

# Pathways-Held Leases Program

Pathways-Held Leases

City of La Crosse ("City")

La Crosse County ("County")

Property Manager

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## Overview

### **1) Introduction**

Pathways-Held Leases are designed to help people experiencing homelessness with imperfect rental histories and lower-level supportive services' needs find permanent, sustainable housing.

#### **a) Apartment Distribution**

- i) The Plan will offer roughly six units throughout La Crosse County as a starting point, with the potential to scale up to about 85 units as the process matures.

#### **b) Application Process Overview**

- i) The City will hold a standard lease with landlords for their respective units.
- ii) The City will then hold a sublease with tenants for those units.
- iii) All prospective residents 18 years of age or older must complete and process a rental application.
- iv) Each applicant must provide valid local, state, or federal government-issued photo identification for verification purposes at the time of application.

#### **c) Rent Structure**

- i) Each household's rent cannot exceed the highest of:
  - (1) 30 percent of the household's monthly adjusted income, or
  - (2) 10 percent of the household's monthly gross income, or
  - (3) The portion of the household's welfare assistance, if any, that is designated for housing costs.

#### **d) Security Deposits**

- i) Upon lease signing, Pathways Home will cover the security deposit equal to one month's rent as a standard.
- ii) The security deposit will be returned to the City of La Crosse upon discharge from the program.

## Household and Unit Eligibility Requirements

### **2) Eligibility Requirements for Households**

The following criteria apply to households that are referred to the Pathways-held Leases program.

#### **a) Pathways to Housing List.**

- i) All referred households must first be on the Pathways to Housing List. (This is a by-name list of every household experiencing homelessness in the City of La Crosse. It includes their level of

recommended case management to maintain housing and other information related to their housing wants/needs.) To be eligible for the Pathways to Housing List, a household must meet HUD's definition of Category 1 homeless. The Homeless Services Coordinator can make exceptions and will review each case on an individual basis.

**b) Level of Support.**

- i) All households who are referred must have an accurately recommended level of need as none, light, or moderate. At the most basic level, a light level of support means roughly monthly check-ins and connections to wraparound supports. A moderate level of support means roughly once-a-week check-ins and connections to wraparound supports. However, the assigned case manager will constantly assess the level of need for the household. The Homeless Services Coordinator will have the final say on all identified levels of need. The Pathways Home Leadership team will provide training on how to use the tool to identify appropriate levels of case management.

**c) Sole Residence**

- i) The apartment must be the applicant's sole residence in order for the applicant to be eligible for housing.
- d) Applicant must have the ability to enter into a program and lease agreement.
- e) The City of La Crosse holds the lease with the landlord/property owner and then subleases it to the tenant.
- f) Household's participation in supportive services is a condition for referral into the program.

**3) Eligibility Requirements for Units**

The following criteria apply to units that may be used as part of the Pathways-held Leases

**a) Rent**

- i) Must be Fair Market Rent or lower.

**b) Condition**

- i) All units must pass a Housing Quality Standards Inspection.

**Household Selection and Application Process**

**4) Household Selection Process**

- a) The Homeless Services Coordinator will oversee the list of available units, including, but not limited to, the landlord/owner, the city where the unit is available, the number of bedrooms, and the price. The Homeless Services Coordinator will make the final decision about which units are added to the list.
- b) There are three ways a landlord's unit can get onto the list. In all three scenarios, the property manager will ensure that any units added to the list meet the eligibility requirements.
  - i) Landlords can contact the Homeless Services Coordinator.
  - ii) Landlords can contact the Property Manager.
  - iii) Case managers can identify landlords for the list or for specific households.

- c) Case Managers will submit a referral form to the Homeless Services Coordinator, who will review it and approve it based on the eligibility and assessment criteria.
- d) For a household to be matched with a landlord on the list, it must be on the Pathways to Housing List via one of the many referral sources.
- e) Households must then be connected with a case manager who will assess their fit based on the recommended level of case management needs and other relevant factors.
- f) If a household is identified as a potential fit, the case manager will discuss the potential for the program at Pathways Conferencing or contact the Homeless Services Coordinator to connect with the property manager.
- g) The Homeless Services Coordinator will decide whether the household fits the program appropriately.
- h) The Homeless Services Coordinator will then connect the Property Manager with the case manager.
- i) The Property Manager, case manager, and household will work together to complete the application process. See more about the application process in Section VI titled "Application Process."
- j) Property Management and the applicant will agree to a move-in date and sign the sublease on the agreed-upon date.
- k) Day of Move-In
  - i) Property Management will coordinate the move-in process by providing the applicant with their keys for their apartment.
  - ii) If not previously completed, Property Management will complete a move-in inspection checklist with the household at this time.

## **5) Application Process**

- a) **Application Requirements:** A complete application may include the following information:
  - i) A written application submitted by the applicant's household.
  - ii) A criminal report ordered by Property Management.
  - iii) Verification of income, bank accounts, and other assets, etc., as applicable for each applicant household.
  - iv) The City of La Crosse will have the final say about whether a household is accepted based on their application.

## **6) Incomplete Applications**

- a) All incomplete applications will be returned with directions regarding the areas that need to be completed before they can be processed. Property Management and the case manager will work with applicants referred from the Pathways to Housing List to complete their applications.

## **7) Completion of Application Process**

- a) Property Management will notify all applicants of their application status within thirty (30) days after the date of the submitted application or within five business days of receipt of all required documentation, whichever is later (excluding weekends and designated Federal holidays).

