower in good working condition
- Sink and tub must have working hot and cold water
- Plumbing must work
- Adequate ventilation
- At least one electric light fixture

Code Requirements – Doors & Windows



- Every habitable room must have one window that can be opened
- Windows must have screens and storm windows when your client moves in
- Shade or blinds must be provided on bedroom and bathroom windows (the tenant is responsible for them if they need to be replaced after that point)

Code Requirements – Lights & Electric



- All habitable rooms and kitchen must have at least two electrical outlets
- Light switch in each room and hallway
- There must be adequate lighting in all public hallways and stairways
- Outlets and electrical fixtures must be safe and up to code

Code Requirements – Heat



- Heat equipment (boiler, etc.) must be in good working order so that apartments can be heated to at least 68 degrees F
- [Unvented flame space heaters are illegal](#)
- Heat and hot water bills are the landlord's responsibility unless otherwise agreed to in the lease

Code Requirements – Structural



- There must be at least two safe exits for each apartment above the first floor in case of fire
- No large cracks in walls, floors or ceilings
- Stairs and porches must be in safe and good condition
- No bugs, mice, rats, etc.
- What to do if the unit is not up to code?

Small group discussion

- In small groups discuss the following:
 - How to involve clients in becoming active participants in making sure their new unit is up to code
 - How to involve other staff/case managers not just your “housing person”
 - How to make all this information useful and practical?
- Share back with the larger group

If there are problems with the unit

- Your client should contact the landlord/property to fix the problem
- Give them a reasonable amount of time to resolve the issue
- Encourage your client to make requests in writing and keep a copy (for example texting the landlord)
- Remind your client that the landlord is responsible for keeping all appliances that provide heat, hot water, gas and electricity in good repair
- Depending on the client's lease, the landlord might be responsible for paying for the service – have them check their rental agreement!
- Encourage your client to contact the property manager/landlord and you as the case manager if there are major repairs that need to be made

What if the landlord doesn't make repair?

- If the landlord won't make a minor repair, your client can have it done themselves and deduct that amount from their rent
- Keep in mind, the most they can deduct is \$125.00
- Before they do this, they must make the request in writing (keep a copy) and give the landlord 20 days to make the repair (except in the case of an emergency)
- If your client is going to get repairs done themselves, they must keep all receipts from work and supplies (one copy for your client and one copy for the landlord)

Responsibilities of your client/tenant

- Under RI Law...
 - Must keep apartment clean, sanitary and safe
 - Dispose of trash in proper receptacles
 - Keep all plumbing clear
 - Use plumbing, electrical, heating, etc. in a reasonable manner
 - Not deliberately destroy, deface, or remove property without permission
 - Not conduct themselves in a manner that prevents their neighbors from peaceful enjoyment
 - Refrain from using the apartment for the manufacture, sale or delivery of controlled substances
 - Refrain from crime of violence on the premises

Advice if your client moves to another unit



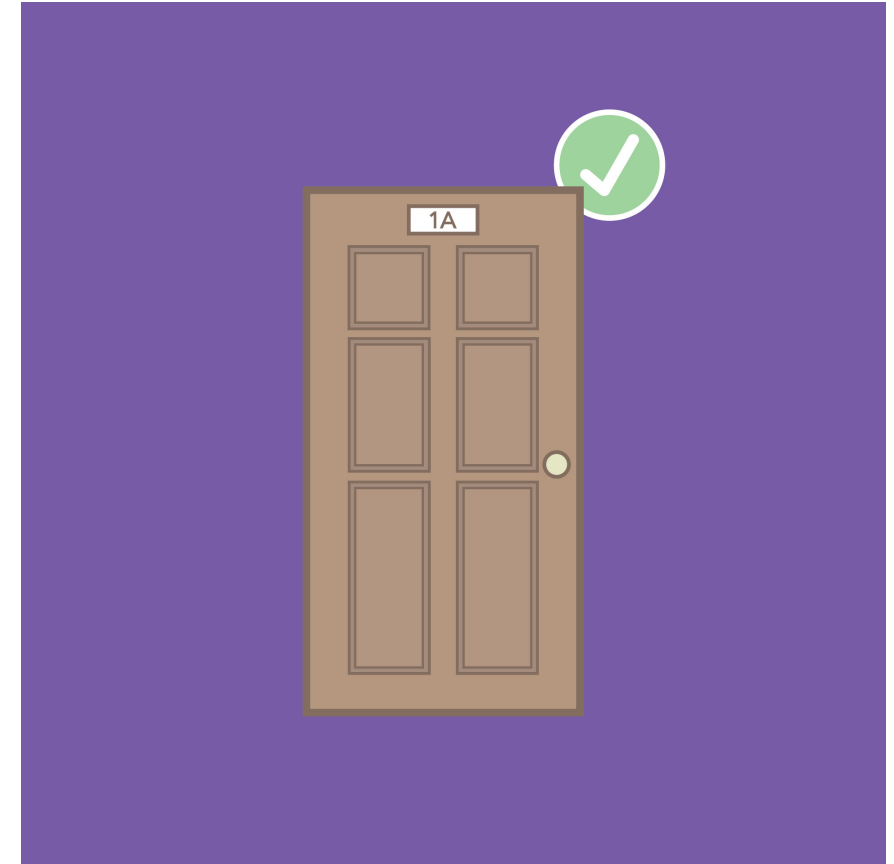
- Leave the apartment clean
- Take pictures of the apartment (dated)
- Do a walk-thru with the landlord
- Give the landlord your new address
- Make sure to have your mail forwarded

