



# Bridges Provider Meeting

July 1, 2023

# Agenda



- Bridges Work Plan
- Metrics
- New Program Guide, Forms and Website
- Program Changes in the Guide
- Forms to Accompany Changes
  
- Questions

# Bridges Work Plan



- Mission: Improve the lives of homeless people with mental illness in transition from institutions by creating interagency collaboration that support housing stability
- Vision: Increase the number of people with mental illness exiting segregated settings/institutions into housing stability

# Guiding Principles



1. Support people with disabilities exiting institutions
2. Equity and Inclusion- reach underserved populations
3. Interagency Collaboration- foster relationships to support transitions to housing stability
4. Increase accountability and provide measurable results
5. Create housing options for people with mental illness in community

# Partners in the Work: Interagency Collaboration



1. Corrections: Jails and Prisons-Parole Officers
2. Regional Treatment Centers
3. Community Behavioral Health Centers
4. Adult Foster Care
5. Residential Treatment Centers
6. Segregated Settings; Tribal Definitions; Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs; Other
7. Housing Stability Service Providers- Other Behavioral Health Supports
8. Property Management Companies, Property Owners

# Goals



1. Decrease the time it takes to transition from institutions into housing
2. Increase housing access for underserved populations
3. Improve housing stability and quality of life for people with mental illness

# Strategic Objectives



1. Improve housing transitions from institutions and segregated settings by creating a waitlist that promotes real-time exits from institutions into housing
2. Establish regular communication with partners at AMHI meetings, include corrections professionals and Housing Stability service providers
3. Have providers identify all the referral sources in the region, incorporate them into the referral process

# Strategic Objectives Cont.



4. Identify new housing options for people with barriers, master leasing, room rental, new property owner/ management company relationships
5. Document service referral and service attainment (Housing Stabilization Service and community behavioral health services (for example: ARMHS, Case Management, ACT) (Still in progress)
6. Track progress with meaningful metrics that show progress in aligning with the guiding principles of the program

# Metrics



## 1. Decrease Transition Time from Institution Into Housing

- Increase number of housing options- room rental, master leasing

- Increase number of referrals from institutions that are placed into housing

# Metrics Cont.



## 2. Increase Housing Access for Underserved Populations

- Providers will incorporate corrections into referral process by identifying a referral source and process
- Providers will identify landlords that will work with people who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color
- Track accurate demographic information about participants (reduced use of unknown responses)
- Increase enrollment for people who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color

# Metrics Cont.



## 3. Improve Quality of Life and Housing Stability for People with Mental Illness

- Increase time in housing- stability over time measured by number of months (3/6/12 months)
- Increase access to housing- barrier reduction
- Increase services to the region
- Service attainment and retention
- Quality of life survey instrument (still in process)

# New Guide, New Forms New Website



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Minnesota Housing website. The browser's address bar shows the URL [mnhousing.gov/rental-housing/grant-programs/active-funding/bridges.html](https://mnhousing.gov/rental-housing/grant-programs/active-funding/bridges.html). A purple announcement banner at the top reads: "Announcement | Minnesota Housing has a new website! Let us know what you think. Take the survey." The breadcrumb navigation path is "Home / Rental Housing / Grant Programs / Active Funding / Bridges".

**Bridges Programs**

Minnesota Housing has been authorized to operate rental assistance programs for people with mental illness. The Bridges and Bridges Regional Treatment Center (RTC) programs provide temporary rental assistance, security deposits, and access to housing supports and supportive services in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Section 462A.2097.

For the Bridges and Bridges RTC programs, the funded housing agencies will establish a rental housing assistance program for low-income people with mental illness. Rental assistance may be in the form of direct rental subsidies, security deposits, damage claims, vacancy payments, application fees, financial assurance/risk mitigation program fees, and utility connection fees for housing. The rental subsidy is temporary and is intended to bridge the housing gap between exiting institutions, segregated settings, supervised release, and homelessness, to a permanent affordable housing option.

Bridges operates as a partnership between the housing agency and a local mental health entity (LMH), behavioral health service agency/agencies, and partners providing housing stabilization services that provide connections to housing supports and mental health services to participants. Each housing agency administering Bridges must enter into a cooperative agreement with an LMH entity and identify partnerships with a behavioral health service agency/agencies to coordinate the implementation of the program. Bridges supports the State of Minnesota's goals under the [Olmstead Implementation Plan](#), [The Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#) and the [Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act](#).

[Bridges and Bridges RTC Rental Assistance Program Guide - 2024-2025 Contract Term](#)

[Bridges and Bridges RTC Rental Assistance Program Guide - 2022-2023 Contract Term](#)

The left sidebar contains a "Find Housing Help" button with a magnifying glass icon and a "Menu" section with links to "Find Housing Assistance" and "Apply for Grant Funding".

The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and a system tray displaying "85°F Sunny" and the date "7/10/2023".

# New Guide, New Forms New Website

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the Minnesota Housing website. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'mnhousing.gov/rental-housing/grant-programs/active-funding/bridges.html'. The page content includes a paragraph of text, a 'Guide' section with three bullet points, and a 'Program Qualification and Administrative Forms for Providers' section with eight bullet points. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various open applications and the system tray with the date and time '12:30 PM 7/10/2023'.

frame that they are diverted to other facilities does not affect the participant's eligibility; they remain eligible if the individual has a legal commitment court document that has been verified and noted in the file.

