



Bridges and Bridges Regional Treatment Center Rental Assistance Programs Guide

June 2021



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Chapter 1 – Program Overview

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (Minnesota Housing), in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division (DHS-BHD), manages the Bridges Rental Assistance Program (Bridges). Minnesota Housing enters into contracts with local Housing Agencies to provide assistance to eligible households. Bridges goals are to:

- Provide housing subsidies for people with mental illness who are experiencing housing instability in order to bridge the time until a federal or other permanent housing subsidy program is available
- Maintain and foster the integration of people with mental illness into their communities through a partnership of housing subsidy and supportive services

Bridges provides a temporary housing subsidy for Participants in which at least one adult member has a mental illness and whose household gross income is under 50% of the area median. Bridges funds may be used to pay rent directly to a landlord, security deposits, application fees, utility connection fees, damage claims and vacancy payments. The housing subsidy is provided while the Participant is on a waiting list for federal or other permanent housing subsidy programs or it is provided to a Participant who will apply when the waiting list opens.

Minnesota Housing enters into Bridges Grant Contract Agreements with local Housing Agencies (housing authority, nonprofit organizations and/ or tribal nation) some of which also manage a permanent housing subsidy program. The Agencies work with applicants and issue monthly housing subsidies that are paid to the landlord on behalf of Participants. The Housing Agency partners with a Local Mental Health Entity (LMH Entity) and a Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and partners that provide Housing Stabilization Services in the region in order to provide access to culturally appropriate behavioral health and Housing Stabilization Services. The LMH Entity enters into a Cooperative Agreement with the Housing Agency to define roles and responsibilities under Bridges. Participation in services and housing are voluntary, so the Housing Agency, LMH Entity, and Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services need a clear partnership and strategy for supporting the Participant's ongoing health and housing stability. The standards for the Cooperative Agreement and partnership expectations can be found later in this guide.

Bridges serves as a transition to a permanent subsidy, and many provisions of the program are similar to those in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. Examples of similar HCV Program polices include verification of income, leasing procedures, federal Housing Quality Standards (HQS) and payment standard limits on rents. However, Bridges has required priorities for serving households who have histories of instability and Homelessness and the program is therefore designed to be more flexible in admission criteria. The Bridges housing subsidy is determined by a calculation using the gross income of the household and does not include the same deductions that are used in the HCV Program to include utility allowances. The maximum subsidy is the

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difference between the Participant Rent and the contract rent, up to the local payment standard (LPS).

Once initial eligibility has been determined, a Bridges Participant remains eligible to receive a housing subsidy if the housing assistance is still needed, the household is waiting for another permanent rental subsidy, and the household complies with program requirements.

The Bridges Regional Treatment Center Program (Bridges RTC) is a program that is administered through the same rules and procedures contained in this Program Guide, with some exceptions noted throughout. Bridges RTC provides a subsidy for people who meet Bridges eligibility criteria and who are being discharged from the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC), St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, now known as Forensic Services.

Chapter 2 – General Administrative Requirements

2.01 Governing Statute

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

2.02 Entities

Current Bridges and Bridges RTC administrators, and new applicants are eligible to apply for funding if they meet the requirements listed below.

Eligible Bridges Applicants: Eligible Bridges applicants must be a Housing Agency, tribal nation, or nonprofit organization with demonstrated experience working with low-income housing programs and with people exiting institutions, segregated settings, and supervised release. In order to be eligible, the application must also include a partnership with a Local Mental Health Entity (LMH Entity) that will collaborate with the Bridges administrator to implement the program. The partnership must also identify behavioral health service partners that can and are committed to serve Bridges participants in the service area.

An LMH Entity can be:

- A Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) operating under the authority of the county
- A tribal nation mental health agency operating under the authority of the tribal government
- An Adult Mental Health Initiative, which is a collaboration of county LMHAs and/or a tribal nation mental health agency that provides or enhances coordination of the delivery of mental health services required under the Minnesota Adult Mental Health Act

Subgrantees

Grantees may serve a large geographic area, and as a result, they may have partnered with subgrantees such as other Housing Agencies, a qualified nonprofit, or a tribal nation to better serve Participants in the region. If a subgrantee arrangement exists, grantees are expected to enter into formal agreements with subgrantees and impose, at a minimum, the same expectations that Minnesota Housing requires of grantees. In addition, grantees should help ensure that communication received from Minnesota Housing is relayed to subgrantees.

2.03 Service Area

Each Housing Agency administering Bridges will operate in the geographic area indicated in its Bridges Grant Contract Agreement, which is known as the Service Area. Minnesota Housing must receive a written notification of the change and approve any change in the Service Area designation.

2.04 Cooperative Agreement

Bridges operates as a partnership between the Housing Agency that provides housing subsidies and an LMH Entity, 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. The Housing Agency, LMH Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies, and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services will perform the duties indicated in the Cooperative Agreement. Any changes in the Cooperative Agreement must be approved by the county or tribal nation. Minnesota Housing must receive a written notification of the change and approve any change and complete an amendment to the contract. The LMH Entity must notify DHS-BHD of these changes.

The goal of the Cooperative Agreement is to assist people with mental illness in obtaining and retaining stable, affordable housing within their community. Other aspects of the Cooperative Agreement should contain:

- Designation of the Parties (LMH Entity, Housing Agency, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services) entering into the Cooperative Agreement and unique features of the parties
- Terms of the Cooperative Agreement, including the duration
- Purpose, such as:
 - To foster cooperation between parties;
 - To assist people with mental illness in accessing appropriate housing, treatment, supportive services, and income supports
 - To assist people with mental illness to live in the community
- Guiding Principles
 - People with mental illness are full members of the community with all rights, privileges, opportunities, and responsibilities accorded to all people
 - People with mental illness are not required to accept services
 - Support services are:
 - Based on need, preferences, and desires
 - Offered to the individual in the least restrictive manner
 - Flexible in location, intensity, and schedule
- Responsibilities
 - Lists the roles and responsibilities of the Housing Agency and the LMH Entity and Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services to include:

- Who the referral sources will be and the process of referral; how are the resources identified for Bridges participants;
- Who will provide housing placement and housing stability services
- Who will assist with transition planning and applying for permanent housing
- Lists the Participants to be serve
- Lists the services available to Participants
- 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
 - The process for modification, amendment, or termination of the Cooperative Agreement
 - Resolution of problems
 - Interagency meetings, including frequency; attendees, if known; dates
 - Involvement of Participants
 - Designation of liaisons to oversee, facilitate, monitor, and evaluate the Cooperative Agreement

Each Housing Agency must provide Minnesota Housing with a copy of the Cooperative Agreement as well as any subsequent modifications, amendments, or terminations. Minnesota Housing and DHS-BHD will review the Cooperative Agreement and make suggestions for modification. Executed copies of the Cooperative Agreement will be an exhibit to the Grant Contract Agreement and should be maintained by all parties to the Cooperative Agreement. (A sample [Cooperative Agreement](#) is provided on Minnesota Housing’s website.)

The Housing Agency, LMH Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies, and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services will gather input from Participants in order to review the program and identify areas of strength and improvement.

2.05 Data Privacy

In working with applicants and Participants, the Housing Agency, LMH Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services 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 is available on Minnesota Housing’s website at www.mnhousing.gov. This statement must be completed at initial occupancy and retained in the Participant’s file.

Additionally, the Housing Agency and LMH Entity need to use their own Release of Information (ROI) forms to share Participant information and complete income verification inquiries. All ROIs that are signed by the Participant must be kept in both Housing Agency and LMH Entity files.

2.06 Foundational Service Practices

The concept of foundational service practices arises from the Minnesota Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, which identifies four relevant areas of program implementation believed to have the greatest potential to positively impact outcomes for people experiencing Homelessness. Bridges administrators must establish these standards to more effectively serve individuals and families who experience challenges in accessing and maintaining participation in Bridges. They must also continuously improve practices as they identify where they can increase outcomes.

Documents Required for Enrollment

- Instead of requiring original documents, accept copies or other confirmation such as a Social Security number rather than the original card. Avoid requiring documents that are costly to obtain.
- Assist or refer the applicant to available resources that can help in gathering needed identification materials.
- Notify secondary contact of documentation requirements.
- Offer Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Bridges Form 6) if verified efforts are underway to obtain required documentation.

Frequency of Required In-person Appointments

- An in-person appointment for the initial Briefing Session may be optional. Allow flexibility for the applicant.
- Annual recertification may be completed by fax, mail, or telephone.
- For in-person appointments, refer for assistance with transportation or offer a home visit option, if needed.
- Second and third chances – implement a lenient policy for missed appointments for people with disabling factors.
- Encourage participation of secondary contact.
- Prior to termination from Bridges due to Participant not responding to communication or appointments, attempt to reach all known contacts in an efficient manner.

