

Transitional Housing Provider Orientation Packet



Earned Release Date (ERD) Housing
Voucher Program



5/14/2018

Dear Prospective Housing Vendor,

Thank you for expressing interest in providing transitional housing for individuals releasing from Washington State prisons. Transitional housing is a valuable and necessary service not only for those releasing from prison, but also for our communities and the criminal justice system. Providing transitional housing increases the likelihood that a releasing individual will be able to maintain a crime-free lifestyle and in turn it also supports responsible correctional practices while simultaneously reducing the need for current and future taxpayer expenses caused by re-incarceration.

Department staff are available to meet with you to discuss your plans and answer questions about the nature of release transition, benefits and potential pitfalls commonly experienced by transitional housing vendors who choose to operate this type of business. These staff are able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different program types and what services or amenities are helpful or desirable in a transitional housing program.

Finally, they can discuss and work with you to clarify and establish appropriate requirements and limitations for your proposed program. The attached orientation packet provides information the department feels would be helpful for a prospective housing provider when considering establishing a transitional housing program.

Robert J. Story

Housing Program Administrator
WA State Department of Corrections
Reentry Division
8008 NE Fourth Plain Blvd., Ste. 360
Vancouver, WA 98662

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS BASICS

Community Corrections Division

Community Corrections Division supervises formerly incarcerated individuals under the jurisdiction of the department in communities. The division's primary goals are to promote public safety by:

- Providing guidance, support and program opportunities for all individual returning to the community.
- Holding individuals accountable to their court ordered conditions, as they resume life within the community.
- Collaborating with community resources that have a vested interest in incarcerated individuals successfully transitioning into the community.

Supervising Formerly Incarcerated Individuals in the Community

The Community Corrections Division supervises individuals who have either been confined in a county jail or prison for felony convictions of more than a year, or were sentenced to direct supervision in the community. Individuals under the jurisdiction of the department in the community report to community corrections officers who monitor their activities based on their sentence from the court. Most individuals are required to follow specific conditions of supervision which may include residence and employment approval, home visits, office reporting, submitting to urinalysis and other testing. There may also be requirements for participating in treatment programs, behavioral programs, family reunification programs and reparation-based activities. Failure to abide by the conditions or requirements can lead to penalties including jail time for the supervised individual.

Reentry Division

The Reentry Division is responsible for supporting successful transition and release into the community. Programs offered through the Reentry Division include:

- ERD Housing Voucher Program
- Veteran Services
- Transition Services
- Strength in Families Program
- Work Release
- Release Planning

TRANSITION AND RELEASE

The department's transition and release policy requires classification counselors or work release community corrections officers (WR CCOs) to work with incarcerated individuals during the twelve month period leading up to the earned release date to plan for their eventual return to the community.

Staff and incarcerated individuals are expected to work together using the individual's personal resources to develop approvable release plans. Personal resources are typically family or friends willing to assist, organizations, support persons, personal savings, or other sources of income or assistance.

Transition Timeline

- Twelve months prior to the earned release date (ERD), or upon arrival at the facility reception, a classification counselor or WR CCO will meet with the incarcerated individual to initiate release planning and to obtain information for any potential release address.
- If an incarcerated individual requires assistance locating an approvable release address the classification counselor or WR CCO will contact a regional housing specialist responsible for the individual's release area to obtain appropriate and current housing referrals.
- The classification counselor or WR CCO will contact prospective housing providers on behalf of the incarcerated individual by telephone or e-mail as appropriate.
- The classification counselor or WR CCO will assist incarcerated individuals with any necessary application processes by facilitating telephone interviews with prospective sponsoring organizations or providers or mailing application material for the individual.
- Six months prior to the ERD a classification counselor or WR CCO will begin submitting appropriate release addresses, funded by the incarcerated individuals' personal resources, for investigation by the department.
- The classification counselor or WR CCO will continue to work with the incarcerated individual to develop an approvable release plan funded with the individual's personal resources until a plan is approved or the Earned Release Date arrives.
- Release plans submitted for investigation (which require payment) that do not identify an available funding source will be denied.

