



Bridges and Bridges for Long-Term Homeless Households Rental Assistance Program Guide

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Introduction

Minnesota Housing, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), currently administers the Bridges program, which provides rental assistance for people with serious mental illness and people with serious mental illness who are also experiencing long-term homelessness (LTH).

DHS received legislative funding in 1991 to begin a housing initiative for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. DHS began a modified Section 8-like program. The 1993 Minnesota legislature authorized and appropriated funds to Minnesota Housing under provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 462A.2097 to operate a rental assistance program for persons with mental illness.

In 2005, the Minnesota Housing authorized and appropriated funds from the Ending Long Term Homelessness Initiative Fund (ELHIF) to be administered through the Bridges program, with provision that households assisted with ELHIF meet the Bridges program requirements and the definition of long-term homelessness. In 2009, DHS and Minnesota Housing agreed to change the Bridges program definition of eligible persons to those with serious mental illness.

The 2015 Minnesota Legislature authorized and appropriated additional funds to Minnesota Housing to prioritize proposals that target, in part, eligible persons who desire to move to more integrated, community-based settings.

Goals of the program are:

- To provide a housing subsidy for people with serious mental illness and for people with a serious mental illness who are also experiencing long-term homelessness and are eligible to receive a Housing Choice Voucher subsidy or who can become eligible to receive a Housing Choice Voucher based on successful participation in the Bridges Program. This subsidy will be provided while the person is on a waiting list for a federal or other permanent housing subsidy program or the person formally agrees to apply for a waiting list when one is opened.
- To maintain and foster the integration of people with serious mental illness and people with serious mental illness who are also experiencing long-term homelessness into their communities through a partnership of housing subsidy and supportive services.

Chapter 1 – Definition of Terms

Administrative Fee: An amount of funds a Housing Agency may request to pay for expenses in operating Bridges, based on the total number of households participating each month.

Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD): A division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI): Law of Minnesota for 1995, Chapter 207, Article 8 (with 1997 amendments). The DHS Commissioner approved projects to test alternatives to or enhance coordination of the delivery of mental health services required under the Minnesota comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act.

Applicant: A person with serious mental illness who has applied to the Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) and whose eligibility is being determined.

Assisted Unit: A unit found eligible for inclusion in Bridges and one that is occupied by a participant who has executed an approved lease with the landlord, is receiving a Bridges subsidy and whose landlord has executed a Bridges contract with the Housing Agency.

Bridges Agreement: A document Minnesota Housing executes with a Housing Agency outlining respective responsibilities in administering Bridges.

Bridges Contract: An agreement executed by a Housing Agency and a landlord setting out terms that must be met for the landlord to receive subsidy payments on behalf of a participant residing in an eligible unit.

Bridges Program: A state rental assistance program for persons with serious mental illness waiting for a permanent housing subsidy.

Briefing Session: A meeting at which the eligible participant receives an explanation of the program and instructions for leasing an eligible unit.

Case Management: Activities that are designed to help adults with serious mental illness gain access to services that meet mental health needs. Case management services include developing an individual community support plan, referring and assisting the person in obtaining needed mental health and other services, ensuring coordination of services and monitoring the delivery of services.

Certificate of Participation: A form listing unit size and rent limits that authorizes an eligible participant to find a market rate unit.

Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC): An entity defined in Minnesota statutes that provides a wide range of services for individuals having mental or emotional disorders, mental

retardation, alcoholism, drug abuse or any other psychiatric condition. Services typically include education and prevention; consultation to schools, courts and health and welfare agencies; outpatient diagnostic and treatment services; and rehabilitation services. In many counties, community support services are contracted by the counties to a Community Mental Health Center.

Community Support Services Program (CSP): A program, under the clinical supervision of a mental health professional, designed to provide supportive services for adults with serious mental illness to improve their ability to live in the community. CSP services include:

- Outreach
- Education about mental illness, treatment and recovery
- Development of competitive employment and work related opportunities
- Opportunities for social, peer and recovery support
- Assistance in applying for basic needs and health insurance benefits
- Housing support services

Consumer: A person with serious mental illness (SMI).

Cooperative Agreement: An outline of the respective roles and responsibilities of a Housing Agency (HA) and a Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA).

DHS: Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Eligible Participant: A household with an adult member who has a serious mental illness and a gross household income under 50 percent of the area median.

Eligible Payment: A monthly rent; a security deposit.

Eligible Unit: A market rate property that meets program criteria and Housing Quality Standards.

Fair Market Rent (FMR): HUD established rent limits for geographical areas.

Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement: Minnesota Statutes 13.04, Subdivision 2, requiring organizations to inform individuals about recording data.

Gross Household Income: All income projected for the next 12 months by household members age 18 and over.

Homeless Person: As defined in the Stuart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, a homeless person is an individual who lacks a fixed and adequate nighttime residence. As interpreted by the Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness and the Mental Health Division of the Department of Human Services, this may include, but is not restricted to:

1. An individual or family that lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence; or
2. An individual or family whose primary nighttime residence is:
 - a. A supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters and transitional housing for the mentally ill),
 - b. An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or
 - c. A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

The term does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained under an act of Congress or a state law.

Households Experiencing Long Term Homelessness: Individuals, unaccompanied youth, or families with children who lack a permanent place continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years. Any period of institutionalization or incarceration shall be excluded from the determination of the duration of homelessness. **NOTE:** Minnesota's definition does not require that the person have a disabling condition. Time spent in transitional housing is also excluded from the determination of the duration of homelessness. See Minnesota Housing's website for further clarification on the LTH definition.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS): A computerized database that allows organizations that provide services to people experiencing homelessness to collect client information electronically to easily produce required reports. The mission of Minnesota's HMIS is to provide standardized and timely information to improve access to housing and services and strengthen efforts to end homelessness. The statewide goal is to eventually provide as comprehensive a picture of homelessness as possible by incorporating information from all emergency shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing providers, as well as other points of contact for people experiencing homelessness, such as outreach programs, drop-in centers, and food shelves. The Agency requires all fund recipients for programs targeting households experiencing long-term homelessness to utilize the HMIS system.

Housing Agency (HA): A local unit of government or a non-profit organization under contract to provide housing subsidy services.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP): A subsidy portion of the rent.

Housing Quality Standards (HQS): Housing inspection standard used in HUD Housing Choice Voucher assistance for inspection of market rate housing to determine that a unit is decent, safe and sanitary.

Housing Support Services: A CSP service that:

- Assists adults in obtaining, moving to, and retaining housing
- Provides resources for local public housing authorities, subsidized housing programs, realtors, private apartment rental services or similar housing services
- Assists in applying for housing program subsidies
- Assists in appealing denial, suspension, reduction or termination of a housing subsidy
- Mediates and teaches coping and mediation skills to resolve disputes with a landlord or roommate
- Provides ongoing support
- Provides periodic home visits to ensure health and safety

HUD: The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Imminent risk of homelessness: Persons who are:

- Being evicted from a private dwelling unit, or
- Being discharged from a hospital, correctional facility, or other institution, or
- Living in housing that has been condemned by housing officials that is no longer considered meant for human habitation and who have no subsequent housing options identified,
- **AND** are lacking the resources or support networks needed to retain current housing or obtain temporary or permanent housing.