HUD/State Requirements

- Recertification is critical!
- Forms can be found at <https://www.rihousing.com/continuum-of-care/>
- When your client is awarded a rental voucher it is critical to find out what type of voucher they have
 - Recertification must happen yearly during month of move-in
 - Can be done 30 days prior to the due date
- Annual Recertification involves [verifying income and assets](#) of your client
 - Talk to your program manager/team lead/supervisor about when the recertification is due
- [Interim Recertification](#) happens when a client's income changes during the year
- Clients can lose their voucher if this isn't done – subsidy will be cut!

HUD/State Requirements

- The Annual Inspection is also critical!
- Called the Annual HQS (Housing Quality Standards)
- Forms: <https://www.rihousing.com/continuum-of-care/>
- Inspection done at the same time as the Recertification
- [Annual Inspection](#) verifies the quality of the unit
- Clients can lose their voucher if this isn't done – subsidy will be cut!



Household Maintenance

- Important to talk with your client about the importance of keeping the rental unit in good shape including tips such as:
 - Declutter!
 - Spend 5 minutes picking up each day.
 - Clean as you go.
 - Do not buy things you do not need!
 - Designate a day each week to be your “cleaning day”.
 - Designate 1 day a month for a “deep cleaning”.
 - Always have a multi purpose cleaner, Windex, paper towel, and cleaning rags on hand.

Safety with Appliances



- **Common Refrigerator Safety Hazards**
 - **Fire** clean the dust under, behind, and in the vents.
 - **Foodborne illness** maintain a clean fridge, wiping down weekly with any anti-bacterial cleaner, or wipe.
 - **Tipping**
- **Common Microwave Safety Hazards**
 - **Radiation exposure** make sure that the door seal and lock work well. Be wary if the door doesn't seal tightly or if you notice any warping. Sparks during operation can be another sign that something is wrong with a seal or that a vent may be blocked by grease or other food byproducts. Always clean after use, wiping away food waster or splattered grease/sauce.
- **Electrical hazards do not ignore sparks!**

Safety with Appliances

- **Common Stove Safety Hazards**

- **Use your back burners first** so hot pots are further from the edge.
- **Keep an eye on your pans** When a pan is on high heat with nothing or just oil in it, it will heat up very quickly, and can be a fire risk where the oil or grease or even lining on the pan could ignite; cast iron or carbon steel pan without any plastic or wood parts is the way to go. Also, do not forget to wear your oven mitts!
- **Do not start cooking something and fall asleep!**

- **Common Small Appliance Safety Hazards**

- **Unplug Appliances** Avoid an [electrical fire](#) by making sure that all appliances are in good working order and no wires are frayed. Don't overload electrical outlets, either. In fact, it's a smart practice to unplug small appliances like toasters and coffee makers when not in use.
- **Clean** food particles from toaster or toaster oven.
- **Avoid** placing appliances near water!
- **Metal** can not go in the microwave (silverware, tin foil etc.)

Fires and Floods



How can we avoid them?