EARNED RELEASE DATE (ERD) HOUSING VOUCHER PROGRAM

The Reentry Division operates the Earned Release Date (ERD) Housing Voucher Program to provide housing options to incarcerated individuals and to provide financial assistance to individuals who have reached their ERD and will be held in prison because they do not have an approvable release address. The level of service provided by the program is determined by the individual's situation and specific need. Services may be limited to simple housing referrals or include funding. The department may provide a maximum benefit of \$500 per month for a period up to three months after the initial prison release. The level of service provided remains at the discretion of the department and is not an entitlement.

If during the regular transition process the ERD arrives and a release plan has not been approved, incarcerated individuals may apply for financial assistance from the department. These benefits will be provided if the individual meets the program's defined criteria and remains in compliance before and after release with the custody facility plan, supervision plan, conditions of supervision, and any facility rules.

The program's criteria are defined in a document called a criteria worksheet which is intended as a screening document and contract to be signed between the incarcerated individual and the department, usually represented by the assigned classification counselor or WR CCO.

These expectations are intended to be followed before and after release from prison. Programming includes all facility rules and all components of the custody facility plan. Upon release, individuals are expected to comply with all conditions of supervision and any requirements specified in the agreement.

The department has made an accommodation for incarcerated individuals who are disabled, ill or experiencing a hardship. If an individual is ill, disabled or experiencing a hardship his or her Classification Counselor or WR CCO may request an exception and apply for benefits prior to the ERD. The individual and staff member must document the reason for requesting early benefits in the application and confirm that the exception has been granted before submitting a Release Plan.

Incarcerated individuals who are not disabled, ill or experiencing a hardship should expect to be held past their ERD if they are planning on using this program as their sole mode of release. If an individual has some resources and would like to request partial benefits as assistance, he or she should discuss this with their assigned classification counselors or WR CCOs. The classification counselor or WR CCO will discuss potential arrangements for partial assistance with their local housing specialist.

EARNED RELEASE DATE (ERD) HOUSING VOUCHER PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

Housing Specialists

Seven Regional Housing Specialists (RHS) are positioned throughout the state to assist housing providers and department staff in both the Prison and Community Corrections Divisions with the ERD Housing Voucher Program and the transition process in general. Housing specialists were distributed across the state based on population and transition release volume. The RHS maintains data on housing resources and functions as the lead in the development and maintenance of relations with local housing vendors. The RHS also provides referrals and appropriate placement assistance to incarcerated individuals, staff and housing vendors. This assistance is specified as active and involved participation by the RHS in the placement of releasing individuals into sustainable housing. While the responsibility for plan development and placement investigations remains with the assigned classification counselor or WR CCO, the RHS is available to help identify and facilitate placements. The RHS can also assist classification counselors and WR CCOs with the release plan process and can be very effective with reducing delays caused by the release plan investigation period.

The RHS also conducts research and data collection on the nature and status of barriers to timely release. This data is compiled and developed into formats which assist both prison and community management to identify and address the sources of delayed transition.

The ERD Housing Voucher Program maintains internal websites which provide a statewide transitional housing directory, program forms, process information, housing specialist contact information, and eligibility/FAQ material which staff will find helpful when interfacing with the program.

The RHS is responsible for ensuring that transitional housing providers are paid for services in a timely and accurate manner. They are also responsible for assisting to mitigate housing conflicts or disagreements between department staff and transitional housing providers.

Yakima CJC | (509) 574-9834

Counties served: Adams, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Walla Walla, and Yakima

Spokane CJC | (509) 363-2791

Counties served: Asotin, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman

Vancouver CJC | (360) 449-7660

Counties served: Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum

Tacoma CJC | (253) 680-2620

Counties served: Kitsap and Pierce

Seattle CJC | (206) 516-7622 / (253) 333-5931

County served: King

Everett CJC | (425) 513-5239

Counties served: Snohomish, Clallam, Jefferson, Skagit, Whatcom, Island, and San Juan

Vetting Process

With regard to the vetting process of a prospective vendor, the following routinely occurs:

Initially, the vetting starts with a conversation between the Regional Housing Specialist (RHS) and the prospective vendor. This conversation typically involves a discussion about the program, as summarized in this document, and also seeks to answer questions such as the vendor's intended use, the vendor's housing requirements, and any restrictions for participation the vendor may have.