Mailing Address and Phone Number Requirements

- If the applicant is unable to provide an address, encourage them to provide the address of a family member, a friend, a social service provider, or a secondary contact. Update secondary contact information annually.

- Refer applicant to services for a free or low-cost cell phone, voicemail, or P.O. box.

Communication Methods

- Provide multiple methods of communication, recognizing the barriers that mental illness can present in communication. Use mail, phone, fax, email. Text from a work phone if able and requested.
- Release of Information (ROI) for service provider, representative payee, or other secondary contact assisting the person is recommended. If an ROI is obtained, include the secondary contact on receipt of mailed and emailed documents.
- Clearly state open office hours.
- Provide opportunities for face-to-face communication. Clearly inform clients of the process and expectations.
- Clearly state in writing what changes or notices are required for continued participation.

In addition to the areas identified by the Minnesota Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, the following two other areas of practice are required within Bridges. Administrators are also expected to align their policies to adhere to the following areas of service practices:

Criminal History

Bridges intake does not require a credit or rental history background check and is often more flexible than the HCV Program regarding criminal histories. Housing Agencies, the LHM Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies, and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services should refer Participants to housing navigation resources or assist Participants with finding an eligible rental unit that they can qualify for based on screening criteria. Criminal history is evaluated to:

- Determine whether an applicant is a lifetime registered sex offender or has been convicted of methamphetamine production in public housing. This does not disqualify them from Bridges, but must be considered as it does disqualify them from other federal subsidies, and a plan to transition to other permanent housing options will be necessary
- Develop ways to support the individual in transition to the HCV Program
- Identify if tenancy supports and landlord engagement strategies are needed

Documenting Housing Status

- Bridges does not require that an individual or family be experiencing Homelessness to apply; however, all Housing Agencies are required to have a preference for individuals leaving Institutions or who are experiencing Homelessness.
- If a household is claiming preference points, evidence that the household meets that preference must be verified and kept in the Participant file.

2.07 Program Obligations – Checklist of Responsibility

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The following is a list of activities that are carried out in implementing Bridges. For each activity, either the Housing Agency, LMH Entity, Behavioral Service Agency/Agencies, and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services or a combination, may be responsible. Responsibilities vary for different implementations of Bridges and must be described in the Cooperative Agreement. Only the Housing Agency and LMH Entity will be required to sign the Cooperative Agreement, but at least one Behavioral Service Agency/Agencies, and one partner providing Housing Stabilization Services with appropriate resources to provide services, must identify activities. Organizations should use this list as a tool for program development and as a resource for the creation of the Cooperative Agreement.

| Activity | Housing Agency | LMH Entity | Behavioral Health Service Agency/ Agencies or partners providing Housing Stabilization Services |
|---|----------------|------------|---|
| 1. Publish information on the availability and nature of the program | x | x | x |
| 2. Explain the program to the landlords, RTCs, community-based residential treatment facilities, counties, shelters, social service staff, applicants, and Participants | x | x | x |
| 3. Develop a variety of housing options and strengthen relationships with landlords and managers to make units available for Bridges Participants who may have barriers to housing | x | | |
| 4. Develop an ROI form for use between the Housing Agency, Service Providers, and the LMH Entity | x | x | x |
| 5. Inform of housing options outside areas of economic and racial concentration | x | x | x |
| 6. Outreach to potential applicants meeting Bridges priorities: a. People residing in an Institution or other Segregated Setting to include people on correctional supervision who will be homeless upon exit b. People who are experiencing Homelessness and are in need of Permanent Supportive Housing | x | x | x |

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| Activity | Housing Agency | LMH Entity | Behavioral Health Service Agency/ Agencies or partners providing Housing Stabilization Services |
|--|----------------|------------|---|
| c. People who are experiencing Homelessness or who are at Imminent Risk of Homelessness | | | |
| 7. Verify diagnosis of people with mental illness | | x | x |
| 8. For Bridges RTC, verify that the applicant meets the additional eligibility criteria | x | x | x |
| 9. Verify income and assets | x | x | x |
| 10. Maintain an applicant waiting list | x | x | x |
| 11. Communicate with the Continuum of Care (CoC) regarding referrals from Coordinated Entry (CE) | x | | |
| 12. Conduct Briefing Sessions explaining Participant’s rights and responsibilities, including payment responsibilities | x | | |
| 13. Verify applicant’s HCV Program eligibility and waiting list status | x | | |
| 14. Calculate subsidy and Participant Rent | x | | |
| 15. Assist Participant with housing appeals for denial of eligibility | | x | |
| 16. Assist Participant in locating appropriate housing | x | x | x |
| 17. Negotiate lease and conditions with landlord | x | x | x |
| 18. Determine eligibility of selected units based on rent, unit size, and lease provisions | x | | |
| 19. Conduct HQS inspection of selected units | x | | |
| 20. Enter into, administer, and enforce Bridges Contracts with landlords | x | | |
| 21. Make payments to landlords | x | | |
| 22. Conduct annual and interim recertification of Participant eligibility | x | | |
| 23. Terminate Bridges subsidy for Participants who violate program regulations, become | x | | |

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| Activity | Housing Agency | LMH Entity | Behavioral Health Service Agency/ Agencies or partners providing Housing Stabilization Services |
|---|----------------|------------|---|
| ineligible for the HCV Program, or refuse an HCV subsidy when offered | | | |
| 24. Maintain financial management records | x | | |
| 25. Maintain Participant demographic information | x | x | |
| 26. Report required information to Minnesota Housing | x | | |
| 27. Provide after-hours emergency response to landlords, Participants, and the Housing Agency | | x | x |
| 28. Assist Participants who choose to be served with the following: a. Case Management services b. Diagnosis and treatment of mental illness 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) | | x | x |
| 29. Notify Housing Agency of absences by Participants during medical behavioral health treatment or psychiatric crisis | | x | x |
| 30. Recalculate subsidy payment and utilities for Participants during medical or psychiatric crisis | x | | |

| Activity | Housing Agency | LMH Entity | Behavioral Health Service Agency/ Agencies or partners providing Housing Stabilization Services |
|--|----------------|------------|---|
| 31. Partner to increase the supply and options of housing available to people with mental illness (e.g., location, style, rent levels, flexible services, integration) | x | x | |

2.08 Applicant/Participant Records

Each Housing Agency will establish files for applicants and Participants. Minnesota Housing requires that these files contain copies of all Participant and property related forms listed below. The following forms are available on Minnesota Housing’s website at www.mnhousing.gov. Some of the following required documents do not have a specific form, as noted below, and Housing Agencies are expected to provide documentation in a format that contains the required elements. Required Bridges forms are updated regularly, and Housing Agencies are responsible for using the most current version of the required forms.

Required file documentation:

| Form | Required – 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 Disclosure Statement and Acknowledgement (signed by all adults 18 or older on lease) | x | | |
| 4. Verification of Mental Illness (Form 4) – Specific records and documents detailing the nature of applicant’s illness should be retained by the LMH Entity | x | | |
| 5. Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Form 6) | x | | |
| 6. Participant Agreement for Requirements of Continued Eligibility (Form 7) | x | | x |
| 7. Income and Asset Verification | | x | x |
| 8. Computing Gross Income, Participant Rent and Subsidy (Form 8) | | x | x |

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| Form | Required – Specific Format | Required – Various Formats Accepted | Required Annually |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 9. Lead-based Paint Certification (if applicable) | x | | |
| 10. Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections | x | | x |
| 11. Executed lease agreement (no specific form; must be one to 12 month term) | | x | |
| 12. Addendum to Lease (Form 12) | x | | |
| 13. Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13) (if applicable) | x | | |
| 14. Bridges Contract (Form 14) | x | | |
| 15. Certification and Authorization for Payment of Rent and Deposits During Crisis (Form 24) | x | | |
| 16. Evidence of homeless status or release from Institution required for Participants claiming waiting list priority points and all Bridges RTC Participants | | x | |
| 17. Eligibility/ineligibility notices sent to applicants/Participants by Housing Agency or LMH Entity | | x | |
| 18. Letters and notifications of outcome from informal hearings | | x | |
| 19. Documents and correspondence concerning the Participant’s application and participation in Bridges | | x | |
| 20. Initialed and dated notations regarding conversations about the Participant | | x | |
| 21. Notice of termination | | x | |

The main file for each applicant and Participant is kept by the Housing Agency. The Housing Agency may share any documentation that may be needed by the LMH Entity in carrying out its responsibilities to provide supportive services, provided an ROI has been completed. Both the Housing Agency and the LMH Entity need to retain a copy of the ROI in its permanent records. The sharing of information and documents should be outlined in the Cooperative Agreement.