- Do not attempt to fix leaks or electrical problems on your own – seek help from staff or a licensed professional
- Keep flammable objects away from open flames and heat sources
- If you are using a space heater, keep away from flammable items and make sure you read and understand all safety directions
- Make sure you have smoke AND carbon monoxide detectors
- If you notice small flooding or dripping from another apartment, call your landlord or property manager



Common causes of flooding

- Broken pipes
- Poor drainage
- Clogged rain gutters
- Malfunctioning appliances (broken water heater, dishwasher, washing machine, refrigerators, toilets) – some things may need repairs
- Damaged foundation
- The weather
- Letting the faucet run unattended

Tips for Avoiding Grease fires



- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, boiling or broiling food. The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- Be alert and do not use the stove or stovetop if you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol.
- Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stovetop.
- Remove as much moisture as possible from the food before putting it in hot oil. Do not put frozen foods into hot grease.
- Keep the grease at the recommended temperature. If you see any smoke or the oil smells, it is an indication that it is too hot. Immediately turn off the burner to let it cool down.
- Heat the oil slowly.
- Add food gently to prevent splatter.
- Keep a lid near the pan you're cooking with so that it is accessible if a fire starts.
- Always keep children away from the stove while cooking.

Pests & Rodents



The best way to control a [pest infestation](#) is to prevent it from happening!

- Keep food sealed tightly.
- Clean crumbs and food debris from microwave and toaster.
- Keep garbage out of the house and sealed properly at all times.
- Notify property manager/landlord of any openings where a pest could get in.
- Do NOT leave food out

Common signs of pests

- **Cockroaches**
 - Egg casings (small shells that are black, brown, or dark red)
 - Small droppings that look like black pepper grains
 - Strong oily odors
- **Flies**
 - Observing a large number of flies around garbage cans or waste containers
 - Seeing a few flies every so often may not mean you have an infestation
- **Rodents**
 - Small black droppings
 - Mice (droppings about the size of rice grains)
 - Rats (droppings about the size of jelly beans)
 - Strong smell of ammonia (rodent urine)

Bed bugs



- Bed bugs are small, oval insects that feed by sucking blood from humans or animals
- They do not fly
- Bed bugs are pests that can live anywhere in your home. Including: cracks in furniture or in any type of textile, upholstered furniture. They are most common in beds, including the mattress, box springs, and bed frames.
- Bed bugs are most active at night. They may bite any exposed areas of skin while an individual is sleeping. Common locations for bedbug bites are the face, neck, hands, and arms.
- Bed bug bites come in 3s – if you are unsure if it's a bedbug bite see your doctor



Prevention of bed bugs

- Make sure your client protects their mattress by covering it!
- If they purchase used furniture, check for the signs of bed bugs
- Encourage your client to avoid taking furniture from the curb, and to only get their furniture from trusted sources and is checked/treated
- Make sure that your client calls the property manager/landlord if they suspect that they have bed bugs in their unit!

Finances of a new home



- Important to talk with your client about their finances to ensure they are set up to keep up with the costs to maintain their housing
- This may include helping them set up a bank account, teaching them to do a budget and helping them learn cost savings shopping techniques

Creating a budget

A BUDGET

is telling your money
where to go
instead of wondering
where it went.

John Maxwell



- Helping your client create a budget is a good place to start
- [Budget worksheet to help them](#)
- Critical for clients to understand to pay rent and key bills first! Set up direct payment for key bills.
- Work with clients on where to save costs

Finances and budgets

- Support your client in opening a banking/checking/savings account
 - They may need help going to the bank/credit union
 - They may help writing a check again or filling out a money order
- Checking their bank balance/balancing their checkbook
- How to deposit a check or set up direct deposit
- Discuss putting aside savings for items they want – like a new television
- Harm reduction – make sure they put things in their budget like alcohol so they can see where their money goes
- Becoming a smart shopper
- Connect your client with one of the Community Action Programs (CAPs) that has financial classes
- Work with them on understanding the difference between “wants” and “needs”

