



Rental Assistance Tenant Briefing Meeting Guide

If you are the Sponsor Agency representative for an applicant for VCRHYP’s Rapid Rehousing project, you will receive a copy of the **Award Letter** that will be sent to the participant and name you and your agency, along with the draft **Subsidy Contract**. Your next step is to set up a **Tenant Briefing Meeting** where you will review and complete the subsidy contract with the participant. The below guide is intended to help you move through that meeting and assure participants are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and the supports available to them.

Timeline for meeting: Within 10 business days* of receiving the **Award Letter** from VCRHYP.
 * *Should you be unable to schedule within this timeframe, document efforts and reason for delay.*

Who should be there: Participant head of household and other adult members of household if possible, Sponsor Agency Case Manager (you), regional VT State Housing Authority Field Representative

Meeting outcomes:

1. Completion and signing of **Subsidy Contract**.
2. Explanation of benefit level, participant responsibilities, available supports.
3. Making a plan for engaging in housing search.

1. COMPLETION AND SIGNING OF SUBSIDY CONTRACT:

When you receive the **Subsidy Contract**, it will already have some information completed. You will need to complete the remaining boxes and get signatures from the Head of Household, as well as sign it yourself. *NOTE: Bring at least two copies, one for your records (which you will scan back to VCRHYP) and one for the participant’s records.*

<i>SUBSIDY SECTION</i>	<i>INFO NEEDED</i>	<i>IMPORTANT REMINDERS</i>
Box 1: Subsidy Number	Will already be assigned by VCRHYP before being sent to you	
Box 2: Unit size	Will be filled already in when sent to you	The approved unit size does not mean a participant may only rent that unit size; it means this is the unit size their subsidy was calculated for. If they rent a larger or more expensive unit size, the participant will need to pay the difference. They may find a smaller unit size, but the cost of it must still be within VT Payment Standards for that smaller unit, even if less than their subsidy award.

		<i>See Policies and Practices Section VII. Allowable Housing Situations/ Unit Size</i>
Box 3: Issue Date	The issue date is the day you hold your Tenant Briefing Meeting and sign the Subsidy Contract	
Box 4: Expiration date	The date the subsidy expires is 120 (total) days after date of Tenant Briefing Meeting	Tip: Ask your smart phone or an internet search engine “what is 120 days after X date”
Box 4: Date Extension Expires	This is not applicable until there is an extension on place. Should you need an extension, you would update the subsidy contract with this information	Apply for an extension at least 30 days before the expiration date <i>See Policies and Practices Section III. Allowable length of time for leasing-up and program enrollment for more information on extensions</i>
Box 6: Name of Household Representative	This should be the Head of Household who was originally referred and named head on application	
Box 9: Name of Sponsor Agency	This is your agency	
Box 10: Name and tile of SA rep	This is your name and title	

2. EXPLANATION OF BENEFIT LEVEL, PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES, AVAILABLE SUPPORTS:

Take your time to go through all aspects of the contract, assuring participant understands each element. Below are some tips and points to cover during the meeting:

Housing Search Process Overview and Timeline:

- (1) Starting on the day of the ***Tenant Briefing Meeting***, the participant can begin looking for suitable housing. Participant will have 120 days to find housing. An extension can be requested if there were significant barriers to securing a unit.
- (2) Suitable housing will be right sized (*see unit size*), fall within Vermont Payment Standards (*see Policies and Practices Appendix 3*) for applicable unit size, and be able to pass the Vermont State Housing Authority Housing Quality Standards Inspection.
- (3) The VSHA Field Representative should explain what to look for in a unit so that it passes the HQS inspection.
- (4) Once a potential unit is identified, you and the participant will complete ***Housing Quality Standards Inspection Request*** and ***Request for Tenancy Approval*** and submit to

demo@WCYSB.org along with a copy of the unsigned lease. A Field Representative will be assigned and complete the inspection within 10 days.