2.09 Monitoring and Evaluation

Minnesota Housing will conduct ongoing evaluations of the financial reports and Participant files submitted by the Housing Agency. If the grant award is over \$250,000, annual monitoring

will be required. If the grant award is less than that amount, monitoring will be required once during the biennium.

Minnesota Housing will review Participant files kept on site at the Housing Agency during site visits or through an audit of requested files. Review of the Housing Agency and LMH Entity partnership will also be conducted on a regular basis by both DHS-BHD and Minnesota Housing. The review may contain the following components:

- Participant files:
 - Verification of income and eligibility
 - Calculation of Participant Rent
 - Fair Market Rent (FMR) limits/local payment standards (LPS)
 - Lease agreements and contracts
 - Housing Quality Standards (HQS)
 - Additional information as required
- Financial records detailing:
 - Expenditures for subsidy payments to landlords
 - Security deposits
 - Payments during medical and psychiatric crises
 - Balance sheet and check register
- Cooperative Agreement:
 - Partnership and communication
 - Management of capacity and funds
 - LMH Entity adherence to the Program Guide
 - Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and partners providing Housing Stabilization Services adherence to the Program Guide
 - Housing Agency adherence to the Program Guide
- Interview of case managers, community support staff, and Participants

State Monitoring of Grantees: Grantees and subgrantees are responsible for maintaining financial records that document the use of all Bridges funds and that include all eligible payments. Grantees will be required to provide Minnesota Housing with a monitoring summary on the annual narrative report, which will include information on subgrantees. After completion of the grant term, grantees and subgrantees are expected to maintain all records for a minimum of six years after the grant term has ended. In addition to program financial records, client records must also be maintained for a minimum of six years after the grant term has

ended. In addition, Minnesota Housing reserves the right to review financial and client records during this period, and records must be made available upon request.

Grantee Monitoring of Subgrantees: Grantees are expected to monitor subgrantee activities. Subgrantees should not receive advanced payment; rather, they should be required to submit an invoice with supporting documentation for services and assistance prior to receiving reimbursement from grantees. Grantees must determine that the Participants meet all the eligibility requirements prior to the subgrantee providing assistance. Subgrantees must also provide rental assistance calculations, verification of income and HQS inspection results to grantees before grantees can request from Minnesota Housing a rental payment for the Participant. Any payments made in error to an unqualified Participant, or incorrectly calculated, will be the responsibility of the grantee. Minnesota Housing is not responsible for reimbursement of erroneous or incorrectly calculated payments made to subgrantees.

In addition, if subgrantees are responsible for maintaining client files, grantees must, at a minimum, monitor them annually to help ensure proper procedures are followed and documentation is collected (refer to client file requirements for details).

Grantees must consult with Minnesota Housing staff in a timely manner any concerns that arise regarding the performance of a subgrantee, through monitoring or any other means, in areas such as client files or financial management. Minnesota Housing may recommend grantees take further action such as providing additional monitoring or developing a performance improvement plan with subgrantees.

2.10 Financial Management/Records

The Housing Agency must establish one or more separate bank accounts (checking or savings) for Bridges payments from Minnesota Housing. The Housing Agency may combine these funds with other funds in a consolidated account, provided that the Housing Agency'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. Minnesota Housing will request financial information once during the biennium due to financial reconciliation requirements. The Housing Agency must maintain and make available records of payments to landlords.

2.11 Funding Reimbursement

Housing Agencies will prepare and submit to Minnesota Housing monthly payment requests that detail actual expenditures and Participant information for the previous month. The required [Rental Assistance Draw Request Form](#) is available on Minnesota Housing's website. The information collected on the Rental Assistance Draw Request Form includes:

- Actual expenses incurred in the payment of rent and eligible housing related expenses for the previous month

- A monthly Participant log for the previous month, which consists of information such as Participant name, unit address, move-in date, move-out date, contract rent, Participant Rent, subsidy amount, and security deposit amount, if paid from Bridges funds.

Minnesota Housing will use the monthly Rental Assistance Draw Request Form data to determine the reimbursement amount to be sent to the Housing Agency. The Housing Agency should submit the request for funds to Minnesota Housing no later than the 15th of each month, unless other arrangements have been approved by Minnesota Housing. At the end of the term of the Bridges Grant Contract Agreement, the Housing Agency must refund any excess subsidy funds or administrative fees.

2.12 Administrative Fee

At the time of selection for funding, Minnesota Housing will approve a monthly administrative fee for the Housing Agency, and it will be described in the Bridges Grant Contract Agreement. The administrative fee will be paid each month in which a Participant resides in an eligible Assisted Unit.

Minnesota Housing will approve administrative fees that range from \$53 per household per month to \$68 per household per month, based on the target number of households, the amount of the grant, the geography of the Service Area, the population served, and other relevant criteria.

2.13 Future Funding

Funding for Bridges will be allocated through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Minnesota Housing and DHS-BHD may follow one, both, or a combination of each of the following funding processes for a biennium. All current grantees and interested parties are encouraged to apply for Bridges funds. Housing Agencies with a current Bridges Grant Contract Agreement may be considered for funding based on the results of performance reviews, need, and utilization. New applications may be solicited, to reach underserved areas and to identify Housing Agencies that provide culturally competent services and have referral sources that reach Black, Indigenous and People of Color that are exiting institutions, other segregated settings, or that are on supervised release.

The scoring methodology is designed to incentivize grantees to be high performing agencies that strive to:

- Improve program design and procedures to efficiently serve the region identified in the contract
- Develop staffing models and practices that create access for people with mental illness and diverse populations with high barriers to housing
- Create collaborative behavioral health service system partnerships that promote the best possible service outcomes for program Participants

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- Track outcomes to show improved program practices

Chapter 3 – Household Eligibility, Intake and Certification

3.01 Bridges and Bridges RTC Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Bridges and Bridges RTC Applicants: Eligible Bridges applicants must be a Housing Agency, tribal nation, or nonprofit organization with demonstrated experience working with people exiting institutions, segregated settings, and supervised release. In order to be eligible, the application must also include a partnership with a Local Mental Health Entity (LMH Entity) that will collaborate with the Bridges administrator to implement the program. The partnership must also include behavioral health service partners that have or can acquire resources or can and are committed to serve Bridges Participants in the service area.

An LMH Entity can be:

- A Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) operating under the authority of the county
- A tribal nation mental health agency operating under the authority of the tribal government
- An Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI), which is a collaboration of county LMHAs and/or a tribal nation mental health agency that provides or enhances coordination of the delivery of mental health services under the Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act

NOTE: The application requires the expertise of both the Bridges rental assistance administrator and the LMH Entity in order to successfully respond.

Bridges RTC is designed to help individuals move from hospitalization at one of the specified state-operated facilities, to living in an integrated setting in the community of his or her choice. Referrals may come directly from AMRTC, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center/ Forensic Services, the LMH Entity or from other agencies. Participants should be contacted early about their housing preferences, well in advance of not meeting hospital level of care criteria. Identified Participants may transition to Intensive Residential Treatment Services (IRTS) or other treatment prior to community housing and retain their eligibility for Bridges RTC. Bridges RTC may be used as a diversion from AMRTC, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center/ Forensic Services hospitalization in some cases, with prior written approval from Minnesota Housing and DHS-BHD.

3.03 Tribal Nations and Nonprofit Organizations

Programs operated by a tribal nation may have alternate eligibility criteria and rules around the HCV waiting list requirements that align with the permanent housing programs managed by the tribal nation. Because tribal nations and nonprofit organizations do not manage an HCV Program, Bridges policies that are specific to HCV Program alignment may not apply. Any alternate eligibility criteria or rules must be approved in writing by Minnesota Housing.

3.04 Outreach

Information about Bridges should be widely distributed by the LMH Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies, and the Housing Agency to people with mental illness who are experiencing housing instability or living in a segregated setting. Specifically, information will be provided to regional treatment centers, corrections staff, community-based residential treatment facilities, homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, board and lodges, county case managers, county employment workers, community mental health centers, drop-in centers, and Community Support Services Programs. The programs should also strive to serve households disproportionately impacted by Homelessness or housing instability and develop outreach efforts to improve their ability to serve these households in their region. If the Housing Agency is not a tribal nation, and there is tribal land in the service region, specifics should be included to reach individuals on the reservation. If there is not tribal land in the service area, strategies to reach Indigenous people living in the area should be identified. People 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 LMH Entity and the Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies are primarily responsible for outreach. Outreach should be well described in the Cooperative Agreement.

3.05 Application

Bridges applicants are required to complete the Application for Bridges Program (Form 2) and a Minnesota Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement. The LMH Entity or Behavioral Health Service Agency Agencies must verify that the head of household or another adult household member has mental illness as defined by the Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act. The LMH Entity must review that a qualified Mental Health Professional has signed the Verification of Mental Illness (Form 4) and has submitted it to the Housing Agency in a timely fashion. A mental health diagnosis is based on a diagnostic assessment not more than two years old. The Mental Health Professional must include documentation of this determination in the Participant's case file. At time of application, information regarding all the applicant's previous living situations prior to program intake and extent of Homelessness must be collected and submitted upon participation in Bridges.

