

VOUCHER SUCCESS RATE



Briefing Strategies:
Working SMARTER not **HARDER**

Developing a Plan for Success

- Use what works for YOUR agency
- Have the flexibility to change things that don't get results
- Be conscious of how concepts interact, build on these connections
- Repeat and Reinforce Key Concepts
- Plan with Purpose



Why is voucher success rate so important?



- Remember the Program's purpose: to assist with housing
- Streamlining
 - Putting the effort on the front end to yield better results
 - "Wasted effort" = eligibility screenings, paperwork, contacts resulting in a non lease-up
- Effect on the Bottom Line
 - Success rate is used in TYT calculation
 - Higher success rate can mean quicker results when you need to spend funding

Success Rate vs. Time to Lease vs. Eligible for Voucher

Success Rate = Percent of distributed vouchers that result in a successful lease up

Time To Lease

- Percentage of vouchers that lease up in 30/60/90/120 increments
- Also included in Two Year Tool (2YT)
- Figures must total 100%
- This statistic gives the best picture as to when payments will start
- Very important in planning, knowing how many months will be paid in current year
- Watch trends – some circumstances will naturally lend to shorter or longer lease-up

Eligible for Voucher

- Percentage of waitlist applicants that are screened as eligible to receive a voucher
- A stale waitlist can factor into this statistic
- Important to track so you can estimate how many applicants to pull in order to reach desired number of distributed vouchers
- This is not tracked in the 2YT
- Knowing this information can help determine when to open the waitlist

Success Rate, Time to Lease and Eligible for Voucher
statistics ALL impact the PHA bottom line



The PHA has the most CONTROL over the Success Rate.
Use that Advantage.

Briefings play an important
role in your success rate.

Let's work on Briefing strategies ...



To Do List:

- ✓ Get people involved, get people excited
- ✓ Be Mindful when scheduling briefings
- ✓ Put together briefing packages
- ✓ Be prepared to make yourself available!



Get People Involved

- Motivate! Choose a dynamic person to lead the briefing
- Invite social workers, family members, anyone that can support and assist with the process.
- Invite staff members/inspectors to weigh in and learn the process as helping hands.
- Invite any community members that could benefit from learning more about the program (Social Workers, Landlords, Advocates). Make connections!



Schedule Briefings

- Vary times of briefings to accommodate participant's schedules, especially if participants are working.
- Pick an appropriate number of invitees (and "helpers") for the space and staff you have.
- Set expectations in scheduling letter about the importance of attendance. Avoid unnecessary delays in assistance.
- Use an accessible space. Be flexible if translators, one-on-one time is needed.
- Advise against bringing children.



Put together briefing packages

- Keep it simple, you do not want to overwhelm the participant.
- Suggested forms: Voucher(s); Outline of process; Application (if updated info needed); Utility Schedule/Payment Standards; Highlights of recent changes; Participant Obligations (most violated); RTA/property condition; List of top inspection fail items; Fair Housing contact information; Lead Based Paint pamphlet; Expanding Housing Opportunities information
- Include Housing Program Assistant's name and contact info
- Go through packet page by page during briefing.
- Provide pen/paper. Encourage note taking.



Be prepared to make yourself available

- Although time consuming, taking the time to answer questions will save a lot of effort in the long run.
- Staff members should stay after the briefing to answer all questions.
- Allow for potential landlords to contact you with questions they may have. No one is a better advocate of the benefits of the program.
- Continue to re-affirm points covered in the briefing.

Tips for Conducting a Briefing

Again, use what works for YOUR PHA



Goals



- Improve Success Rate
- Engage the participants, Motivate the participants
- Educate the participants on the process
- Spread the word to community partners, build a support system for program participants
- Provide participants with the tools they need to find housing and keep housing.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself, make the audience comfortable with you so that the briefing is interactive.
- Ask everyone to:
 - Silence Phones (direct them where they can take an important call)
 - Keep talking amongst themselves to a minimum
 - Keep ALL questions to the end (assure them that you will answer everything, you are not being rude by ignoring a raised hand)
- Acknowledge any “helpers” in attendance, Thank them for their participation.
- Build a sense of community: Everyone is in this together (running theme throughout the briefing)



Set the Tone

- Congratulate the participants. Remember this is a BIG deal for them!
- Engage the participants. Motivate them to do their part.
- Remind them that the voucher is a great opportunity, a life changing event. Urge them to take advantage.
- Discuss accountability, only THEY can make this happen.
- Coach them not to be overwhelmed, the program has MANY success stories. They CAN do this.
- Encourage them not to give up.

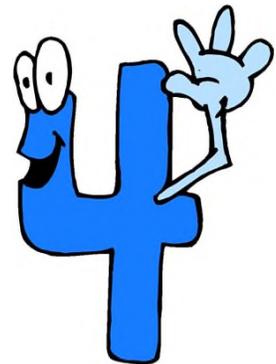


4 main points

Repeat again, and again, and again

4 Criteria of finding an APPROVABLE unit

- The unit is within the PHA's jurisdiction
- The landlord accepts rent assistance
- The GROSS rent is within the payment standard
- The unit passes inspection





4 main points

Add these discussion points

- 4 Criteria of finding an APPROVABLE unit
 - The unit is within the PHA's jurisdiction
 - ❖ Discuss Port requirements
 - The landlord accepts rent assistance
 - ❖ If landlord is hesitant, have them call the PHA for more information
 - ❖ It is a LL's discretion whether they accept Rent Assistance, not considered discrimination
 - ❖ If the participant feels they are being discriminated against for other reasons, advise them to contact the Fair Housing Council
 - The GROSS rent is within the payment standard
 - ❖ Discuss difference between rent and gross rent
 - ❖ Discuss 40% exception
 - The unit passes inspection
 - ❖ Discuss importance and role of tenant in "pre-inspect" review and assessment



Go through the Paperwork...