With information in hand, the RHS conducts a preliminary assessment of the proposed property and neighborhood. This generally includes a walk-thru of the proposed housing, plus familiarization of the area/neighborhood. On multiple occasions, our vetting process has stopped at this point due to community safety concerns for example, and no further action is taken except to notify the vendor the process will not move forward.

If the vetting process continues, the RHS notifies the local jurisdiction regarding the prospective housing vendor's interest in participating in the housing voucher program and being added to our housing directory. This is a statewide legal requirement. This notification triggers a prescribed period of time to allow the local jurisdiction to conduct their own vetting process and provide their input in the form of a Community Impact Statement, if they chose to do so.

The RHS will most likely contact the local community corrections office for their feedback as well. It has been our experience that the local DOC office is most familiar with the neighborhoods in their coverage area. They are typically aware of unsafe spots and the areas where certain populations of individuals tend to be concentrated. In addition, we want to know from their perspective if they would approve a release plan to the proposed housing address. If significant issues surface that cannot be mitigated, generally the process stops here and the local jurisdiction and prospective vendor is informed.

Once all the information is gathered by the RHS, to include feedback provided by the local jurisdiction, the housing program administrator will make a determination if the housing is acceptable or not for department use. By law, a second notice is emailed to the local jurisdiction regarding the outcome of our findings. At that point, the local jurisdiction is provided with another prescribed time period to submit their response. Responses received within that time period will be considered before any final listing determination is made by the housing program administrator.

Note: It is important to understand that just because a housing vendor is placed in our housing directory, does not guarantee that an individual will be released there. Incarcerated individuals releasing from prison are managed by the Community Corrections Division. It is the local community corrections office in the neighborhood that determines if a specific release plan to a housing vendor is appropriate based on their own independent transition release investigation.

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

The Department of Corrections' mission statement is to improve public safety; the department hopes to achieve this goal through our vision statement to work together for safe communities. Providing referrals to safe and responsibly managed transitional housing resources in the community is in the best interest of both the formerly incarcerated individual and the community. In an effort to encourage best practices and sound transitional program development the department has worked with government and non-government stakeholders to develop guidelines and recommendations for prospective and existing transitional housing providers.

Department Requirements

The department will provide referrals and, if necessary, financial assistance to the releasing individuals for transitional housing facilities or programs which meet the basic standards and expectations documented below. The department will also provide individuals with information about transitional housing programs to include their requirements, restrictions and range of services provided in an effort to help them make an educated decision on which facility or program would best meet their needs.

Minimum Expectations

- Rent will be inclusive of all expenses associated with the tenancy.
 - All rents, fees, service charges, utilities, supplies and/or fuel.
- Fee Schedules will be fully disclosed.
- All program contracts, rental agreements and house rules should be fully disclosed.
- Heating equipment will be provided which is adequate for the living space should be legal and operational.
- Electrical facilities and lighting should be adequate, functioning and in compliance with local building codes.
- Private or shared bathroom facilities will be available to the tenant, to include running hot and cold water, a functioning sink, toilet and shower.
- Accommodations will comply with local building or health codes and individual room capacity limited a maximum of two tenants unless otherwise agreed with the Regional Housing Specialist.
- Furnishings and linens will be provided and include at a minimum:
 - Bed, clean sheets, blanket(s), pillow, towel
- Security and safety features for the individual unit or shared living space should be adequate to protect the health or safety of a tenant and include functioning security locks and adequate lighting.
- Tenants should be provided with keys and 24 hour access to their private or shared living space as appropriate.