Informal Hearing: A meeting requested by a consumer to contest a determination of ineligibility made by the Housing Agency (HA) or Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA).

Landlord: An individual(s), a partnership or corporation holding title to a property.

Lease: A contract between the participant and landlord under which the participant may occupy a unit.

Lease Addendum: An addendum to the lease executed between the participant and the landlord with a form specific to the Bridges program and approved by the Housing Agency (HA).

Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA): A county operating under the Comprehensive Mental Health Act.

Mental Health Housing Mission: Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245.461, Subdivision 4.
"The commissioner shall ensure that the housing services provided as part of a comprehensive mental health service system: (1) allow all persons with mental illness to live in stable, affordable housing, in settings that maximize community integration and opportunities for

acceptance; (2) allow persons with mental illness to actively participate in the selection of their housing from those living environments available to the general public; and (3) provide necessary support regardless of where persons with mental illness choose to live."

Mental Health Professional: A person providing clinical services in the treatment of mental illness who is qualified in at least one of the following ways:

- In psychiatric nursing: A registered nurse who is licensed under sections 148.171 to 148.285 and who is certified as a clinical specialist in adult psychiatric and mental health nursing by the American nurses association or who has a master's degree in nursing or one of the behavioral sciences or related fields from an accredited college or university or its equivalent, with at least 4,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness.
- In clinical social work: A person licensed as an independent clinical social worker under section 148B.21, subdivision 6, or a person with a master's degree in social work from an accredited college or university, with at least 4,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness.
- In psychology: A psychologist licensed under sections 148.88 to 148.98 who has stated to the board of psychology competencies in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.
- In psychiatry: A physician licensed under chapter 147 and certified by the American board of psychiatry and neurology or eligible for board certification in psychiatry.
- In marriage and family therapy: The mental health professional must be a marriage and family therapist licensed under sections 148B.29 to 148B.39 with at least two years of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness, or in allied fields: A person with a master's degree from an accredited college or university in one of the behavioral sciences or related fields, with at least 4,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness.

Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act: A statute that is the essence of the mental health system in Minnesota. The statute is Minnesota Sections 245.461 – 245.4863.

Minnesota Housing Mission: Housing is the foundation for success, so we collaborate with individuals, communities and partners to create, preserve and finance affordable housing.

Occupancy Standards: Guidelines set by HUD used to determine the maximum number of bedrooms and Fair Market Rents.

Operating Area: A geographic area in which the Housing Agency operates the Bridges program.

Participant: A person with serious mental illness who has been awarded a Bridges subsidy.

Participant Rent: A portion of the rent payable by the participant to the landlord.

Permanent Supportive Housing: Permanent rental housing affordable to the population served where support services are available to residents. Permanent supportive housing is available to individuals and families with multiple barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing, including those who are formally homeless or at risk of homelessness and those with mental illness, substance abuse disorders and/or HIV/AIDS.

Person with Serious Mental Illness (SMI): An individual with a disability described in the Minnesota Comprehensive Mental Health Act (Attachment II).

Preferences: A priority by which applicants are selected.

Procedural Guide: A document developed to implement the Bridges program under statutory requirements.

Reasonable Accommodations: Variance of the rules granted because someone has a disability

Recertification: An annual review of the participant's income to determine eligibility.

Release of Information: A signed and dated authorization by the participant allowing the Housing Agency (HA) and Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) to share information about the participant.

Regional Treatment Center (RTC): A facility where the state provides active inpatient treatment for persons with serious mental illness, developmental disabilities, chemical dependency and/or elderly who have complex medical conditions and challenging behaviors.

Rent During Crisis: A payment of the full rent when the participant is unable to meet financial obligations due to a medical or psychiatric crisis.

Rent Limits: The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) amount allowed for a unit determined by Fair Market Rent/Payment Standards and any HUD approved exceptions.

Segregated settings: As defined by the Minnesota Olmstead Plan, “often have qualities of an institutional nature. Segregated settings include, but are not limited to: (1) congregate settings populated exclusively or primarily with individuals with disabilities; (2) congregate settings characterized by regimentation in daily activities, lack of privacy or autonomy, policies limiting visitors, or limits on individuals’ ability to engage freely in community activities and to manage their own activities of daily living; or (3) settings that provide for daytime activities primarily with other individuals with disabilities.” Examples of institutions or segregated settings include a regional treatment center, a community behavioral health hospital, nursing homes, adult foster care, or other hospital or residential treatment center.

Subsidy: A portion of the rent paid by the Housing Agency (HA) that equals the difference between participant rent and the total rent, not to exceed the local payment standard (also referred to as HAP).

Chapter 2 – Program Overview

The goal of Bridges is to provide community-based housing so that people can live in integrated settings while receiving mental health services. The program is designed to assist people who have no place to live until they can receive a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) or other permanent housing.

Bridges provides a temporary housing subsidy for participants in which at least one adult member has a serious mental illness and whose household gross income is under 50 percent of the area median. Bridges funds may be used to pay rent directly to a landlord, security deposits, and the full rent, for up to 90 days, during a medical or psychiatric crisis. The housing subsidy is provided while the participant is on a waiting list for federal or other permanent housing subsidy programs. In order to successfully “bridge” the gap between homelessness and a permanent housing subsidy, it is important that the individual be able to move onto a HCV when his/her name comes to the top of the waiting list.

The Ending Long Term Homelessness Initiative Fund (ELHIF) is administered through the Bridges rental assistance program and provides a temporary housing subsidy for households who meet the Bridges eligibility criteria as well as the definition of long-term homeless. The administration of ELHIF funds are subject to the same rules and procedures as the Bridges program. Administrators of ELHIF funds will be responsible for a few additional requirements such as determining long-term homelessness eligibility and utilizing the state’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Since the program serves as a transition to a permanent subsidy, many provisions of the Bridges program are similar to those in the HUD HCV program. These include verification of income, leasing procedures, federal housing quality standards, and payment standard limits on rents. The Bridges housing subsidy is determined by a calculation using gross income and does not include deductions as in the HCV program. The maximum subsidy is the difference between the participant’s rent and the total rent, up to the payment standard.

Once initial eligibility has been determined, a Bridges/ELHIF participant remains eligible to receive a housing subsidy provided that:

- 30 percent of participant income does not exceed the full rent for the assisted unit
- The participant is not paying more than 40 percent of his/her gross annual income in rent (*if the participant rents a unit that is within the area’s payment standard rates, based on the appropriate bedroom size, the tenant’s monthly payment is 30 percent of his/her monthly income. The participant can rent a unit that exceeds the area’s payment standard providing that the tenant’s portion does not exceed 40 percent of his/her monthly income*)
- The participant applies for and accepts a Housing Choice Voucher when one is offered
- The participant does not commit fraud

- The participant does not engage in criminal activities that would make him or her permanently ineligible for HCV
- The Minnesota Legislature continues the Bridges funding appropriation

Minnesota Housing, in conjunction with DHS, will monitor and evaluate the performance of the HA and the LMHA involved in administering Bridges.