As part of application activity, the LMH Entity 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 Aid (MSA)
- Inform applicants of what types of mental health services, community support services, and program services they are eligible for and make referrals for these services if the 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 a Bridges subsidy, they must also be eligible to receive a federal or other permanent housing subsidy and accept the other subsidy when it is offered
- Develop and provide to each applicant a written document that incorporates the information in this section, as well as provide the information to the applicant verbally

3.06 Housing Choice Voucher Waiting List Requirements

Bridges Participants are required to apply for and accept, when offered, a federal or other permanent housing subsidy, primarily the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, formerly known as Section 8. The Housing Agency will require Bridges applicants to complete an HCV application at the time of the Bridges 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 HCV program as soon as the waiting list opens. The Housing Agency is responsible for notifying Bridges Participants of HCV waiting list openings. A Participant may apply to HCV programs outside of the area but is not required to do so.

Participant files must contain evidence of the HCV application, or other permanent housing option, 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.

While the Participant is receiving a Bridges subsidy, the Housing Agency, LMH Entity, or Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies will monitor the applicant's status on the HCV waiting list(s) or assist the Participant to apply for an HCV when the waiting list opens. If a Participant does not accept an HCV, becomes ineligible, or refuses to apply for an HCV, the Participant may be terminated from Bridges.

3.07 Final Subsidy Review

The Housing Agency will calculate the subsidy based on gross income and issue the Participant a Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Form 6). Income limits for Bridges are based on 50% of area median income as defined by The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

3.08 Appeals Process

Applicants and Participants may request an informal hearing to contest a determination made by the LMH Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies, or Housing Agency concerning eligibility to participate or for continued participation in Bridges. The LMH Entity or Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies is responsible for disability-related eligibility appeals. The Housing Agency will be responsible for housing-related appeals. The Housing Agency will use procedures established for use in its HCV administrative plan, or otherwise written procedures in the case of a Housing Agency without an 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 or her own evidence in support of eligibility or continued eligibility.

The applicant or Participant must be encouraged to have the LMH Entity or Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies 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 reason(s) for the determination.

3.09 Calculating Gross Income

Gross income includes all income expected to be received in the next 12 months for all household members age 18 and over, 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, professional trade, 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 worker's 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 people not residing with the participant
- Regular and/or special pay and allowances for a member of the armed services who is the head of household or the spouse of the head of household

Gross income does not include:

- Earned income of minors (age 17 and under)

- Income of live-in healthcare aides
- Casual, sporadic, or irregular gifts
- Amounts specifically for reimbursement of medical costs, including Medicaid spend-down
- Inheritances, one-time insurance payments, capital gains, settlements for personal losses or Property losses, and similar lump sum amounts
- Educational grants or scholarships paid expressly for tuition, fees, books, or equipment (amounts not specified for these purposes are counted as income)
- Combat pay for a Participant head of household who is in the armed services
- Relocation payments made under the federal Uniform Relocation Act (URA)
- Foster care payments
- Value of allotments such as food stamps and fuel assistance
- Payments made for people participating in federal or state volunteer programs
- Advance payments of the child tax credit authorized under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021
- Emergency rental assistance payments authorized under either Section 501 of Division N of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, or section 3201 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, section 3201

3.10 Verification of Income and Assets

Regarding verification of income and assets, Bridges follows HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook located at www.hud.gov, which explains verification by a third party. A Housing Agency may use the procedure it has adopted in its HCV administrative plan, or otherwise written procedures in the case of a Housing Agency without an HCV administrative plan.

Verified information must be no more than 120 days old prior to the award of the Bridges Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations. 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 – most recent check stub from issuing organization

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- Social Security – current award letter
- Unemployment compensation – determination letter or most recent check stub
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – award letter or most recent check stub
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) – award letter or most recent check stub
- Workers' Compensation – determination letter or most 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/savings and loan statements, etc.

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

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

3.11 Bridges Waiting List

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

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

Bridges is designed to assist people with high needs through housing subsidies that are linked with community mental health services. To achieve this goal, administrators must prioritize the following populations, with highest priority given to people residing in an institution or other segregated setting who will be homeless upon exit. The following priorities must be identified in the Housing Agency's waiting list management and tenant selection plan:

1. People living in an institution, segregated setting, **or under correctional supervision** who will be homeless **upon exit**.

2. People experiencing homelessness who are **assessed as High Priority Homeless through the Coordinated Entry system, including households of individuals, families with children, or youth (age 18+)**.
3. People who are experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Institutions: Institutions include facilities such as regional treatment centers, community behavioral health hospitals, nursing homes, adult foster care settings, or other hospital or residential treatment centers, jails, and prisons.

Segregated Settings: As defined by Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan, segregated settings “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.”

Correctional Supervision: A community -based sentence which is served by the offender in the community under the control and supervision of Correctional Officials, subject to conditions which have been set by the court or the Commissioner of Correctional Services.

To evaluate if a setting is potentially segregated, use the three criteria listed in the segregated settings definition. Behavioral health residential treatment facilities, including mental health and substance use disorder treatment programs, are typically segregated settings. Tribal definitions of segregated settings and institutions, if identified as different than above, will also be considered.

The Housing Agency must submit its waiting list selection plan to Minnesota Housing for review and approval. The plan must be developed jointly by the Housing Agency, the LMH Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies, and where applicable, tribal nation. 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. Minnesota Housing may consider waiting list selection plan proposals that set aside a specific number of subsidies for households at Imminent Risk of Homelessness, in particular for Service Areas where low rental vacancy rates are contributing to administrators having difficulty utilizing subsidies.

Applicants who are experiencing Homelessness and claiming preference under priority two or three above must be referred from the local Coordinated Entry (CE), when it is available, with the exception for households who are at Imminent Risk of Homelessness. Verification of any waiting list priority must be kept in the applicant/Participant file. Tribal nation programs and nonprofit organizations may develop an alternate referral practice, which must be approved in writing by Minnesota Housing.

3.12 Verification of Bridges Waiting List Priorities and Bridges RTC Eligibility

The Housing Agency must retain evidence in the Participant file for Participants who are prioritized under priority one above. The LMH Entity is responsible for providing this evidence, which may be noted on the Verification of Mental Illness (Form 4), or on a separate document, and retained in the Participant file. People residing in an Institution or other Segregated Setting who will be Homeless Upon Discharge are not required to be assessed by or referred from CE.

For the second and third waiting list priorities, required documentation will be provided by CE and will demonstrate the assessment or ranking. Households at Imminent Risk of Homelessness are not required to be referred from CE and must provide evidence such as an eviction notice or notice of condemnation.

Verification that a person is at AMRTC, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center/ Forensic Services, or was prior to entering an IRTS, is required for Bridges RTC. Verification may come from the referral source, which is usually the IRTS, RTC, county, or a tribal nation. People who are eligible but not identified while at AMRTC or Forensic Services may have that evidence confirmed after the fact by the facility.

3.13 Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations

The administrator will issue a Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Form 6) to each eligible Participant when they reach the top of the waiting list and are offered a rental subsidy. This document certifies that the Participant is eligible for Bridges and outlines the criteria for an eligible Assisted Unit. The document also describes the process and required documents for obtaining the subsidy as well as the Participant’s obligations.

The Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participation allows the Participant 90 days to locate an eligible Assisted Unit and submit necessary documents to the Housing Agency. If a unit is not located within that timeframe, the Housing Agency has the discretion of extending the Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations.

A signed Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations is retained in the Participant file after it is issued at a Briefing Session where the program requirements are verbally explained to the Participant. The Housing Agency must inform the Participant during the Briefing Session that if they need additional time to locate an eligible Assisted Unit, they should contact the Housing Agency to request an extension of the certificate.

3.14 Unit Size (Occupancy Standards)

The Housing Agency may use the unit size (occupancy standards) established for their HCV Program. If different than the HCV Program, or if the Housing Agency does not have an HCV Program, 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 household member living with a disability, regardless of age. The Housing Agency 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% of the time
- Who are in the unit under foster care
- Who are temporarily absent due to placement in a foster home

The Housing Agency and LMH Entity may establish criteria for granting exceptions to the occupancy standards. Exception criteria may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Unique disability-related circumstances of the Participant
- Availability of the specified size in the Housing Agency's Service Area
- Housing market conditions prevalent in the Housing Agency's Service 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.