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS (CONTINUED)

Best Practices

- Involvement, support, coalition building for program from Community Stakeholders
- Local government and law enforcement, community groups, religious and charitable organizations, advocacy groups
- Pre-placement interviews (meeting with individuals in person or by telephone)
- Release and intake date transportation, coordination.
- Transportation information (bus schedules, maps, information on basic necessities)
- Local social service provider information
- DSHS, Veterans Administration, WorkSource, employment agencies, community colleges.
- Emergency service provider information
- Food banks, emergency clothing, hospitals or health clinics

Legal Compliance

All companies and organizations which conduct business with the department are expected to maintain legal compliance with all local, state and federal regulations. While the department is not a regulatory authority or responsible for conducting inspections, licensing or permitting activities for businesses in Washington State, the department does expect the companies or organizations who provide services to our clients to obtain and maintain all required business licenses, use permits and building and health code standards required in the local municipality. At a minimum the regional housing specialist will advise prospective vendors of their requirements to secure and maintain the necessary licenses and permits to legally operate as a transitional housing provider.

Business Licenses

All municipalities or unincorporated areas within the state require at least one type of valid business license to engage in commerce. Providing transitional housing will require at least one if not multiple types of business licenses. Depending on how the business is structured these licenses will be issued by local municipalities but additional licenses may be required by a state agency, usually the Department of Health. It is the responsibility of all business owners to obtain and maintain all required business licenses.

Building/Health/Zoning Requirements

All municipalities or unincorporated areas within the state require residential, commercial and industrial buildings to comply with local, state and sometimes federal building, safety and/or health code requirements. The specific requirements for a transitional housing facility will differ depending on the nature of the facility and where it is located. The Department of Corrections recommends that anyone operating or planning on operating a business of this sort contact their local building, code enforcement, or environmental services authority to determine what the specific requirements are. An example of common municipal requirements and restriction is provided for review as an attachment to this packet.

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS (CONTINUED)

Housing Rights Protection (Landlord/Tenant Rights)

Various federal, state, and local laws and ordinances protect housing rights. The Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 makes it illegal for a landlord to discriminate because of a person's race, sex, national origin, or religion. Some local laws forbid discrimination on the basis of age, marital status, physical and mental disability, personal appearance, sexual preference, family responsibilities, military/veteran status, political affiliation, prior arrest or conviction record, source of income, or others.

Washington State has a Residential Landlord-Tenant Act (RCW 59.18), which defines the minimum duties of landlords and tenants of residential dwellings. These laws also impose certain restrictions and provide remedies if one party fails to carry out a duty. The remedies include eviction, reduced rent, self-help repairs, the right to sue for monetary damages, and an award of attorneys' fees to the successful party. Generally, the provisions of the act may not be waived by the landlord or tenant.

Furthermore, in many communities, additional housing codes, local ordinances and requirements have also been enacted to set minimum standards for living conditions and to further regulate landlords' and tenants' rights and duties.

As a housing vendor, it is incumbent on you to be well-versed and compliant on these rights and duties. For information pertaining to local housing rights protection, contact the city council, city attorney, or other officials where transitional housing is to be provided.

Note: DOC staff will not act as agents on behalf of a landlord in an eviction process.

VENDOR ACCOUNTS, PAYMENTS AND PROCESSING

Statewide Vendor Accounts

The State of Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM) is responsible for the disbursement of funds for all state business. To receive payment for services, transitional housing providers must establish a statewide vendor account with the Department of Enterprise Services. The regional housing specialist will provide applicants with the current statewide vendor account application to complete and return.

Electronic Funds Transfers

Direct deposit or electronic funds transfer is the preferred method of payment, it is free of charge and provides access to payments in a more efficient and timely manner. The application for this service is included with the vendor account application. Mailing in checks are available as an option.

Updating a Vendor Account

In the future if an adjustment to a vendor account is necessary it must be accomplished through the submission of a revised application. This process is in place to maintain a level of security for the states service providers. Further information on this process may be obtained by calling the Department of Enterprise Services at: 360-407-8180, or contacting via email at: payeehelpdesk@watech.wa.gov.