Chapter 3 – General Administrative Requirements

3.01 Period of Operations

The Bridges program provides rental subsidies in accordance with Minnesota legislation that authorizes and appropriates funds under provision of Minnesota Statute Section 462A.2097.

The agency may establish a rental housing assistance program for persons of low income or for persons with a mental illness or families that include an adult family member with a mental illness. Rental assistance may be in the form of direct rental subsidies for housing for persons or families with incomes of up to 50% of the area median income as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, adjusted for families of five or more. Housing for the mentally ill must be operated in coordination with social service providers who provide services requested by tenants. Direct rental subsidies must be administered by the agency for the benefit of eligible tenants. Financial assistance provided under this section must be in the form of vendor payments whenever possible. HIST: 1995 c 224 s 108

Those administering ELHIF funds through the Bridges program provide rental subsidies in accordance with the statute above to households who meet the definition of long-term homelessness.

3.02 Area of Operations

Each HA will operate in the geographic area indicated in its Bridges Agreement. Any change in this designation must be approved by Minnesota Housing.

Each LMHA will operate under the authority of the local county and within an AMHI. It will perform the duties indicated in the Cooperative Agreement. Any changes in the Cooperative Agreement must be approved by the county. The county needs to notify the Department of Human Services-Mental Health Division of these changes.

3.03 Cooperative Agreement

The Bridges program is intended to operate as a partnership between the HA, that provides housing subsidies, and a LMHA, that provides housing support services to participants. Each HA administering Bridges must enter into a Cooperative Agreement with a LMHA to coordinate the implementation of the program. The goal of the Agreement must be to assist individuals with serious mental illnesses (SMI) in obtaining and retaining stable, affordable housing within their community. Other aspects of the agreement should contain:

- Designation of the Parties (LMHA and HA) Entering into the Agreement
 - Unique features of the parties
- Terms of the Agreement
 - Duration of the agreement

- Purpose
 - To foster cooperation between parties
 - To assist persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH to access appropriate housing, treatment, supportive services and income supports
 - To assist persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH to live in the community
- Guiding Principles
 - Persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH are full members of the community with all rights, privileges, opportunities and responsibilities accorded all people
 - All persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH will not be required to accept services
 - Support services are:
 - Based on need, preferences and desires
 - Offered in the least restrictive manner to the individual
 - Flexible in location, intensity and schedule
- Responsibilities
 - Lists the roles and responsibilities of the agency and the initiative
 - Lists the clients to be served
 - Lists the services available to clients
 - Lists the site of services, the times available and the manner in which these services can be obtained
- Participant Rights and Responsibilities
 - Describes the rights and responsibilities of participants
- Implementation and Evaluation
 - Modification, amending or termination of the agreement
 - Resolution of problems
 - Interagency meetings, including frequency, attendees and dates, if known
 - Involvement of participants
 - Designation of liaisons to oversee, facilitate, monitor and evaluate agreement

The HAs and LMHAs will gather input from current and past participants (consumers) in order to review the program and identify areas of strength and improvement.

Each HA shall provide Minnesota Housing with a copy of the Cooperative Agreement as well as any subsequent amendments or terminations. Minnesota Housing and DHS will review the Cooperative Agreement and make suggestions for modification. Executed copies of the

Cooperative Agreement will be maintained by all parties to the contract. (A [sample Cooperative Agreement](#) is provided on the Minnesota Housing website.)

3.04 Fair Housing/Affirmative Action

It is the policy of Minnesota Housing to affirmatively further fair housing in all its programs so that individuals of similar income levels have equal access to Minnesota Housing programs, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, familial status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Minnesota Housing's fair housing policy incorporates the requirements of the Fair Housing Act, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended by the Fair Housing Amendment Act of 1988, as well as the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Housing providers are expected to comply with the applicable statutes, regulations, and related policy guidance. Housing providers should ensure that admissions, occupancy, marketing and operating procedures comply with non-discrimination requirements.

In part, the Fair Housing Act and the Minnesota Human Rights Act make it unlawful to, because of protected class status:

- discriminate in the selection/acceptance of applicants in the rental of housing units;
- discriminate in terms, conditions or privileges of the rental of a dwelling unit or services or facilities;
- engage in any conduct relating to the provision of housing that otherwise make unavailable or denies the rental of a dwelling unit;
- make, print or publish (or cause to make, print or publish) notices, statements or advertisements that indicate preferences or limitations based on protected class status;
- represent a dwelling is not available when it is in fact available;
- deny access to, or membership or participation in, associations or other services organizations or facilities relating to the business of renting a dwelling or discriminate in the terms or conditions of membership or participation; or
- engage in harassment or quid pro quo negotiations related to the rental of a dwelling unit.

Minnesota Housing has a commitment to affirmatively further fair housing for individuals with disabilities by promoting the accessibility requirements set out in the Fair Housing Act, which establish design and construction mandates for covered multifamily dwellings and requires housing providers to make reasonable accommodations and to allow persons with disabilities to make reasonable modifications.

Applicants will be required to submit an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan at the time of application, to update the plan regularly and to use affirmative fair housing marketing practices in soliciting renters, determining eligibility and concluding all transactions.

As a condition of funding through Minnesota Housing, housing providers are not permitted to refuse to lease a unit to, or discriminate against, a prospective resident solely because the prospective resident has a Housing Choice Voucher or other form of tenant-based rental assistance.

The HA also warrants that when participating in Bridges, it will comply with affirmative action policies applicable to doing business with the state of Minnesota.

3.05 Data Privacy

In working with applicants and participants, the HA and LMHA must comply with applicable data privacy laws and regulations. This includes the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, which regulates information that can be obtained, stored, and/or released in connection with public programs. The Minnesota Housing Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement form is available online. This form must be completed at initial occupancy and retained in the participant's file. Additionally, the HA and LMHA need to use their own release-of-information forms to share information on participants and complete income verification inquiries. Finally, administrators of ELHIF funds need to obtain the proper releases to enter tenant data into the HMIS system. This form is available on the HMIS website at:

<http://www.hmismn.org/forms/clientconsent.php>

All releases of information that are signed by the tenant should be kept in both HA and LMHA files.

3.06 Program Obligations - Check List of Responsibility

The following is a list of activities that are carried out in implementing the Bridges program. For each activity, either the HA or the LMHA, or both, may be responsible. Responsibilities may vary for different implementations of the Bridges program and will be described in the Cooperative Agreement. Use this list as a tool for program development and review and as a resource for the creation of the Cooperative Agreement.