3.15 Rent Limits

The maximum subsidy available to the Participant is the difference between 30% of their gross income and the area Fair Market Rent (FMR)/local payment standard (LPS) or contract rent, whichever is less. The Participant may rent a unit that exceeds the area FMR/LPS; however, the Participant is responsible for paying the difference. The maximum Participant Rent allowed is 40% of their gross monthly income. Bridges does not include utility allowances. FMRs are published by HUD annually and can be obtained at www.hud.gov. The LPS is established by the local Public Housing Authority (often the same as the Housing Agency) and is based on the FMR. Tribal nation programs may use an alternate written affordability standard. Any alternate written affordability standard must be approved in writing by Minnesota Housing prior to its implementation, with such approval being at the sole discretion of Minnesota Housing.

3.16 Calculating Participant Rent

The Participant's Rent portion is calculated in a similar manner as the HCV Program, with the exception that Bridges uses gross income, not adjusted income. The minimum Participant Rent is 30% of their monthly income and the maximum payment is 40% of their monthly income.

Participants can pay up to 40% of their monthly income if they choose a unit that exceeds the area FMR/LPS.

NOTE: The Bridges subsidy cannot pay more than the difference between 30% of the Participant's gross monthly income and the area FMR/LPS or the contract rent, whichever is less.

If zero income is claimed by a Participant at entry into the program, verification must occur again within 90 days and every 90 days thereafter. This verification requires the Participant to provide a signed zero income statement to the Housing Agency until a source of income is established. The LMH Entity or Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies will offer the Participant assistance in obtaining and maximizing income if the Participant wishes. It is important for the Housing Agency, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and the LMH Entity to collaborate in order to serve the target number of households by connecting households to eligible benefits and employment services.

Shared units can be provided only if allowed under the Housing Agency's HCV Program administrative plan or other written procedures approved by Minnesota Housing. The subsidy for shared households will be calculated according to the guidelines specified in the HCV Program administrative plan, except for the use of gross income for the Bridges Participant. Likewise, households that are comprised of eligible and ineligible members for the HCV Program are considered eligible for Bridges under the prorated formula defined in the HCV Program administrative plan. Tribal nation programs may use an alternate written standard, which must be approved in writing by Minnesota Housing.

3.17 Briefing Session

The Housing Agency must schedule a Briefing Session for each Participant receiving a Bridges Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations for the first time. It is recommended that an LMH Entity representative or other secondary contact such as a friend or family member attend the Briefing Session. The Housing Agency 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, if requesting and if a Participant is unable to attend in person.

A Briefing Session must cover the following topics:

- Program overview of Bridges
- Explanation of the Participant's obligations listed on the Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Form 6)
- Review of the calculation worksheet, Computing Gross Income, Participant Rent and Subsidy (Form 8) and the amount of the Participant Rent

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- 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 Assisted Units
- Service Area in which the Housing Agency may execute Bridges Contracts with landlords
- Assistance the LMH Entity, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies and Housing Agency can provide if a Participant needs help locating a unit or in receiving mental health or other supportive services

At the session, the Participant signs and receives the Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Form 6). Participants receive a briefing packet containing the following, or other similar information, which can be found on Minnesota Housing’s website, unless otherwise noted:

- Index to Participant Briefing Packet (Form 16)
- Participant Rent Payment (Form 17)
- How to Find a Rental Unit (Form 18)
- How to Find a Unit that Meets Housing Quality Standards (Form 21)
- Request for Lease Approval (Form 10)
- Information on the Fair Housing Act (available from HUD)
- Landlords and Tenants Rights and Responsibilities (available from the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office)
- Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Form 6)
- Participant Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility ((Form 7)

The Housing Agency may include additional materials that it deems useful for the Participant.

Chapter 4 – Leasing Process

4.01 Freedom of Choice in Selecting Units

Bridges will assist people with mental illness to live in various types of conventional rental housing that may be available in the Housing Agency's Service Area. While Participants may need advice about finding a unit and understanding legal requirements and options for making a selection, they have full responsibility for making the final choice. The Housing Agency, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies, and LMH Entity 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 choices.

4.02 Eligible Units

The rental unit must be eligible for use by the Participant household under the local HCV Program or other identified permanent rental subsidy. Bridges Participants may choose from eligible units, which may include:

- Units owned or substantially controlled by a Housing Agency if all of the following apply:
 - All 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 Service Area
- Units that were constructed with federal or state assistance such as Section 236 or USDA Rural Development, provided that:
 - Rents approved for Bridges Participants are the market rate for the building
 - No other deep subsidy (i.e. rent based on 30% of income) is provided to the Bridges Participant

Subsidies 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 people with 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)
- Lot rental for a landlord occupied manufactured home

4.03 Utility Allowances

Bridges does not provide utility allowances.

4.04 Inspections – Housing Quality Standards

All properties and units to be leased by Participants must be inspected by a qualified person, someone that was trained by someone that is certified in HQS, or someone that is certified with the Housing Agency. The Housing Agency can also use a contracted housing professional certified or otherwise qualified to perform HQS inspections. A standard federal form (or another version approved by HUD) must be used for reporting the results of the inspection. Units must pass the initial inspection before the Housing Agency makes a payment to the landlord. No subsidy payments from Bridges may be made for a period when the unit was not in compliance with the initial or annual HQS requirements. Exceptions may be considered for unusual circumstances, fully documented in the Participant file, and for which Minnesota Housing has given written approval.

Units must be inspected at least annually. Housing Agencies should schedule the inspection well in advance of the annual due date in order to allow time for repairs, if needed. A copy of all HQS inspections, including passes and fails, must be kept in the Participant's file.

Minnesota Housing allows virtual HQS inspections except under the circumstances listed below:

- Properties built before 1978
- Units owned or leased by landlords unfamiliar to the Housing Agency
- No more than 50% of all units assisted can be inspected virtually each year
- Landlord, Participant, or other party requests a physical inspection
- Landlord and/or tenant Participant does not have the technology or resources to complete a virtual inspection

NOTE: Re-inspections of failed items can be completed either as a physical or virtual inspection regardless of the method used in the first inspection. Re-inspections would not count toward the 50% limit on virtual inspections.

Virtual inspections must be completed using the same HQS forms, procedures, and standards as physical inspections. Special safeguards may need to be taken to protect Participant information.

4.05 Portability

Bridges Participants must lease a unit within the Service Area of the Housing Agency in which they applied. The Bridges subsidy is not portable outside of the Service Area. Participants who wish to relocate must apply to Bridges or other housing resources in their desired area. The LMH Entity and Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies will assist Participants to assess other housing options.

4.06 Leasing Procedures

The procedure for processing leases is similar to the HCV Program:

1. The Participant locates a suitable unit with assistance, if needed.
2. The Participant submits a signed Request for Lease Approval (Form 10).
3. The Housing Agency conducts an HQS inspection.
4. If the unit passes the HQS inspection, the lease and the Bridges Contract (Form 14) are signed with the landlord.

The term of the lease may not extend beyond one year. The Housing Agency, at its sole discretion, may permit lease terms from one month to 12 months. A copy of the lease, the HQS inspection report, and the Bridges Contract (Form 14) must be retained in each Participant file.

4.07 Lease Amendment/Extension

A current lease agreement is required for all Bridges Participants. Some lease agreements may have a provision for a renewal after the initial term. Renewals may be month to month or longer, up to a maximum of one year.

A Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13) must be signed at the time that a lease expires and parties to the lease would like to extend the term or when parties to the lease agree to an increase to the contract rent.

In the case of income changes, which result in a change to the rental subsidy and the tenant paid rent, a Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13) is not required, but verification of income and the calculation of the rental subsidy must be retained in the Participant file. The Housing Agency must notify the landlord and the Participant, in writing, of the new amounts.

4.08 Security Deposits

If the Participant cannot afford to make a security deposit for the Assisted Unit and no other resource is available within a reasonable amount of time, the Housing Agency, upon request of the Participant, may pay the security deposit to the landlord using Bridges funds. The security deposit may exceed one month's rent, not to exceed a double deposit (two months' rent total), when no other resources are available, and cannot be paid until after a unit passes inspection. Bridges RTC allows security deposits to be paid up to an amount equal to two months of contract rent, if necessary, to help ensure landlord cooperation and if no other resources are available within a reasonable amount of time. If the landlord requires a deposit in excess of one month's rent, other resources may be combined.

If the Participant leaves a unit and the unit has damages or unpaid rent and/or unpaid utilities, then the landlord retains all or 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 Housing Agency and Participant that the deposit, plus interest, was used to offset expenses.

Participants who are transferring to a new Assisted Unit may request assistance from the Housing Agency for a new security deposit, which may be permitted at the Housing Agency's discretion.