### Guide

- [Bridges and Bridges RTC Rental Assistance Program Guide - 2024-2025 Contract Term](#)
- [Bridges and Bridges RTC Rental Assistance Program Guide - 2022-2023 Contract Term](#)
- [Sample Cooperative Agreement](#)
- [Bridges and Bridges RTC RFP Selection Framework and Final Scores](#)

### Program Qualification and Administrative Forms for Providers

- [#2 Application for Bridges Program \(Housing agency use only\)](#)
- [#4 Verification of Mental Illness](#)
- [#6 Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participant Obligations](#)
- [#7 Consumer Agreement for Requirements of Continued Eligibility](#)
- [#8 Computation of Gross Income, Participant and Subsidy Rent](#)
- [#24 Certification and authorization for payment of deposits and rent during crisis](#)
- [Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement](#)
- [Instruction for Completing the Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement Form](#)

# Guide Changes to Assist With Goal Attainment



1. Increase the maximum Bridges rental subsidy limit
2. Allow Bridges rental assistance funds to be used in certain shared housing options
3. Include utility allowances in the rental assistance calculation
4. Expand the eligible uses to include financial assurance/risk mitigation program fees
5. Clarify the RTC eligibility documentation

# Max Rent



- **Tier 1:** Implement a rental subsidy limit that allows each administrator to choose between the use of the fair market rent (FMR) or the LPS, whichever is greater. They are then allowed to exceed that limit by 10% for up to 20% of their portfolio.

# Max Rent



## **Tier 2:**

Allow administrators to petition in writing to Minnesota Housing to request a maximum rental subsidy increase greater than 10% and/or have the increase be applicable to more than 20% of their portfolio.

Such requests must further demonstrate hardship (e.g., participant inability to secure housing with expanded subsidy limit within allowable housing search time).

# Implementing Max Rent



- As an agency you will develop a practice on how and if you implement exceeding the FMR/LPS whichever is greater. The language change whichever is greater already gives some advantages
- It is important to manage your budget and to maintain equity for participants giving access to the benefit

# Shared Housing



- On January 15, 2021, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released [PIH Notice 2021-05](#) to remind public housing authorities (PHA) that shared housing is a permissible and viable option for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program.

# Shared Housing



- There will be a separate lease for each assisted household that resides in the same unit.
- Assisted participants may share a unit with people who may or may not be assisted by rental housing subsidies. The owner of the property may reside in the unit, but housing assistance may not be paid on their behalf.
- A resident owner cannot be related by blood or marriage to the assisted household. Exceptions must be granted if needed as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability to include a live-in aide.

# Shared Housing



- Housing quality standards (HQS) must still be met.
- The rents for shared housing will follow the same fair market rent (FMR) and local payment standard (LPS) process that all units use in the Bridges rental assistance program, except they will only be a pro-rata share of the total unit rent.

# Shared Housing



- Adding the shared housing option creates additional rental options for potential participants.
- There is a pool of shared housing landlords to tap into
- There may need to be work done with local municipalities to confirm the number of unrelated occupants can exist in a unit in your service area
- Remember participant choice!

# Include Utility Allowances in the Rental Assistance Calculation



- A standard local utility allowance will be used
- Adding the utility allowance into the Bridges calculation helps make the subsidy and participant amounts more consistent with the permanent subsidy

# Expand the Eligible Uses to Include Financial Assurance/ Risk Mitigation Program Fees



- The purpose of this fee is to help support landlord risk mitigation fund programs that are used to pay claims and reduce risk.
- The fee is paid by the participant or an organization on behalf of the participant and is an eligible expense.

# Clarify the Bridges Regional Treatment Center (RTC) Eligibility Documentation



Verification that a person is at AMRTC, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center/Forensic Services, or was prior to entering an Intensive Residential Treatment Services (IRTS) facility, is required for Bridges RTC.

Verification may come from the referral source, which is usually the IRTS, RTC, county, or a tribal nation.

Identified participants may transition to IRTS facilities or other treatment facilities prior to community housing and still retain their eligibility for Bridges RTC.

Identified participants remain eligible if the individual has a legal commitment court document that has been verified and documented in the file

The period of time diverted from AMRTC, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center/Forensic Services, or other treatment facility is not relevant.

The Bridges Program Guide Chapter 3 – Sections 3.01 and Section 3.11 have been updated to reflect this recommendation.

# New Data Requirements Next Contract Term



- Track the time from referral into housing and the barriers present in the participants that obtain housing
- Collect accurate demographic information through the participant application process

# New Forms to Collect Information



New Application Form - Form 2

New Rental Calculation Form - Form 8

New Draw Request Form

# Application Changes



- New Application will gather additional information on barriers to housing, demographics of the applicant and referral dates
- The application needs to be completed with new applicants and at the time of recertification for existing participants. Tracking referral at time of recertification may not be possible, but attempt
- Its important to ask the applicant the demographic questions. If your service provider completes the application educate them to ask the question, not assume

# Draw Request Form Changes



- The new application information that you gather from the application gets added to the draw request form at application and recertification
- A new draw request form will be sent to you with your current participant information inserted. Begin using the new form as soon as you receive it and enter new information as you have it.

# Rental Calculation Form 8



- The new rental calculation form includes the utility allowance, the new max rent limits if used and also the shared housing pro rata calculation
- If you have a software system that does these calculations, a printout of the calculation for the file is also permissible as long as the calculation is correct and in alignment with this form

# Questions????



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