Voucher



- Collect signed copy for the file 
- Explain that this is the form used to verify their participation to LL's
- Review the bedroom size
 - ❖ Discuss the option of renting a larger unit within the payment standard
 - ❖ Discuss subsidy determinations
- Review the expiration date
 - ❖ Discuss tolling time
 - ❖ Discuss extensions, What is required for an extension approval, Form used



Go through the Paperwork...

Cover Letter/Overview



- This letter welcomes them to the program and provides an overview of the process
- Note the assigned Housing Program assistant and contact info
 - ❖ Have HPA's introduce themselves
 - ❖ Have participants raise hands showing who they are assigned to, makes it more personal and you can be assured everyone knows who their HPA is
- Highlights FAQ's (subsidy, extensions, area covered)
- Good time to discuss "House Rules"
 - ❖ Acknowledge stress level, but important to treat staff respectfully
 - ❖ Leaving one message, calls WILL be returned (make sure they are ☺)
 - ❖ Leave "short" messages with the necessary details, explain how this helps the staff get through more calls (affirming participant role in helping with this)
 - ❖ Discuss ways tenants can assist with the efficiencies of the process (utilize front desk staff, it is not always necessary to see your HPA in person)



Go through the Paperwork...

Utility Allowance/Payment Standard



- Prepare the group for a "Math Problem" ☺
- Assure them that you want them to understand the process, but they are NOT responsible for the equation. HPA's will run calculation.
- Discuss the difference between renting an all utilities included v. responsible for utilities unit
- Give estimates (rule of thumb drop \$150 off P/S if responsible for utilities), remind them that unit not approved until actual calculation is done and within range
- After you have thoroughly explained calculation, discuss 40% option
 - ❖ Remind them that this is money out of their pocket, do not want to financially burden themselves
 - ❖ Warn that future rent increase will cause more of a financial burden



Housing Search Tips for Success

- There will be many “No’s” before a yes. That is OK, stick with it.
- You will need to make choices. KNOW your priorities.
 - Location? Bedroom size? Unit type? Utilities?
- This doesn’t have to be your “forever” home
 - Do NOT let your voucher expire
 - Get into a unit, build your credit
- Do NOT sign lease/move in before the unit passes inspection
- If LL insists on security deposit to hold unit, have something in writing that it will be returned if unit does not pass inspection.
- IF you MUST move in prior to inspection (NOT advised), have written agreement that money paid up front will be returned when HAP received (versus credit or credited over multiple months)



Go through the Paperwork...

Recent Changes



- If you have had recent changes to the program, put together a list
- New participants often know people on the program or other programs and may *think* they know rules.
- New participants do not always understand that different agencies have different administrative plans and different procedures.
- This is a perfect opportunity to discuss WHY decisions have been made
 - Example: Our change in subsidy allowed us to pull off of our waitlist



Go through the Paperwork...

Participant Obligations



- Even if they have already signed a form (highly suggested!), discuss this at the briefing.
- Discuss top violations:
 - ❖ Failure to report income (detail agency requirements)
 - ❖ Failure to submit paperwork
 - ❖ Failure to report Household changes (do NOT let anyone use your address)
- Remind participants that Head of Household is responsible for ALL members of the household.
 - ❖ Do not include someone in your household if they will not abide
 - ❖ Income of all HH members is considered in calculation, even if they do not contribute to HH expenses



Go through the Paperwork...

Request for Tenancy Approval



- Explain that only ONE RTA can be submitted at a time.
- Discuss importance of accurate information and figures on RTA
- Options if gross rent is over the payment standard:
 - ❖ 40% exception
 - ❖ Negotiating lower rent with LL
 - ❖ Denial -> search for a different unit
- Suggestions:
 - ❖ Include Property Condition report requiring LL and T signature
 - ❖ Include a form signed by LL that they are not related to the applicant.



Go through the Paperwork...

Inspection: Top Fail Items



- Have your inspector attend the Briefing!
- Put together a list of top fail items for the participant to give to the LL
- It is the participant's responsibility to emphasize the importance of HQS to the LL, make sure everything is fixed PRIOR to inspection
- Participants should NOT submit RTA for a unit that will not meet HQS
 - ❖ Wastes inspector's time, keeps them from other inspections
 - ❖ Failed inspections causes a backlog that affects ALL participants
- Make sure someone is present for the appointment and all areas are available for the inspection



Go through the Paperwork...

Required Information



- Make sure you get all of your SEMAP points 😊
- Include in briefing packet:
 - List of available units; Landlord contact info
 - Lead Based Paint Brochure
 - Port information
 - Fair Housing literature, office contact info
 - Expanding Housing Opportunities Information (neighborhood info regarding schools, transportation, job opportunities)

Wrap it up



- Repeat the 4 unit criteria
- State that you will answer all questions that will benefit the group
- Encourage others to stay (quietly) to learn from others' questions
- Stay to answer individual questions (have staff there to help)
- Offer final words of encouragement
- Make yourself available to help throughout the process

Briefings are a key tool in boosting your agency's success rate....

Let us know YOUR SUCCESS stories!

Comments and Questions can be directed to: dena.l.hunt@hud.gov