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

- Leaves a unit and the unit has no damages
- Leaves a unit and the unit has damages in an amount less than the security deposit
- Stays in a unit, leaves Bridges and does not receive an HCV or a permanent subsidy
- Stays in a unit, leaves Bridges and goes onto an HCV or another permanent subsidy

A Participant may retain only the balance of security deposit that has been paid from Bridges funds. If a Participant has left Bridges and reapplied and has been issued a new Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations, they may retain the balance of a second security deposit upon the sole discretion of the Housing Agency.

4.09 Payment Terms

The Bridges subsidy is equal to the contract rent less the Participant Rent. Subsidy payments will be made by the Housing Agency to the landlord on behalf of the Participants when all the following payment terms have been met:

- The Participant leases a unit within HUD's published FMR or Local Payment Standard, or if the rent exceeds these rates, the participant's payment does not exceed 40% of their monthly income
- The Participant's unit has passed an HQS inspection
- The landlord and the Housing Agency 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 Housing Agency.

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 Bridges, or the program terminates.

The contract rent plus actual cost of utilities may be paid on behalf of Participants who have a mental health crisis and have their incomes diverted. Such payments may be made for up to 90 days. Written documentation on such situations must be retained in the applicant/Participant record. Housing Agencies, Behavioral Health Service Agencies, and LHM Entities must first utilize the Crisis Housing Fund resources, if available.

4.10 Eligible Payments

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

- Direct payment to the landlord for the subsidy portion of the rent
- Payment to the landlord for the Security Deposit, payment to the landlord for application fees,
- Payment to the utility company for utility connection fees
- Payment to the landlord for the contract rent for damage claims and vacancy payments

If the Housing Agency has the budget, approval from Minnesota Housing and provisions in their administrative plan, they may utilize a portion of their Bridges funds for security deposits, damage claims, vacancy payments, application fees; utility connection fees, and other fees, as approved by Minnesota Housing that are necessary to obtain landlord participation or to prevent repeat episodes of homelessness. Administrators are responsible for communicating to the tenants the types of funds available for housing related expenses, how to access them, the frequently a participant can access the funds, how award amounts are determined, if there is a limit, etc. The administrator will be required to track and report to Minnesota Housing the amount and type of housing related expenses/discretionary fees paid on behalf of tenants, e.g., security deposits, application fees; utility connection fees, damage claims and vacancy payments; and other fees as approved in writing by Minnesota Housing that are utilized to obtain landlord participation or paid on behalf of a Participant to prevent repeat episodes of homelessness.

Damage Claims and Vacancy Payments. An administrator may pay a damage claim or vacancy payment on behalf of a tenant when:

- The documented damages were attributable to the household residing in the Bridges assisted unit and the damages exceed the security deposit that was collected by the owner at initial occupancy.
- The owner experiences a vacancy loss when a Bridges assisted Participant leaves the unit without proper notification to re-rent the unit and/or repairs for the damages incurred by the Bridges Participant prolong the ability for the landlord to re-rent the unit. Vacancy claims can be made for the respective unit, for a maximum of 30 days, when the vacancy expenses for the unit (not to exceed the cost of one month's rent) exceed the security deposit collected by the owner at initial occupancy.

Minnesota Housing approval is required prior to the Housing Agency disbursing funds for damage claims and vacancy payments. The Housing Agency shall require appropriate

documentation from the landlord regarding the requested damage and/or vacancy claim and shall review such documentation for feasibility prior to submitting the request to Minnesota Housing, who will then review the documentation prior to making an approval decision allowing reimbursement to the administrator for this purpose. Approval may be for a lesser amount than submitted. In addition to claim documentation, Minnesota Housing will consider the impact of such payments on the administrator's grant budget.

Application Fees, Utility Connection Fees, etc. An administrator may pay an application fee, utility reconnection fee, and/or other fees, as approved by Minnesota Housing, that are necessary to obtain landlord participation or to prevent repeat episodes of homelessness when:

- The tenant has exhausted all other mainstream resources such as emergency assistance, energy assistance, and/or local service organizations that usually provide financial assistance for such activities and the requested Bridges payment will assist in getting a Participant into housing and/or prevent a future episode of homelessness for the tenant.
- Minnesota Housing may grant exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis.

The Participant's file must be properly documented prior to becoming eligible for payments.

Chapter 5 – Occupancy Guidelines

5.01 Interim Changes

All decreases in the Participant's gross monthly income, regardless of the amount, must be verified and the changes implemented on the first day of the next month after the Housing Agency receives the information about the decrease (i.e., a verified decrease in income reported in June would result in a reduced Participant Rent on July 1). Written notice of the change in tenant paid rent and subsidy must also be provided to the Participant and landlord.

Changes related to increases to the Participant's gross monthly income must be handled in compliance with the HCV Program, or other written policies approved in writing by Minnesota Housing.

Participants who wish to add another adult to the lease must inform both the Housing Agency and the landlord in advance. A Participant must 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/Extension (Form 13) must be used when adding an additional adult to the lease.

The Participant should review the lease for requirements regarding reporting additional minors, but under normal circumstances, the Participant is not required to report to the Housing Agency the addition of a minor to the lease. If a larger unit is needed, a new Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations (Form 6) is issued when the Participant terminates the current lease and seeks other housing.

A Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13) 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 on the new Assisted Unit before the Participant moves or payment from Bridges funding is made.

5.02 Annual Recertification

The income and assets 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 ROI forms, if the Participant has agreed to the ROI. The Participant must be encouraged to update information for a secondary contact at this time. The secondary contact may be a professional caseworker or a friend or family member who can be contacted in the event that the Housing Agency is unable to reach the Participant.

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 120 days. If the verification indicates that 30% of the Participant's gross monthly

income equals or exceeds the contract rent for the Assisted Unit for three consecutive months, then the Participant will be declared ineligible because the Participant Rent will be equal to the contract rent and no subsidy is provided. Participants who are determined ineligible due to income must be notified in writing and given the option to request 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 approval increase, such as Section 236 or USDA Rural Development buildings, an increase in rent may be implemented upon HUD approval of the new rent and upon sufficient notice to the Participant and Housing Agency. A new lease or a Contract Amendment/Extension should be used to change the contract rent. A copy of the HUD rent approval letter should be inserted in the Participant's file.

When negotiating a renewal rent, the Housing Agency may, at its discretion, use the HCV Annual Adjustment Factors (AAFs) to limit the amount of the landlord's rent increases. If the AAFs are not used, the Housing Agency must determine that the requested rent is reasonable based on the Housing Agency's HCV Program rent reasonableness system. A Participant's contract rent may not exceed contract rents paid by unassisted Participants at the same property.

5.03 Lease Termination

Participant Chooses to Move. When a Participant chooses to move, written notice must be given by the Participant to the landlord and Housing Agency in accordance with the lease. If the Participant intends to continue receiving a Bridges subsidy, they must additionally notify the Housing Agency at least 31 days before they intend to move. If the LMH Entity and Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies are aware of a Participant's move, they must notify the Housing Agency if the Participant has not already done so. If the Participant intends to continue receiving a Bridges subsidy after moving, the Housing Agency must issue the Participant a new Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participation Obligations (Form 6) and Request for Lease Approval (Form 10). When the Participant locates a new unit, the Housing Agency must use the same procedures as described in the Leasing Process (Chapter 4 of this Program Guide).

Unit Does Not Meet HQS. If at recertification the Housing Agency determines that the Assisted Unit is not in compliance with HQS, the Housing Agency must give the landlord reasonable time to correct the deficiencies. The Housing Agency may retain the subsidy until the unit meets HQS. If the landlord fails to comply in reasonable time, the Housing Agency 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 Obligations (Form 6) and Request for Lease Approval (Form 10). The Housing Agency should notify the LMH Entity

Landlord Gives Participant Notice to Move. The landlord may give the Participant notice to move (not connected with an eviction) only if the lease provisions permit such a notice, and the landlord must notify the Housing Agency. The Housing Agency should notify the LMH Entity and Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies. 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, which may permit the landlord to evict the Participant for one or all the following:

- Serious and repeated lease violations
- Violations of federal, state, or local law in connection with the occupancy or use of the Assisted Unit and surrounding premises
- Other good cause

The landlord must send a copy of the eviction notice to the Housing Agency at the same time it is served to the Participant. The Participant may remain eligible, at the Housing Agency's discretion, to participate in Bridges, subject to the provisions of Section 5.04 of this Program Guide and the Consumer Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility (Form 7) and may seek other housing. The Housing Agency should notify the LMH Entity. The LMH Entity should advise the Housing Agency regarding the determination of ongoing participation in Bridges.