Eviction Prevention

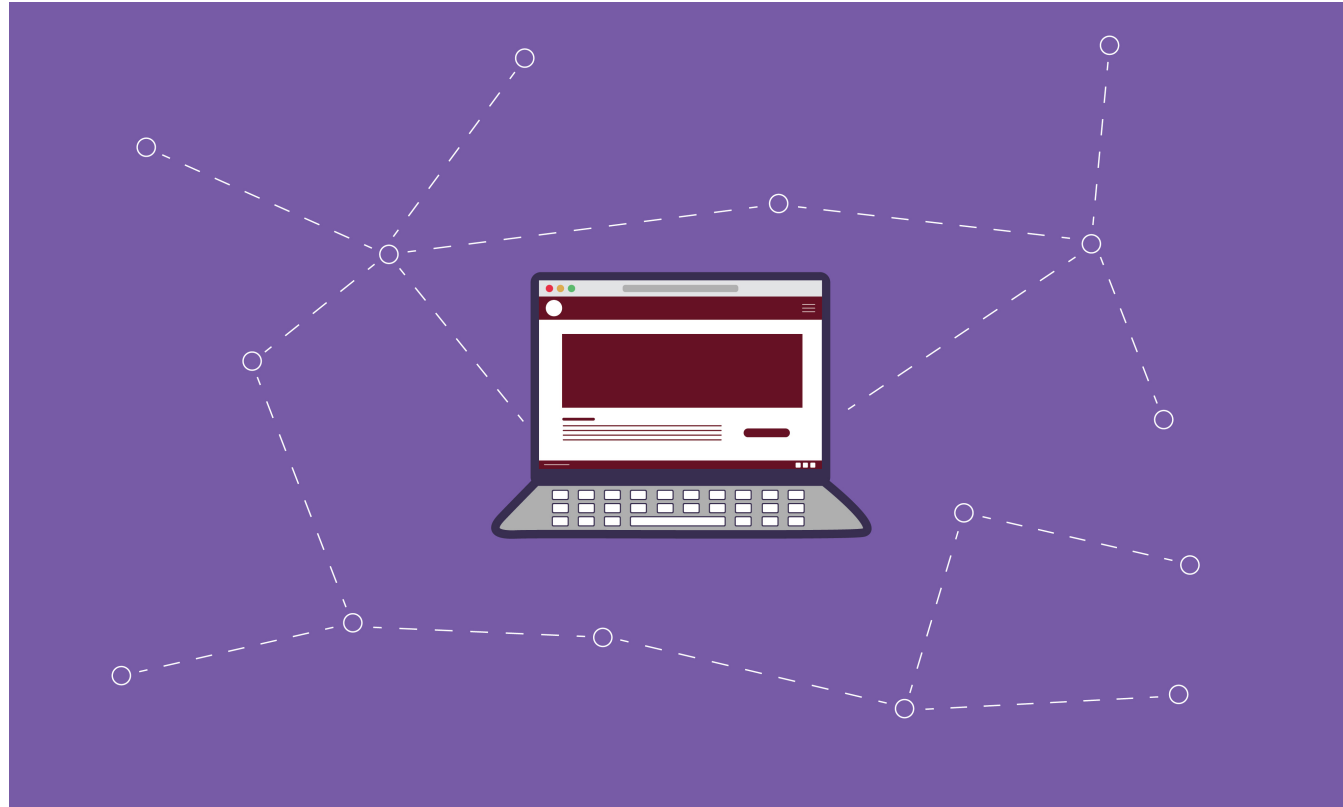


- Obviously, we want to avoid eviction at all costs!
- If your client is not doing well with a particular unit better to try and move them ASAP rather than let it get to the eviction stage
- Key is to encourage clients to be honest about their housing situation including problems

More About Evictions

- [Your client may be evicted](#) and fined up to 3 months rent and attorney's fees if the court finds failure to move was willful and not in good faith
- If your client fails to pay rent within 15 days of the time it is normally due, the landlord can send a written notice telling them that the specific amount is due in 5 days. If this is not paid, the rental agreement can end and the landlord can start the eviction process
- The court will not allow an eviction for non-payment if there is evidence the tenant attempted to pay in full and was refused by the landlord
- Before seeking an eviction for non-payment of rent, the landlord must send the tenant a five-day notice. After five days, the landlord may then fill out proper eviction notice forms.
- The landlord does not need to provide notice before going to the courts in certain cases: drug use, violence, and certain crimes
- If the rental agreement is terminated through proper notice, the landlord must return recoverable security and prepaid rent
- The landlord has the right to sue to recover any damages if they were caused negligently or deliberately by the tenant

Additional Resources



- [Rhode Island Housing Help Center](#)
- [US Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)
- [Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights](#)
- [Rhode Island Legal Services](#)
- Calling [211](#)
- [UnitedWay website](#)

Thank You for Joining Us Today!



- Thank you for coming today!
- Any remaining questions or comments?
- Please fill out the evaluation
- Pick up your Housing First manual at BH Link
- Don't forget to use the [Housing Retention Toolkit](#)