Activity	HA	AMHI/ LMHA
1. Publish information on the availability and nature of the program.	X	X
2. Explain the program to landlords, Regional Treatment Centers (RTC), community-based residential treatment facilities, counties, shelters, social service staff, applicants and participants.	X	X
3. Encourage landlords and managers to make units available for the program.	X	X
4. Develop data privacy authorization between the HA and LHMA.	X	X
5. Provide housing options outside areas of economic and racial	X	

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Activity	HA	AMHI/ LMHA
concentration.		
6. Outreach to potential applicants meeting Bridges preferences: a. People residing in an institution or other segregated setting b. People who are experiencing long-term homelessness c. People who are experiencing homelessness or who are at imminent risk	X	X
7. Verify diagnosis of persons with serious mental illness.		X
8. For Administrators of ELHIF, verify that participant meets the state’s definition of Long-Term Homelessness.	X	X
9. Verify income and assets.	X	X
10. Maintain an applicant waiting list.	X	X
11. Conduct program briefings explaining participant's rights and responsibilities, including payment responsibilities.	X	
12. Verify applicant’s Housing Choice Voucher eligibility and waiting list status.	X	X
13. Calculate subsidy and participant rent.	X	
14. Assist participant with housing appeals for denial of eligibility.		X
15. Assist participant with social service appeal for denial of eligibility.	X	
16. Assist participant in locating appropriate housing.	X	X
17. Negotiate lease and conditions with landlord.	X	X
18. Determine eligibility of selected units based on rent, unit size and lease provisions.	X	
19. Conduct Housing Quality Standards inspection of selected units.	X	
20. Enter into, administer and enforce Bridges Contracts with landlords.	X	
21. Make payments to landlords or utility companies.	X	
22. Conduct annual and interim recertification of participant eligibility.	X	
23. Terminate Bridges subsidy for participants who violate program regulations, become ineligible for Housing Choice Voucher or refuse Housing Choice Voucher subsidy when offered.	X	
24. Maintain financial management records.	X	
25. Maintain consumer demographic information.	X	X
25. Report required information to Minnesota Housing.	X	
27. ELHIF Administrators utilize HMIS to report data on behalf of the assisted long-term homeless households.	X	X
28. Provide 24-hour emergency response to landlords, participants and HA.		X
29. Assist participants, who choose to be served, with the		X

Activity	HA	AMHI/ LMHA
following: a. Case management services b. Diagnosis and treatment of serious mental illnesses c. Rehabilitation, vocational training and employment assistance d. Income support and benefits e. General health care and dental services f. Alcohol and/or other drug abuse treatment g. Consumer and family involvement h. Legal protection (including protection provided under civil rights laws, such as the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) i. Screening criteria of the HA		
30. Notify HA of absences by participants during medical or psychiatric crisis.		X
31. Recalculate subsidy payment and utilities for participants during medical or psychiatric crisis.	X	
32. Develop and maintain a list of housing options.	X	X
33. Partner to increase the supply and options of housing available to persons with serious mental illnesses (e.g., locale, style, rent levels, flexible services, integration).	X	X

3.07 Applicant/Participant Records

Each HA will establish files for applicants and participants. These files are required to contain copies of all participant and property related forms listed below. Most of the following forms are available on Minnesota Housing’s website.

Required tenant file documentation:

	Required in specific format	Required, various formats accepted	Required Annually
1. Application for Bridges Program (Form 2)	X		
2. Preliminary screening forms developed locally for intake		X	
3. Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and Disclosure Statement and Acknowledgement	X		

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	(signed by all adults 18 or older on lease)			
4.	Verification of Serious Mental Illness (Form 4) - Specific records and documents detailing the nature of applicant's illness should be retained by the AMHI/LMHA	X		
5.	Certificate of Participation–Statement of Obligation (Form 6)	X		
6.	Consumer Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility (Form 7)	X		X
7.	Income and Asset Verification		X	X
8.	Computation of Gross Income, Participant and Subsidy Rent (Form 8)		X	X
9.	Lead-Based Paint Certification (if applicable)	X		
10.	Housing Quality Standards inspections	X		X
11.	Approved Leases (Form 11)		X	
12.	Approved Lease Addendum (Form 12)	X		
13.	Approved Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13), when applicable	X		
14.	Bridges Contract (Form 14)	X		
15.	Certification of payment during crisis (Form 24), if applicable	X		
16.	Verification of Long-Term Homelessness and HMIS Data release form (ELHIF only)	X		

Tenant Files must also include the following correspondence and notes when applicable:

1.	Eligibility/ineligibility notices sent to applicants/participants by HA or LMHA		X	
2.	Letters and notifications of outcome from informal hearings		X	
3.	Documents and correspondence concerning the participant's application and participation in Bridges		X	
4.	Initialed and dated notations regarding conversations about the participant		X	
5.	Termination Notice		X	

The main program file for each applicant and participant is to be kept by the HA. The HA may share with the LMHA any documentation that may be needed by the mental health agency in carrying out its responsibilities to provide housing support services, provided a release of information has been completed. The LMHA needs to retain a copy of the release of information in their permanent records. The sharing of information and documents should be outlined in the Cooperative Agreement.

3.08 Monitoring and Evaluation

Minnesota Housing and DHS will conduct ongoing evaluations of the financial and participant reports submitted by Housing Agencies. Management reviews of the HA and LMHA partnership administering Bridges will also be conducted on a regular basis. The review will contain the following components:

- LMHA adherence to the procedural guide:
 - Cooperative Agreement
 - Support Services
 - Participant files
- Interview of case managers, community support staff and participants
- HA's adherence to the procedural guide
- Financial records detailing:
 - Expenditures for subsidy payments to landlords
 - Security deposits
 - Payments during medical and psychiatric crises
- Cooperative Agreement:
 - Program Eligibility
 - Maintenance and retention of participant records
 - Waiting list, including selection criteria and preferences
 - Unit size
 - Exceptions
- Participant files:
 - Verification of income and eligibility
 - Calculation of participant rent
 - FMR limits/payment standards
 - Forms
 - Lease and admission, interim and recertification

- HQS (units may be inspected)

3.09 Financial Management/Records

The HA must establish one or more separate bank accounts (checking or savings) for Bridges payments. The HA may combine these funds with other funds in a consolidated account, provided that the HA's banking system can adequately segregate the various restricted funds within one account. Any interest earned on these funds may be retained locally and may be used in paying administrative expenses. In the event Minnesota Housing requests the information, the HA must maintain and make available records of payments to landlords and utility companies.

The HA must provide evidence of insurance for employee dishonesty or crime coverage in the amount of at least one-eighth of the total amount of the grant. Acceptable forms include a copy of an effective policy or certification from the insurance carrier that indicates the policy's effective dates and terms of coverage and that meets the above requirements. HA employees authorized to make payments to landlords must receive formal authorization by the HA's board and provide a copy of that authorization to Minnesota Housing.

3.10 Requesting Bridges Funds

Housing Agencies will prepare and submit to Minnesota Housing monthly payment requests that detail actual expenditures for the previous month. The information collected on the draw request form includes:

- Actual expenses incurred in the payment of rent and administrative fees for the previous month
- A monthly participant log for the previous month, which is attached to the monthly payment request and consists of information such as participant name, unit address, move-in date, move-out date, gross rent, participant rent, subsidy amount, security deposit amount

Minnesota Housing will utilize the monthly participant log and payment request data to determine the reimbursement amount to be sent to the HA. HAs should submit the request for funds no later than the 15th of the month, unless other arrangements have been agreed upon. At the end of the grant term, the HA will refund any excess subsidy funds or administrative fees.

3.11 Administrative Fee

At the time of selection or grant renewal, Minnesota Housing shall approve a monthly administrative fee for the HA. The administrative fee will be paid for each month in which an eligible household resides in an eligible rental housing unit.