5.04 Termination of Eligibility

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

- 30% of gross monthly income equals or exceeds the full rent
- Failure to apply for, accept, or utilize an HCV or other permanent subsidy
- Failure to report all income, additional adults, or having zero income for over six months
- Illegal drug related or violent criminal activity
- Expired Bridges Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participation Obligations
- Receiving an HCV or other housing subsidy
- Voluntary termination
- The Housing Agency, Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies or LMH Entity is unable to locate the Participant
- Evicted
- Refusal to cooperate with the recertification or HQS inspection process
- Deceased

All Participants must have the option to request an informal hearing similar to an HCV informal hearing to contest the termination of their subsidy. The procedures to be used in conducting informal hearings are described in Household Eligibility, Intake and Certification (Chapter 3 of this Program Guide).

Using the Rental Assistance Draw Request Form, the Housing Agency must report monthly to Minnesota Housing the reason why Participants ended their participation in Bridges.

Participants who lose their subsidy may reapply to Bridges, unless the Housing Agency has identified issues of fraud or deliberate misrepresentations of information. In the case of an eviction, a Participant may retain their Bridges Certificate of Participation and look for another unit.

It is important for the Housing Agency and Behavioral Health Service Agency to develop relationships with landlords so that they can be notified of lease violations and assist the Participant in being lease compliant.

Chapter 6 – Services

6.01 Services Overview

Bridges does not provide funding for services. Rather, it provides connections to community providers who provide mental health, housing transition, tenancy sustaining services, and outreach services. The LMH Entity and Behavioral Health Service Agency/ Agencies are responsible for providing these connections for Participants to community service providers, typically one or more Behavioral Health Service Agencies. Bridges requires that Participants have choice in what Behavioral Health Service Agency they work with and what services they accept.

6.02 Housing Transition and Tenancy Sustaining Services

Housing transition and tenancy sustaining services are supportive housing services focused on helping the Participant to obtain and retain affordable, permanent housing of the Participant's choice. Service activities include:

- **Housing Transition Services** provide direct support to people with mental illness who need assistance with access to housing. The service may start prior to someone leaving AMRTC, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center/ Forensic Services, and/or during transition through IRTS or chemical dependency treatment, or from other Segregated Settings, as part of the apartment search, application, and securing an apartment process.
 - Conduct tenant screening and housing assessment to identify the person's preferences and barriers to successful tenancy
 - Develop an individualized housing support plan based on the housing assessment that identifies barriers, measurable short- and long-term goals, establishes the person's approach to meeting the goal, and identifies needed providers or services to meet the goal
 - Assist with the housing search and application process
 - Identify resources to cover one-time expenses that facilitate access to housing and establishment of a household such as security deposits, moving costs, furnishings, adaptive aids, and environmental modifications
 - Help ensure that the living environment is safe and ready for move-in
 - Assist with arranging for and supporting the details of the move
 - Develop a Housing Support Crisis Plan that includes prevention and early intervention services when housing is jeopardized
- **Tenant Sustaining Services** provide direct services to support people with mental illness in sustaining tenancy once housing is secured.
 - Provide early identification and intervention for behaviors that may jeopardize housing

- Provide education and training on the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the Participant and the landlord
- Coach on developing and maintaining key relationships with landlords and property managers in order to foster successful tenancy
- Assist with resolving disputes with landlords, property managers, and neighbors to reduce the risk of eviction or other adverse action
- Provide advocacy and linkage to community resources to prevent eviction or other negative housing outcomes
- Assist with the housing recertification process
- Coordinate with the Participant to review, update, and modify their individual housing support and Housing Support Crisis Plans on a regular basis to reflect current goals, needs, and housing retention barriers
- Provide ongoing training on responsible tenancy, lease compliance, and support, with activities related to household management

6.03 Outreach Services

Outreach services are services that are offered to potentially eligible individuals who are homeless or in an Institutional or Segregated Setting to include correctional facilities and connecting with people on supervised release and are not connected with a mental health or housing service. They engage the person with immediate services, provide assessments and help them access and transition to sustainable services. The activities of outreach services are comprised of four elements:

- **Identification.** Identifying potentially eligible mental health service recipients, locating unserved or underserved people who are homeless in the community and in Institutions or Segregated Settings
- **Engagement.** Contacting a person in order to engage them in services. Engagement establishes trust, builds a working relationship, and educates the person about service and resource options
- **Assessment.** Ongoing evaluation of a person's strengths, needs, preferences, recovery goals, and their barriers to accessing services, housing, and resources
- **Access.** Assisting the person with identifying their service and housing preferences, helping them to resolve barriers in accessing those preferences, and facilitating the person's transition to sustainable services, housing, and needed resources

6.04 Expectations of Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies

It is expected that the Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies have regular contact with the Participant to assist with establishing and retaining housing and to assist with goal and crisis planning. It is also expected that the Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies maintain regular contact with tenant advocacy services and provides client-selected behavioral health

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services. If the Participant is eligible, and interested in the service, the Behavioral Health Agency/Agencies should link the Participant to an agency providing Housing Stabilization Services.

The Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies may be a tribal nation, county department, or a contracted provider. The Behavioral Health Service Agency/Agencies will be a participating member of the LMH Entity, and the roles and responsibilities of this Agency/Agencies need to be in the Cooperative Agreement.

Chapter 7 – Fair Housing Policy

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, because of protected class status, to:

- 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.

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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.

Chapter 8 – Fraud Disclosure and Suspension

8.01 Fraud

Fraud is any intentionally deceptive action made for personal gain or to damage another.

Any person or entity (including its employees and affiliates) that enters into an agreement with Minnesota Housing and witnesses, discovers evidence of, receives a report from another source, or has other reasonable basis to suspect that fraud or embezzlement has occurred must immediately make a report through one of the ways described in Section 8.05.

8.02 Misuse of Funds

A loan or grant agreement is a legal contract between Minnesota Housing and the borrower or grantee. The borrower or grantee promises to use the funds to engage in certain activities or procure certain goods or services while Minnesota Housing agrees to provide funds to the borrower or grantee to pay for those activities, goods or services. Regardless of the Minnesota Housing program or funding source, the borrower or grantee must use Minnesota Housing funds as agreed, and the borrower or grantee must maintain appropriate documentation to prove that funds were used for the intended purpose(s).

A misuse of funds shall be deemed to have occurred when: (1) Minnesota Housing funds are not used as agreed by a borrower or grantee; or (2) A borrower or grantee cannot provide adequate documentation to establish that Minnesota Housing funds were used in accordance with the terms and conditions of the loan or grant agreement.

Any borrower or grantee (including its employees and affiliates) of Minnesota Housing funds that discovers evidence, receives a report from another source, or has other reasonable basis to suspect that a misuse of funds has occurred must immediately make a report through one of the ways described in Section 8.05.

8.03 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest, actual, potential, or perceived, occurs when a person has an actual or apparent duty or loyalty to more than one organization and the competing duties or loyalties may result in actions which are adverse to one or both parties. A potential or perceived conflict of interest exists even if no unethical, improper or illegal act results from it.

An individual conflict of interest is any situation in which one's judgment, actions or non-action could be interpreted to be influenced by something that would benefit them directly or through indirect gain to a friend, relative, acquaintance or business or organization with which they are involved.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A contracting party is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to Minnesota Housing due to competing duties or loyalties
- A contracting party's objectivity in carrying out the award is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties
- A contracting party has an unfair competitive advantage through being furnished unauthorized proprietary information or source selection information that is not available to all competitors

Once made aware of a conflict of interest, Minnesota Housing will make a determination before disbursing any further funds or processing an award. Determinations could include:

- Revising the contracting party's responsibilities to mitigate the conflict
- Allowing the contracting party to create firewalls that mitigate the conflict
- Asking the contracting party to submit an organizational conflict of interest mitigation plan
- Terminating the contracting party's participation

Any person or entity (including its employees and affiliates) that enters into an agreement with Minnesota Housing must avoid and immediately disclose to Minnesota Housing any and all actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest through one of the ways described in Section 8.05.

A contracting party should review its contract agreement and request for proposals (RFP) material, if applicable, for further requirements.

8.04 Suspension

By entering into any agreement with Minnesota Housing, a contracting party represents that the contracting party (including its employees or affiliates that will have direct control over the subject of the agreement) has not been suspended from doing business with Minnesota Housing. Refer to Minnesota Housing's website for a list of [suspended individuals and organizations](#).