- (5) VCRHYP will review the lease and provide feedback on any necessary amendments needed to approve, or notify you and the participant of lease approval.
- (6) VSHA will notify the participant, the owner, you and VCRHYP if the unit passes or fails inspection. If the unit fails, you should have a conversation with the landlord to see if they are willing to make the necessary changes within a reasonable time (before the subsidy expires). If they are not, you will need to restart the housing search.
- (7) Once a unit passes inspection, you will support the participant and landlord in signing the lease, the ***RRH Occupancy Agreement***, and the ***Tenancy Addendum***.

Explanation of Benefits:

- Participants have a right to choose a safe and sanitary unit to live in
- The contract shows what has been determined for the monthly housing assistance payment to be paid to the owner, and approved unit size. If the Participant disagrees with this decision, they may appeal by emailing demo@wcysb.org or calling 802-229-9151 and asking for the HUD Housing Project Administrator.
- If a unit that the participant is interested in costs more than what is estimated to be your rental assistance amount plus Household contribution as determined by the Vermont Payment Standard, then the participant will be responsible for the difference between the actual cost of the unit and the allowed payment standard. Note, this will likely mean the participant is paying more than 30% of their adjusted gross income to rent and sustainability of such a decision should be discussed.
- Households are not limited to the determined unit size provided the unit passes a Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection and the Household can afford it. The determined rental assistance subsidy will not increase if Household chooses a larger unit and the Household will need to pay the difference between approved subsidy and the full rent payment.
- If finding a unit that is the approved size listed on the subsidy contract is difficult, you can look for alternative sized units. While determining if an alternative unit size will be suitable, the Housing Quality Standards (HQS) state that there can be up to two people in each sleeping/living space. This also includes the living room. For example, a two-bedroom apartment with a living room can potentially fit up to 6 individuals.
- VCRHYP may require you to report progress in leasing a unit at any time.
- For the unit to be eligible the following must occur:
 - Been inspected by VSHA and pass the Housing Quality Standard (HQA),
 - The rent has been determined to be reasonable (within Vermont Payment Standards)
 - The owner and tenant have executed the lease including the tenancy addendum prior to VCHRYP giving approval for the household to lease the unit.
- Participant responsibility includes the following:

- To notify VCRHYP of any changes in income from any members of the household.
- To verify that the household is living in the unit, if requested
- To notify VCRHYP that the household will be absent from the unit for extended periods of time, more than 30 days.
- To allow VSHA or VCRHYP to inspect the unit with advance notice.
- To notify VCHRYP and the owner in writing, 30 days in advance before moving out of the unit or terminating the lease.
- To notify VCRHYP in writing about the addition of members of the household and obtain prior permission before they move in.
- To notify VCRHYP in writing of any members leaving the household.
- To notify VCRHYP and provide documentation regarding eviction notice.
- To pay utility bills.
- All members of the household must not:
 - Own or have any financial gain or interest in the unit.
 - Commit any violations of the lease.
 - Commit fraud, bribery, or any corrupt or criminal act in connection with the program.
 - Sublease or let the unit or assign the lease or transfer the unit.
 - Receive rental assistance while receiving another housing assistance subsidy.
 - Damage the unit or premises or permit any guest to damage the unit.
 - Receive rental assistance while residing in a unit owned by a family member (grandparent, parent, siblings) unless approved by VCRHYP.
 - Engage in any threatening, violent or abusive behaviors towards the sponsor agency, VCRHYP or VSHA staff or owner.
- If participant feels that they have been discriminated against, by a landlord, case manager, or other housing support professional, on the basis of age, religion, race, color, sex, disability, national origin or familial status, they may file a housing discrimination complaint with VCRHYP in person, by mail or telephone or by emailing demo@wcysb.org or calling 802-229-9151 and asking for the HUD Housing Project Administrator.
- The subsidy will end on the date stated on item number 4 of the subsidy contract unless an extension is requested in writing, preferably 30 days before expiration, and, at the discretion of VCRHYP.
- It is important for participants to keep their case manager informed and to attend meetings to facilitate the housing search and securing an apartment that is suitable.