Payment Processing

Regional housing specialists are responsible for ensuring that all payments to transitional housing providers are requested, processed and paid in a timely manner. If a transitional housing provider has questions or concerns about a future, current or past payment, the regional housing specialist has access to all payment records and can provide assistance.

ATTACHMENT 1: COMMON BUILDING/HEALTH/ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS

GENERAL

1. Junk vehicles in the yard are prohibited.
2. Garbage, junk, or debris in the yard is prohibited.
3. Overgrown ground cover, grass, weeds, trees or unmaintained shrubbery over one foot in height which constitutes a health safety or welfare violation.
4. Lack of, or inadequate garbage and rubbish storage for disposal is prohibited.
5. Exterior stairways (in yards) need handrails/guardrails.
6. Exterior sidewalks may not be broken, buckled or deteriorated.

LIFE SAFETY

1. Missing or unreadable address or apartment numbers are prohibited.
2. Broken or defective exit stairs need to be repaired or replaced.
3. Exit stairs must be present and have proper landings.
4. Exit stairs must have correct rise and run.
5. Exit stairs need to be provided with handrails/guardrails.
6. Stairs must have correct width.
7. Door locks may not be missing, inoperative, or illegal.
8. Window locks may not be missing or inoperative.
9. Any porch, deck, or balcony must be in good repair or be replaced or removed.
10. Any porch, deck, or balcony must have a guardrail.
11. Room and space dimensions must meet code requirements.

EXIT(S)

1. Exterior doors and/or door framework must be in good working order or be repaired or replaced.
2. Exit windows from sleeping rooms must be provided.
3. Exit windows from sleeping rooms must be of adequate area or dimension.
4. Overcrowding: Any building or portion thereof, must have exiting sufficient in number, width, or access for the occupant load served, or where the number of occupants in sleeping rooms meet or exceed the number permitted by the area of sleeping.

STRUCTURAL

1. Roofing must be in good repair.
2. Insufficient roofing must be repaired or replaced.
3. Chimney(s) needs to be in good repair or repaired or removed.
4. Ceiling and/or roof framing must be in good repair.
5. Foundations must be in good repair or be replaced.
6. Wall framing must be in good repair.
7. Exterior wall siding must be in good repair.
8. Window glass must not need replacement.

ATTACHMENT 1: COMMON BUILDING/HEALTH/ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS (CONTINUED)

STRUCTURAL (cont'd)

9. Window frames must be in good repair.
10. Floor framing must be in good repair.
11. Peeling or absence of paint or weather protection on exterior wall, decks, stairs, porches, and other exterior surfaces is prohibited.
12. Deteriorated or crumbling plaster or gypsum board are prohibited.

FIRE SAFETY

1. Smoke detectors must be in bedrooms and operational.
2. Note: Since January 1, 2013, carbon monoxide alarms must be installed in existing dwellings and sleeping units in hotels, motels, apartments and single family residential units where an attached garage or fuel-fired heat source is present.
3. Smoke detectors may not be centrally located outside of sleeping areas, and/or are not on each floor.
4. Improper storage, building clutter, or other fire hazards are prohibited.

ELECTRICAL

1. Improper or hazardous wiring is prohibited.
2. Access to electrical panels is adequate.
3. If there are fuses, the circuits are properly fused.
4. Electrical convenience outlets or switches must have cover plates.
5. Burnt or painted outlets must be replaced.
6. Adequate numbers of electrical convenience outlets must be present.
7. Ground fault circuit interrupters must be installed in the bathrooms and kitchens.
8. Missing or damaged light fixtures, receptacles or switches must be replaced.