Minnesota Housing will approve administrative fees that range from \$40 per household per month to \$60 per household per month, based on the target number of households, the amount of the grant, the geography of the service area, the target population and other relevant criteria.

3.12 Future Funding

Funding for the Bridges program will be allocated through a Request for Proposal (RFP) or renewal process. Minnesota Housing and DHS may follow one, both, or a combination of each of the following funding processes for a biennium:

- Applications for continued funding may be requested from all current interested Bridges programs. Current HAs providing Bridges may be considered based on the results of management reviews, need and utilization.
- New Bridges applications may be solicited with preference given to HAs proposing to operate in areas underserved in rental subsidies for persons with serious mental illness.

Chapter 4 – Household Eligibility, Intake and Certification

4.01 Eligibility Criteria

The basis for Bridges eligibility is as follows:

- The head of household or other household member must be 18 years of age or over and have a diagnosed serious mental illness (verified using Verification of Serious Mental Illness (Form 4)) as defined in the Comprehensive Mental Health Act
- Are income eligible to receive a Housing Choice Voucher subsidy or who can become eligible to receive a Housing Choice Voucher based on successful participation in the Bridges Program (this subsidy will only be provided if the person is on a waiting list or formally agrees to be on a waiting list when one is opened)
- The gross income of the household, at the time of initial eligibility, is at or below 50 percent of the area median income for the household size
- For programs administering ELHIF funds, the head of household must also meet the definition of long-term homelessness

4.02 Outreach

Information about Bridges should be widely distributed by the AMHI, LMHA and HA to all persons with a serious mental illness. Specifically, information will be provided to Regional Treatment Centers, community-based residential treatment facilities, homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, board and lodges, county case managers, community mental health centers, drop in centers and community support programs. Persons who reside outside the county, but for whom the county assumes financial responsibility, should also be informed of the opportunity to apply for Bridges.

The AMHI/LMHA is primarily responsible for outreach. The Cooperative Agreement should describe the plan to conduct outreach.

4.03 Intake/Screening

The applicant will complete the Application for Bridges Program form and a Government Data Practices Act and Disclosure Statement. The LMHA must verify that the head of household or another adult household member has a serious mental illness as defined by the Comprehensive Mental Health Act. The AMHI/LMHA must have a mental health professional sign Verification of Serious Mental Illness (Form 4) and submit it to the HA in a timely fashion. For households being referred for ELHIF funds, the AMHI or LMHA must also verify their eligibility based on the long-term homelessness definition, using the LTH verification form. At intake for all Bridges households, information regarding the household's previous living situation prior to program intake and extent of homelessness shall be collected and submitted.

As part of intake activity, the LMHA must:

- Inform applicants that receiving the Bridges subsidy may reduce other forms of aid that they may be receiving such as food stamps and Minnesota Supplemental Assistance (MSA)
- Inform applicants that they are eligible for mental health case management services and community support program services and make referrals for these services if applicant agrees to a referral
- Advise applicants that participation in services is not required in order to participate in Bridges
- Inform applicants that, as a condition of receiving Bridges subsidy, they must be eligible to receive a subsidy and apply for and accept a federal or other permanent housing subsidy when one is offered

The AMHI/LMHA and HA may wish to develop a form to be given to each applicant that incorporates the above information.

4.04 Housing Choice Voucher Waiting List Requirement

Bridges participants are required to apply for and accept a federal or other permanent housing subsidy, primarily the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. The HA will require Bridges applicants to complete a HCV application if they are currently not on the local waiting list. If waiting lists for the area are closed, the applicant must agree to apply to the Housing Choice Voucher program as soon as the waiting list opens. A participant may apply to HCV programs outside of the area, but is not required to.

While the participant is receiving a Bridges subsidy, the HA and LMHA will monitor the applicant's status on the HCV waiting lists or make certain that the participant does sign up for a HCV when a waiting list opens. Participant files must contain a copy of the HCV application verifying the status on the waiting list/s or documentation that the waiting list is closed and the participant will sign up as soon as a waiting list opens.

If a participant does not accept a Housing Choice Voucher, becomes ineligible for a subsidy or refuses to apply for a Housing Choice Voucher, the participant may be terminated from the Bridges program.

4.05 Final Eligibility Review

The HA will calculate the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) based on gross income. Income limits for Bridges are based on 50 percent of the area median income as defined by HUD.

4.06 Informal Hearings/Appeals

Applicants and participants may request an informal hearing to contest a determination made by the LMHA or HA concerning eligibility to participate or for continued participation in Bridges. The LMHA will be responsible for disability related eligibility appeals. The HA will be responsible

for housing issues. The HA will use procedures established for use in their HCV administrative plan.

At an informal hearing, the applicant or participant must be given an opportunity to view all documents and information used to make the decision and must have an opportunity to present his/her own evidence in support of eligibility or continued eligibility.

The applicant or participant must be encouraged to have the LMHA assist them in their appeal. The hearing should be conducted by an individual who did not take part in the original decision that is being contested. Applicants and participants must be notified, in writing, of the outcome of the hearing and be informed of the reasons for the determination.

4.07 Calculating Gross Income

Gross income includes all income for all household members age 18 and over expected to be received in the next 12 months, excluding the income of a non-related person who is living in the household solely to care for a disabled, handicapped or elderly household member. When computing gross annual income, include the actual income earned from assets, such as interest or dividends.

Gross income includes, but is not limited to:

- Amount, before any payroll deductions, of wages and salaries, overtime pay, commissions, fees, tips and bonuses
- Net income from operating a business or profession or from rental of real or personal property
- Interest and dividends
- Amount of periodic payments received from Social Security, annuities, insurance policies; retirement funds, pensions, disability or death benefits, and similar types of periodic payments
- Unemployment, disability, or workers' compensation or severance pay, and similar types of payments in lieu of income
- Public assistance payments
- Periodic allowances such as alimony, child support, gifts/contributions received from persons not residing with the participant
- Regular and/or special pay and allowances for a member of the armed forces who is the household head or spouse

Gross income does not include:

- Casual, sporadic or irregular gifts

- Amounts specifically for reimbursement of medical costs, including Medicaid spend-down
- Inheritances, insurance payments, capital gains, settlements for personal or property losses and similar lump sum amounts
- Educational grants or scholarships paid expressly for tuition, fees, books or equipment (amounts not for these purposes are counted as income)
- Combat pay for a participant head who is in the armed services
- Relocation payments made under the federal Uniform Relocation Act
- Foster care payments
- Value of allotments such as food stamps and fuel assistance
- Payments made for persons participating in federal or state volunteer programs

4.08 Verification of Income and Assets

The Bridges program follows HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Practices Handbook #7420.7 i, which explains verification by a third party. HAs may use the procedure it has adopted in its HCV administrative plan. Verified information must be no more than 90 days old prior to the award of the Bridges voucher. Income and assets to be verified are:

- Records of Earned Income:
 - Income tax return – state and/or federal (most recent)
 - Paycheck stubs
 - W-2 forms
- Records of Other Income:
 - Pensions and annuities – latest check stub from issuing institution
 - Social Security – current award letter
 - Unemployment compensation – determination letter or latest check stub
 - Supplemental Security Income – award letter/most recent check stub
 - MFIP – award letter/most recent check stub
 - Workers' Compensation – determination letter, recent check stub
 - Alimony – copy of court order
 - Child support – copy of court order
 - Educational scholarships/stipends (federal Title IV grants are excluded) – award letter
 - Other public assistance – award letter
 - Income from assets – credit union/bank/S & L statements, etc.