8.05 Disclosure and Reporting

Minnesota Housing promotes a "speak-up, see something, say something" culture whereby internal staff, external business partners (e.g., grantees, borrowers) and the general public are encouraged to report instances of fraud, misuse of funds, conflicts of interest, or other concerns without fear of retaliation. You may report wrongdoing or other concerns by contacting:

- Minnesota Housing's Chief Risk Officer at 651.296.7608 or 800.657.3769

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- Any member of Minnesota Housing's [Servant Leadership Team](#) (visit mnhousing.gov and enter **SLT** in the Search box)
- [Report Wrongdoing or Concerns](#) (visit mnhousing.gov and enter **Wrongdoing** in the Search box)

Appendix A – Terms

| Term | Definition |
|----------------------------------|---|
| AMHI | Adult Mental Health Initiative. A collaboration of county LMHAs and/or a Tribal Nation Mental Health Agency that provide or enhance coordination of the delivery of mental health services required under the Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act |
| AMRTC | Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center. A state psychiatric hospital that serves people who have a mental illness |
| Assisted Unit | An eligible unit 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 a Housing Agency |
| Behavioral Health Service Agency | An agency that promotes mental health, resilience, and wellbeing; the treatment of mental and substance use disorders; and the support of those who experience and/or are in recovery from these conditions, along with their families and communities. |
| Bridges | Bridges Rental Assistance Program. A state rental assistance program for people with mental illness who are waiting for a permanent housing subsidy |
| Bridges Grant Contract 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 describing the terms that must be met for the landlord to receive subsidy payments on behalf of a Participant residing in an eligible unit |
| Bridges RTC | Bridges Regional Treatment Center. A state rental assistance program for people with mental illness who are leaving AMRTC or Forensic Services and are waiting for a permanent housing subsidy |
| Briefing Session | A meeting at which the eligible applicant receives an explanation of Bridges and instructions for leasing an Assisted Unit |
| Case Management | Activities that are designed to help people with 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 |

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| Term | Definition |
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| | services, ensuring coordination of services, and monitoring the delivery of services |
| CE | Coordinated Entry. A centralized or coordinated process designed to coordinate program Participant intake, assessment, and provision of referrals |
| Certificate of Participation – Statement of Participant Obligations | A document provided by the Housing Agency that lists the unit size and rent limits and that authorizes an eligible Participant to find a unit |
| CoC | Continuum of Care. A community strategic plan to organize and deliver housing and services to reduce the incidence of Homelessness by assisting homeless individuals, youth and families with children to move to self-sufficiency and permanent housing |
| Community Support Services Program | <p>A program, under the clinical supervision of a Mental Health Professional, designed to provide supportive services for people with mental illness to improve their ability to live in the community. Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| Competency Restoration Program at St. Peter | A program that provides comprehensive treatment and evaluation of individuals who have been committed for competency restoration pursuant to Minnesota Rule of Criminal Procedure Rule 20.01 Subd. 7 |
| Cooperative Agreement | An outline of the respective roles and responsibilities of a Housing Agency and an LMH Entity |
| Crisis Housing Fund | A flexible pool of money that provides short-term housing assistance to people with mental illness whose income is being used to pay for inpatient psychiatric treatment of 90 days or less |
| DHS-BHD | Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division |
| FMR | Fair Market Rent. HUD established rent limits for geographical areas |
| Forensic Services | Formerly known as St. Peter Regional Treatment Center and is the location of the Minnesota Security Hospital, Competency Restoration Program and Transition Services |

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| Term | Definition |
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| HCV | Housing Choice Voucher. A subsidy provided through the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. Formerly known as Section 8 |
| HMIS | Homeless Management Information System. A computerized database that allows organizations that provide services to people experiencing Homelessness to collect client information electronically to easily produce required reports. Minnesota's HMIS provides 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. Minnesota Housing requires all fund recipients for programs targeting households experiencing long-term Homelessness to utilize the HMIS system |
| Homelessness | <p>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 Behavioral Health Division of the Department of Human Services, this may include, but is not restricted to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 |

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| Term | Definition |
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| | <p>c. A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.</p> <p>The term does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained under an act of Congress or a state law.</p> |
| Homeless Upon Discharge | <p>Discharge to an emergency shelter or no longer meets criteria to remain in the Institution (e.g. level of care) but cannot be discharged because of lack of a place to go. Discharge to a friend or family member’s home in order to prevent Homelessness may also be considered Homeless Upon Discharge. Discharge to a short-term residential or treatment program, without other housing options, may also meet this definition.</p> |
| Housing Agency | <p>A local unit of government or a non-profit organization with an active Bridges Grant Contract Agreement</p> |
| Housing Stabilization Services | <p>Housing Stabilization Services is a new Minnesota Medical Assistance benefit to help people with disabilities, including mental illness and substance use disorder, and seniors find and keep housing.</p> <p>Housing Stabilization is a Home and Community Based Service (HCBS), and providers of Housing Stabilization must abide by the HCBS requirements. Information about being a HCBS provider</p> |
| Housing Support Crisis Plan | <p>A person-centered plan that reflects current needs and addresses existing or recurring housing retention barriers and includes prevention and early intervention services needed when housing is jeopardized</p> |
| Housing Support Services | <p>A Community Supports Service Program service that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Provides periodic home visits to ensure health and safety</p> |

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| Term | Definition |
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| HQS | Housing Quality Standards. A federal housing inspection standard used for inspection of market rate housing to determine that a unit is decent, safe, and sanitary |
| HUD | The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development |
| Imminent Risk of Homelessness | <p>People who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| Institution | Institutions include facilities such as a regional treatment center, community behavioral health hospital, nursing homes, adult foster care, or other hospital or residential treatment. Typically, persons meeting this priority will be in the Institution as a result of their mental illness. If you have questions about a particular facility and whether it meets the definition of an Institution, please contact DHS-BHD or Minnesota Housing. |
| IRTS | Intensive residential treatment services are time-limited mental health services provided in a residential setting |
| LMHA | Local Mental Health Authority. A county operating under the Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act |
| LMH Entity | Local Mental Health Entity. An Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI), Tribal Nation Mental Health Agency, or LMHA that collaborates with a Housing Agency to deliver Bridges |
| Local Payment Standard | The maximum subsidy a PHA can pay on behalf of a family, and a PHA establishes payment standards based on the HUD-established Fair Market Rents (FMR) for the area |
| Mental Health Professional | <p>A person providing clinical services in the treatment of mental illness who is qualified in at least one of the following ways:</p> <p>1) In psychiatric nursing: a registered nurse who is licensed under Sections 148.171 to 148.285; and: (i) who is certified as a clinical specialist or as a nurse practitioner in adult or</p> |

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| Term | Definition |
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| | <p>family psychiatric and mental health nursing by a national nurse certification organization; or (ii) 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</p> <p>2) In clinical social work: a person licensed as an independent clinical social worker under Chapter 148D, 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</p> <p>3) In psychology: an individual licensed by the Board of Psychology under Sections 148.88 to 148.98 who has stated to the Board of Psychology competencies in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness</p> <p>4) 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, or an osteopathic physician licensed under Chapter 147 and certified by the American Osteopathic Board of Neurology and Psychiatry or eligible for board certification in psychiatry</p> <p>5) 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;</p> <p>6) In licensed professional clinical counseling, the Mental Health Professional shall be a licensed professional clinical counselor under Section 148B.5301 with at least 4,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness</p> |

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| Term | Definition |
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| Mental Health Service Agency | A mental health provider agency eligible to provide Minnesota Health Care Programs services |
| Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act | A statute that describes the fundamental mental health system in Minnesota. The statute is Minnesota Sections 245.461–245.4863 |
| Minnesota Health Care Programs | Adults with low incomes who meet eligibility rules may qualify for Minnesota Health Care Programs. Programs include Medical Assistance (MA), MinnesotaCare, Minnesota Family Planning Program and others |
| MSA | Minnesota Supplemental Aid. Minnesota Supplemental Aid provides cash assistance to help adults who get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) pay for their basic needs. |
| Participant | A person who is in the Bridges program with mental illness |
| 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/People with MI | <p>People with Mental Illness. People with an organic disorder of the brain or a clinically significant disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, memory, or behavior that meets both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is detailed in a diagnostic code list published by the commissioner of Minnesota Department of Human Services and verified by a qualified Mental Health Professional • Seriously limits a person’s capacity to function in primary aspects of daily living such as personal relations, living arrangements, work, and recreation |
| Program Guide | A document developed to implement Bridges under statutory requirements. |
| Public Housing Authority | Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) provide decent, safe, and affordable quality rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. |
| RTC | Regional Treatment Center. A facility where the state provides active inpatient treatment for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, chemical dependency |

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| Term | Definition |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| | and/or elderly who have complex medical conditions and challenging behaviors |
| ROI | Release of Information. A signed and dated authorization by the Participant allowing the Housing Agency and relevant LMH Entity to share information about the Participant |
| 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 (RTC), a community behavioral health hospital, nursing homes, adult foster care, or other hospital or residential treatment center |
| Service Area | A geographic area in which a Housing Agency and a Mental Health Agency operate Bridges |
| St. Peter Regional Treatment Center | Now known as Forensic Services |
| Tribal Nation Mental Health Agency | The agency primarily responsible for tribal nation mental health services |

Appendix B – 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 detailed in a diagnostic codes list published by the commissioner, 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 with Severe Emotional Disturbance

Minnesota Statute 245.4871, 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 of 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.