PLUMBING/HEATING/LIGHT & VENTILATION

1. Proper toilets, lavatories, bathtubs, showers or other plumbing fixtures are required by the size or occupant load of the occupancy.
2. Lavatories, sinks, bathtubs or similar fixtures may not feature a spigot outlet below the level of the basin rim, and any other fixtures where cross-connection or back-siphonage is possible.
3. Plumbing piping or fixtures must use approved materials.
4. Leaking plumbing piping (supply and/or waste) is prohibited.
5. Sagging or improperly supported piping is prohibited.
6. Clogged or inoperative plumbing piping is prohibited.
7. Temperature/pressure relief valves must be installed on water heater.

ATTACHMENT 1: COMMON BUILDING/HEALTH/ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS (CONTINUED)

PLUMBING/HEATING/LIGHT & VENTILATION (cont'd)

8. Substandard Laundry Facility is prohibited. All residential buildings shall provide facilities for the washing of clothes in accordance with the provisions of the codes in force at the time the building was constructed. In an apartment house, where laundry facilities are not provided for each unit, such as laundry trays or washing machines shall be provided elsewhere on site and shall be available to tenants.
9. Heating or mechanical equipment must be in good working order.
10. Supply of combustion air for fuel fired equipment must be adequate.
11. Gas piping must be adequate and installed correctly.
12. Ventilation (either natural or mechanical ventilation) must be adequate.
13. Windows may not be painted shut.
14. Wood stoves or other appliances must be legally installed.
15. Appliances, including solid-fuel-burning appliances, must be installed with proper clearances to combustible materials.
16. Windows must be adequate to provide natural light.

SANITATION

1. Each dwelling unit shall be provided with a kitchen. The kitchen area shall contain:
 - A sink with hot and cold running water.
 - Space for a stove, microwave or hot plate.
 - Space for a refrigerator.
 - Adequate counter space for food preparation and dish washing.
 - Adequate storage space for kitchen utensils and food.
 - Adequate floor space.
 - Communal kitchens shall be permitted only in rooming house or boarding homes. Such communal kitchens shall be located within a room accessible to the occupants of each guest rooms sharing the use of the kitchen without going outside the rooming house or boarding home, or going through a unit of another occupant.
2. Broken or plugged sewers are prohibited.
3. Dampness, mold and/or mildew may not be present within the building.
4. Flaking, scaling, or peeling of wallpaper, paint or other interior wall coverings are prohibited.
5. Floor surfacing must be clean.
6. Ceiling surfacing needs to be clean.
7. Infestations of vermin is prohibited.

ATTACHMENT 2: ERD HOUSING VOUCHER PROGRAM – VENDOR ORIENTATION PACKET ACKNOWLEDGMENT

(Disclaimer: This is not a contract or rental agreement between the Department of Corrections and housing vendor. It is merely an acknowledgment of understanding. Please detach page and return.)

I, _____ as the manager of _____
Name Address(es)

acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Transitional Housing Provider Orientation Packet and certify I am in compliance with local building codes, and have a licence to rent my property. I additionally acknowledge the following:

- Rent will be inclusive of all expenses associated with the tenancy: All rents, fees, service charges, utilities, supplies and/or fuel.
- Fee Schedules will be full disclosed.
- All Housing Program Contracts, Rental Agreements and House Rules will be fully disclosed.
- Heating equipment will be provided which is adequate for the living space should be legal and operational.
- Electrical facilities and lighting will be adequate, functioning and in compliance with local building codes.
- Private or shared bathroom facilities will be available to the tenant, to include running hot and cold water, a functioning sink, toilet and shower and/or bath.
- Accommodations will comply with local building or health codes and individual room capacity limited to a maximum of two tenants unless otherwise agreed with the Regional Housing Specialist.
- Furnishings and linens will be provided and include at a minimum: bed, clean sheets, blanket(s), pillow, and towel.
- Security and safety features for the individual unit or shared living space will be adequate to protect the health or safety of a tenant and include functioning security locks and adequate lighting.
- Tenants will be provided with keys and 24 hour access to their private or shared living space as appropriate.

In addition to the above, I self-certify that I am in compliance with Washington State Landlord Tenant Act and local, state, and federal Fair Housing Laws.

Local requirements:

Landlord/Housing Manager

Date