Assets to be evaluated include, but are not limited to:

- Bank statements in checking, savings accounts or CDs
- Stocks and bonds
- Mortgage note or property tax statement
- Life insurance policy redemption value
- Net equity in real property
- Personal property held as an investment

Verified information must be no more than 120 days old prior to the award of the Bridges/ELHIF certificate.

4.09 Waiting List

If the number of applicants for Bridges subsidies exceeds the number of certificates available, a waiting list must be established. The Cooperative Agreement must specify:

- Party responsible for the waiting list
- Procedure for maintaining the list
- Procedure for making selections from the waiting list (using priorities identified in the agreement)

The Bridges program is designed to assist persons with high needs through provision of a housing subsidy that is linked with community mental health services. To achieve this goal, administrators must give priority to the following target populations, with highest priority given to persons residing in an institution or other segregated setting who will be homeless upon discharge. These priorities must be identified in the HA's waiting list selection plan.

1. Persons residing in an institution or other segregated setting who will be homeless upon discharge
2. Persons experiencing homelessness for one year or more, or multiple times in the last 3 years
3. People experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness

The HA must submit its waiting list selection plan to Minnesota Housing for review and approval. The plan should be developed jointly by the HA, the LMHA, and Tribal governance, where applicable. Other objective criteria may be included, such as household income or date and time of application, or a preference for transition-aged youth or families with children.

4.10 Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participant Obligation

Each Bridges participant will be issued a Certificate of Participation (Form 6). This document certifies that the participant is eligible for subsidy and outlines the conditions and procedures for obtaining the subsidy as well as the participant's obligations. A signed Certificate of Participation is required in the tenant file after it is issued at a briefing session where the program requirements are verbally explained to the participant.

The Certificate of Participation allows the participant 90 days to locate an eligible unit and submit necessary documents to the HA. If a unit is not located within that timeframe, the HA has the discretion of extending the Certificate. The HA must use Form 6.

4.11 Unit Size (Occupancy Standards)

The HA may use the Unit Size (Occupancy Standards) established for the Housing Choice Voucher. If different, the occupancy policy proposed for use in Bridges must be submitted to Minnesota Housing for review.

The bedroom size allocated to a participant must count full-time household members, children expected to reside in the assisted unit and any live-in attendant necessary to care for a disabled, handicapped or elderly household member. The HA must count the child or children:

- Of a pregnant woman
- Being adopted
- Whose custody is being obtained
- In joint custody, as long as the child/children will live in the assisted unit at least 50 percent of the time
- Who are in the unit under foster care
- Temporarily absent due to placement in a foster home

The HA and LMHA may establish criteria for granting exceptions to the occupancy standards. Such exception criteria may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Unique disability-related circumstances of the participant
- Availability of the specified size in the HA's operating area
- Housing market conditions prevalent in the HA's market area

An exception policy must be in writing and submitted to Minnesota Housing for review and approval and be made part of the Cooperative Agreement.

4.12 Rent Limits

The maximum subsidy available to the participant is the difference between 30 percent of their gross income and the area Fair Market Rent/Local Payment Standard or contract rent,

whichever is less. The participant can rent a unit that exceeds the area payment standard; however, they are responsible for paying the difference. The maximum participant payment allowed is 40 percent of their gross monthly income. The Bridges program does not include utility allowances. Fair Market Rents or approved Payment Standards/Exception Rents are periodically published by HUD and can be obtained by calling the Regional HUD office in Minneapolis.

4.13 Calculating Participant Rent

The participant's rent portion is calculated in a similar manner as the HCV subsidy with the exception that the Bridges calculation uses gross income, not adjusted income. The minimum participant payment is 30 percent of their monthly income and the maximum payment is 40 percent of their monthly income. Participants can pay up to 40 percent of their monthly income if they choose a unit that exceeds the area FMR/Payment Standard. **NOTE:** The Bridges subsidy cannot pay anything more than the difference between 30 percent of the participant's gross monthly income and the area FMR/Payment Standard or the contract rent, whichever is less.

If zero income is claimed by a participant at entry to the program, another verification must occur within 90 days and every 90 days thereafter. This verification requires the participant to provide a signed Zero Income statement to the HA until a source of income is established. The LMHA will offer the participant assistance in obtaining and maximizing income if the participant wishes. It is important for the HA and the AMHI/LMHA to collaborate in order to serve the target number of households by connecting households to eligible benefits and employment services.

Shared units can only be provided if allowed under the HA's HCV administrative plan. The housing subsidy for shared households will be calculated according to the HCV administrative plan, except for the use of gross incomes for the Bridge's applicant.

4.14 Briefing Session

The HA must schedule a briefing session for each participant receiving a Bridges Certificate for the first time. It is recommended that a LMHA representative attend briefing sessions. The HA may decide whether to hold individual or group sessions. If group sessions are held, the participant's income and rent discussions must be conducted privately. A briefing session must be available by phone by request if a participant is unable to attend in person.

A briefing must cover the following topics:

- Overview of the Bridges program
- Explanation of the participant's obligations listed on the Certificate
- Review of the calculation (Worksheet, Form 8) of the participant's rent

- Review of the lease approval process and the content of the forms, emphasizing provisions of the Request for Lease Approval (Form 10) that must be incorporated into landlord generated leases
- Key requirements in state law affecting landlord/participant relationships
- Responsibility of the participant to pay the participant rent as well as utility expenses not paid by the landlord
- Review of the HQS requirements for eligible housing units
- Geographic area in which the HA may execute contracts with landlords
- Assistance the LMHA and HA can provide if a participant needs help in locating a unit or in receiving supporting services

At the session, the participant signs and receives the Certificate of Participant-Statement of Participant Obligation (Form 6). Participants receive a Briefing Packet containing the following, or other similar information:

- Index to the briefing packet
- Participant rent/maximum rent
- How to find a rental unit
- Information for owners of rental property
- A Good Place to Live - HQS
- Summary: What to do
- Fair Housing Minnesota
- Your rights as a participant

The following documents must be included:

- Request for Lease Approval (Form 10)
- Certificate of Participation-Statement of Participation Obligation
- Rules for continued eligibility

The HA may include additional materials that would be useful for the participant.

Chapter 5 – Leasing Process

5.01 Freedom of Choice in Selecting Units

The Bridges program will assist people with serious mental illness to live independently in all types of conventional rental housing that may be available in the HA's operating area. While participants may need advice about finding a unit, understanding legal requirements and options for making a selection, they have full responsibility for making the final choice. The HA and LMHA may not directly or indirectly reduce a participant's opportunity to choose from any potentially eligible unit. The information and assistance given to participants in locating housing must also provide a broad range of choice to prevent undue concentration of participants in one building or area.