## **8) Selection and Rejection Criteria**

a) Meeting the eligibility requirements above does not mean that an applicant will receive an approved application. All applicants may also meet the following selection and rejection criteria. The ability of the applicant to fulfill lease obligations, along with any related explanations offered by the applicant concerning the facts involved, including any changes in circumstances, will be considered. An applicant may be rejected for one or more of the following reasons:

- i) Falsification, misrepresentation, or withholding of information or submission of inaccurate and/or incomplete information on any application related to eligibility, award, or preference for admission, family composition, or rent.
- ii) Adverse information received during the interview related to eligibility, received on the application and/or received from information contained in a consumer public records history report

**b) Criminal History**

- i) Any household member that has a conviction of illegally manufacturing or distributing a controlled substance as defined in sec 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802).
- ii) Any household member of the household is subject to a lifetime sex offender registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program.
- iii) Any household member convicted in last 5 years of any crime that shows a demonstrable risk to tenant safety and/or property may be denied rental. Considerations in making the final determination for eligibility may include but are not limited to the nature and severity of the crime, the age at the time of the conduct, and the amount of time that has passed since the criminal conviction occurred. Mitigating factors may be considered on a case-by-case basis. The applicant shall provide any mitigating information or documentation that they would like the landlord to consider regarding any convictions.
- iv) Criminal convictions that threaten the health and safety of the residents or staff.

**c) Current and previous landlords**

- i) Unfavorable references regarding tenancy history within the past 3 years.
- d) Anyone refusing to comply with housing program requirements, policies and/or procedures.
- e) Pets are not allowed in the units.

## **Rejection and Appeal Process**

### **9) Rejection Procedures and Appeal Process**

**a) Written Notification**

- i) Written/Emailed notice of denial will be provided unless waived by the applicant in writing. It will include an explanation of the Resident Selection Plan criteria that the applicant failed to satisfy. Each rejected applicant will be promptly notified in writing of the reason(s) for rejection.

**b) Review of Rejected Applications**

- i) The applicant will have seven (7) days (excluding weekends and designated Federal holidays) to respond in writing to an appeal of the decision. If an applicant takes exception to the findings of the eligibility screening, the applicant is responsible for and has the right to contact the reporting agent/agencies. In the event the discrepancy can be cleared up, the applicant will be reconsidered based on the new information.

Any review of the applicant's written response will be conducted by the Director of Planning and Development. The applicant will be given a final written decision from the Director of Planning and Development within ten (10) days (excluding weekends and designated Federal holidays) of the written appeal. If the decision is reversed, the applicant will be offered a suitable unit. If no such unit is available, the applicant will be offered the next appropriate unit.

### **Roles, Responsibilities, and Decision-Making Authority**

It is understood that the Parties must work together as a team to effectively meet the residents' needs. This level of collaboration will require exceptional, thorough, and timely communication among all parties. At the same time, the parties understand their separate and distinct responsibilities.

#### **A. Manager**

- a. The Director of Planning and Development is the manager of this project, and the Homeless Services Coordinator serves as their primary point of contact.
  - i. Acting as manager representative to both property management and supportive case managers throughout the life of the project;
  - ii. Evaluating ongoing service, landlord, and property management performance with suggestions for improvement;
  - iii. Monitoring, minimizing, and where appropriate, attempting to resolve evictions and potential disputes between property management, supportive services providers and households;
- b. Manager has final decision-making authority regarding the execution and performance of day-to-day activities. Consistent with the Parties' mutual goal of operating a successful program, Manager shall seek input from Property Management and Case Manager on all significant decisions and activities.

#### **B. Referral and Case Manager.**

- a. Case Manager will provide referrals for the Pathways-held leases and support services to those units' households.
- b. Details about the units and Household Selection are included within this plan.
- c. The Case Manager may be provided directly or by arrangement with other service providers. Case Manager will have two main goals in performing these supportive services:
  - i. Assisting the household in maintaining their housing; and
  - ii. Assist the household in working toward self-sufficiency.
- d. Case Manager will participate in and provide any relevant information, data, and performance measures that may be required and requested by the Director of Planning and Development in coordination with Property Management.

#### **C. Property Management.**

- a. \_\_\_\_ will be responsible for the overall operations of the leased units, including repairs and other related services, including these activities:
  - i. Preparing all budgets and cost estimates related to the units,
  - ii. Provide the manager with monthly financial reports and any other required information.
  - iii. Maintaining a fully leased program with the assistance of Case Manager for the units;
  - iv. Carrying out rent collection and administration;
  - v. Overseeing household relations with management with respect to:
    1. Notices

- 2. Evictions
  - 3. Enforcement of unit rules, policies and procedures;
- vi. Providing monthly reports on housing retention, at-risk households due to lease violations or warnings, and any eviction prevention measures being performed.
- b. Property Manager will participate in and provide all information, data, and performance measures as required and requested by the manager.
- c. Rental Payments and Security Deposits.
  - i. Pathways Home will give the property manager the funds to handle all new qualifying households applying for housing. Each household is required to disclose all sources of income. Each household's rent cannot exceed the highest of: 30 percent of the household's monthly adjusted income, or 10 percent of the household's monthly gross income, or the portion of the household's welfare assistance, if any, that is designated for housing costs.

#### **D. Contacts**

- a. The following are the lead contacts for the Parties:
  - i. County: Jim Drees, Homelessness Response System Manager, La Crosse County
  - ii. City: Andrea Trane, Director of Planning and Development, City of La Crosse
  - iii. Property Management:

The Parties shall have ongoing project meetings to coordinate activities and make decisions regarding the project. It is understood that the lead contacts may change over time, and the Parties shall notify each other about contact changes.