5.02 Eligible Units

Housing units eligible for a Housing Choice Voucher may be utilized by Bridges participants. Eligible units may include:

- Units owned or substantially controlled by a HA if all of the following apply:
 - All of a property's units are available for occupancy by the general public
 - Rents are market rate and subsidized only with Bridges funds
 - Minnesota Housing receives assurances that a participant was given choices of other housing in the operating area
- Units that were constructed with federal or state assistance such as Section 236 or Farmer's Home (FmHA) provided that:
 - Rents approved for Bridges participants are the market rate for the building
 - No other deep subsidy (i.e. rent based on 30 percent of income) is provided to the Bridges participant.

Bridges assistance cannot be provided for the following:

- Units within or established by public or private institutions that provide psychiatric or medical services such as:
 - Nursing homes or psychiatric hospitals/facilities
 - Board and care facilities
 - Other facilities such as independent group residences established specifically to serve persons with serious mental illness
- Landlord occupied units, unless the participant leases a portion of the unit, such as a basement that contains a private entrance, private bath and private kitchen
- Space rental for a landlord occupied mobile home

5.03 Utility Allowances

Utilities allowances are not provided in the Bridges program.

5.04 Inspections - HQS

All properties and units to be leased by Bridges participants must be inspected by the HA or a contracted housing professional certified to perform HQS inspections. A standard federal form (or a version approved by HUD) must be used for reporting. **Units must pass the inspection before the HA makes a housing payment to the landlord.** No subsidy payments may be made for a period when the unit was not in compliance with HQS. Exceptions would be made only for unusual circumstances fully documented in the participant file.

Units must be inspected at least annually prior to the renewal date of income recertification. A copy of all HQS inspections must be kept in the participant's Applicant/Participant Record.

5.05 Portability

Bridges participants must lease a unit within the service area of the HA in which they applied. The Bridges subsidy is not portable. Subsidies must be within the geographic area of the HA.

5.06 Leasing Procedures

The procedure for processing Bridges leases is like the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher:

1. The participant locates a suitable unit
2. Participant submits a signed Request for Lease Approval (Form 10)
3. The HA conducts an HQS inspection
4. When the unit passes the HQS inspection, the Bridges Contract (Form 14) and the Lease are signed

The term of the lease may not extend beyond one year. The HA, at its sole discretion, may permit lease terms from one month to twelve months.

A copy of the lease, HQS Inspection Report and the Bridges Contract (Form 14) must be retained in each Applicant/Participant Record.

5.07 Lease Amendment/Extension

The lease provides for a renewal after the initial term. Renewals may be month to month or longer, up to a maximum of one year. Renewals are based on continued funding from Minnesota Housing.

A Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13) must be signed at the time of a lease expiration or notification of a landlord rent increase.

5.08 Security Deposits

The security deposit may not exceed one month's rent and cannot be paid until after a unit passes inspection.

If the participant cannot afford to make a security deposit and no other resource is available within a reasonable amount of time, the HA, upon request of the participant, will pay the security deposit to the landlord using Bridges funds.

A participant may keep all or part of the security deposit plus interest when any of the following apply. The participant:

1. Leaves a unit and the unit has no damages
2. Leaves a unit and the unit has damages in an amount less than the security deposit
3. Stays in a unit, leaves the Bridges program, and does not receive a Housing Choice Voucher or a permanent subsidy
4. Stays in a unit and goes onto a Housing Choice Voucher or another permanent subsidy

A participant may only retain one rental security deposit.

If the participant leaves a unit and the unit has damages or unpaid rent and/or unpaid utilities, the landlord retains all or any part of the security deposit to pay for unpaid rent and/or unpaid utilities or damages to the unit or property. The landlord must provide documentation to the HA and participant that the deposit, plus interest, was used to offset expenses.

5.09 Payment Terms

The Bridges rental payment is equal to the contract rent less the participant payment. Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) will be made by the HA to the landlord on behalf of participants when all of the following payment terms have been met:

- The participant rents a unit within HUD's published Fair Market Rent or Payment Standard or, if it exceeds these rates, the participant's payment does not exceed 40 percent of his/her monthly income
- The participant's unit has passed a HQS inspection
- The landlord and the HA have signed and dated a Bridges Contract
- The participant and landlord have signed and dated an approved lease

The landlord may not charge more rent for assisted units than for comparable unassisted units. The landlord may not assess additional charges to the participant for items not included in the rent unless all other participants pay the same charges for the same items. All additional charges (e.g., garage rental, cable TV, storage lockers, pet deposits) must be described in the lease and approved by the HA.

Subsidy payments on behalf of participants meeting the above requirements for payment will continue until the participant receives a permanent housing subsidy, becomes ineligible, voluntarily withdraws from the program or the Bridges program terminates.

The contract rent plus actual cost of utilities may be paid on behalf of participants who have a crisis and have income diverted. Such payments may be made for up to 90 days. Written documentation on such situations must be retained in the Applicant/Participant Record.

5.10 Eligible Payments

The following types of payments may be made with Bridges funds:

- Direct payment to landlord for the HAP portion of the rent
- Payment to landlord for security deposit
- Payment to landlord for contract rent for up to 90 days during a medical and/or psychiatric crisis
- Participant's Applicant/Participant Record must be properly documented prior to eligible payments

Chapter 6 – Occupancy Guidelines

6.01 Interim Changes

All decreases in the participant's gross monthly income, regardless of the amount, must be verified and implemented on the next first of the month after the HA received the information about the decrease (e.g., a verified decrease in income reported in June would result in a reduced participant rent on July 1). Written notice of the change should also be sent to the participant and landlord.

Participants who wish to add another adult to the lease must inform both the HA and the landlord in advance. A participant shall be informed that they must seek the landlord's permission to add an additional adult to the participant's lease or they could be evicted. The landlord may deny permission of an additional adult, based on the landlord's usual participant screening procedures. All income of the additional adult must be verified and added to the participant's gross income. A lease amendment may be used to add an additional adult to the lease.

The participant is not required to report to the HA the addition of a minor to the lease. The sample Bridges lease and most landlords' leases do not require reporting additional minors. It is not necessary to issue the participant a new Certificate of Participation (Form 6) at the time minors are added. If a larger unit is needed, a new certificate is issued when the participant terminates the current lease and seeks other housing.

A lease amendment/extension may be used if the participant moves from one unit to another unit in the same building or another building owned by the same landlord. An HQS inspection must be conducted for the new unit before the participant moves or payment is made for the new unit.

6.02 Annual Recertification

The income (including asset income) of all participants must be verified on an annual basis. At each annual recertification, the participant must sign a new Consumer Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility (Form 7) and the applicable Agency release of information forms.

For participants with an annual lease, the recertification should coincide with the effective date of a new lease. It is not necessary to verify income if the most recent interim change was done within the last 90 days. If the verification indicates that the participant's gross monthly income equals or exceeds the full rent for the assisted unit for three consecutive months, then the participant will be declared ineligible. Participants whose income is determined ineligible must be notified in writing and given the option of requesting an informal hearing if they disagree with the findings.

The landlord may increase the rent only upon the expiration of the lease term and execution of a new or renewal lease. In the case of properties that are subject to a HUD approved increase, such as 236 or FMHA buildings, an increase in rent may be implemented upon HUD approval of the new rent and upon sufficient notice to the participant and HA. A lease and contract amendment should be used to change the unit rent. A copy of the HUD rent approval letter should be inserted in the participant's Applicant/Participant Record.

When negotiating a renewal rent, the HA may, at its discretion, use the Housing Choice Voucher Annual Adjustment Factors (AAF) to limit the amount of the landlord's rent increase. If the AAFs are not used, the HA must determine that the requested rent is reasonable based on the HA Section 8 Housing Voucher Choice rent reasonableness system. A participant's contract rent may not exceed contract rents paid by unassisted participants at the same property.

6.03 Lease Termination

Participant Chooses to Move. When a participant chooses to move, written notice by the participant must be given to the landlord and HA in accordance with the lease. If the participant intends to continue receiving a Bridges/ELHIF subsidy, they must additionally notify the HA at 30 days plus 1 day before they intend to move. If the AMHI/LMHA is aware of a tenant's move, they must notify the HA if the participant has not done so. If the participant intends on continuing with Bridges/ELHIF after moving, the HA must issue the participant a new Certificate of Participation-Statement of Participation Obligation (Form 6) and Request for Lease Approval (Form 10). When the participant locates a new unit, the HA must use the same procedures as described in the Leasing Process (Section V of this document).

Unit Does Not Meet HQS. If, at recertification, the HA determines that the unit is not in compliance with HQS, the HA must give the landlord a reasonable time to correct the deficiencies. The HA may retain HAP (subsidies) until the unit meets HQS. If the landlord fails to comply in a "reasonable time," the HA must notify the landlord and the participant in writing that subsidy payments will be suspended and the Bridges contract terminated. If the participant wishes to continue receiving a Bridges subsidy at a different location, they must be issued a new Certificate of Participation-Statement of Participant Obligation (Form 6) and Request for Lease Approval (Form 10). The HA should notify the LMHA.

Landlord Gives Participant Notice to Move. The landlord may give the participant notice to move (not connected with an eviction) and notify the HA only if the lease provisions permit such a notice. The HA should notify the LMHA. The participant may wish to locate to a new unit and continue to receive the Bridges subsidy.

Landlord Issues an Eviction Notice to Participant. If the landlord issues an eviction notice, the requirements of the lease and state and local laws must be followed. The Bridges provisions permit the landlord to evict the participant for one or all of the following:

- Serious and repeated lease violations

- Violations of federal, state or local law in connection with the occupancy or use of the unit and surrounding premises
- Other good cause

The landlord must send a copy of the eviction notice to the HA at the same time it is served on the participant. The participant may, at the HA's discretion, remain eligible for Bridges, subject to the provisions of Termination of Eligibility in this guide and the Consumer Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility, and may seek other housing. The HA should notify the LHMA.

One of the benefits of the cooperative agreement between the HA and the LHMA is that they are available to collaboratively respond to tenant and landlord issues and assist in resolving conflicts before they lead to eviction. The service component of the Bridges package, especially the availability and responsiveness of the service provider, is a recognizable asset noted by most landlords renting to Bridges participants, and this can be promoted when marketing the program to private market landlords.

6.04 Termination of Eligibility

A participant's eligibility to continue receiving subsidy under Bridges may be terminated for any or all of the following reasons:

- 30 percent of gross monthly income equals or exceeds full rent
- Failure to apply for, accept or utilize Section 8 housing subsidy
- Failure to report all income, additional adults, or having a zero income for over 6 months
- Illegal drug related or violent criminal activity
- Expired Bridges/ELHIF certificate
- Now receiving Section 8 or other housing subsidy
- Voluntary termination
- Unable to live independently
- Skipped out/unable to locate
- Evicted
- Refusal to cooperate with recertification or HQS inspection process
- Deceased

All participants must have the option to request an informal hearing similar to a Housing Choice Voucher informal hearing to contest the termination of their subsidy. The procedures to be used in conducting informal hearings are described in Intake/Eligibility/Certification (Section 4).

The administrator must report to Minnesota Housing the reason why the household ended their participation in the Bridges program. Reporting on household terminations is submitted on the Minnesota Housing monthly payment request form.

Appendix A – Mental Illness

1.) Adults.

Minnesota Statute 245.462, subdivision 20, Mental illness. (a) *"Mental illness" means an organic disorder of the brain or a clinically significant disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, memory, or behavior that is listed in the clinical manual of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9-CM), current edition, code range 290.0 to 302.99 or 306.0 to 316.0 or the corresponding code in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-MD), current edition, Axes I, II, or III, and **that seriously limits a person's capacity to function in primary aspects of daily living** such as personal relations, living arrangements, work, and recreation.* (b) An "adult with acute mental illness" means an adult who has a mental illness that is serious enough to require prompt intervention. (c) For purposes of case management and community support services, a "person with serious and persistent mental illness" means an adult who has a mental illness and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- (1) The adult has undergone two or more episodes of inpatient care for a mental illness within the preceding 24 months;
- (2) The adult has experienced a continuous psychiatric hospitalization or residential treatment exceeding six months' duration within the preceding 12 months;
- (3) The adult has been treated by a crisis team two or more times within the preceding 24 months;
- (4) The adult:
 - (i) Has a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, or borderline personality disorder;
 - (ii) Indicates a significant impairment in functioning; and
 - (iii) Has a written opinion from a mental health professional, in the last three years, stating that the adult is reasonably likely to have future episodes requiring inpatient or residential treatment, of a frequency described in clause (1) or (2), unless ongoing case management or community support services are provided;
- (5) The adult has, in the last three years, been committed by a court as a person who is mentally ill under chapter 253B, or the adult's commitment has been stayed or continued; or
- (6) The adult (i) was eligible under clauses (1) to (5), but the specified time period has expired or the adult was eligible as a child under section 245.4871, subdivision 6; and (ii) has a written opinion from a mental health professional, in the last three years, stating that the adult is reasonably likely

to have future episodes requiring inpatient or residential treatment, of a frequency described in clause (1) or (2), unless ongoing case management or community support services are provided.

2.) Child.

Minnesota Statute 245.462, subdivision 6, for purposes of eligibility for case management and family community support services, "child with severe emotional disturbance" means a child who has an emotional disturbance and who meets one of the following criteria:

- a.) The child has been admitted within the last three years or is at risk of being admitted to inpatient treatment or residential treatment for an emotional disturbance; or
- b.) The child is a Minnesota resident and is receiving inpatient treatment or residential treatment for an emotional disturbance through the interstate compact; or
- c.) The child has one of the following as determined by a mental health professional:
 - i) Psychosis or a clinical depression; or
 - ii) Risk of harming self or others as a result of an emotional disturbance; or
 - iii) Psychopathological symptoms as a result of being a victim of physical or sexual abuse or of psychic trauma within the past year; or
- d.) The child, as a result of an emotional disturbance, has significantly impaired home, school, or community functioning that has lasted at least one year or that, in the written opinion of a mental health professional, presents substantial risk of lasting at least one year. The term "child with severe emotional disturbance" shall be used only for purposes of county eligibility determinations. In all other written and oral communications, case managers, mental health professionals, mental health practitioners, and all other providers of mental health services shall use the term "child eligible for mental health case management" in place of "child with severe emotional disturbance."