

Rapid Re-housing Program Interview Guide

Hello, my name is [NAME] and I'm from Abt Associates, a research and consulting firm. We are scheduled to do an interview today to talk about your rapid re-housing program. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has contracted with Abt to conduct a study to better understand how rapid re-housing operates across the country and what different rapid re-housing models are being developed and used by CoCs.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We understand that your time is valuable, so we really appreciate that you've taken the time to share your insights. We anticipate this interview will take about an hour and a half. Does that work for you?

[PAUSE TO GET CONFIRMATION]

Before we get started, I'd like to go over a few quick details. The information you share with us today will be reported to HUD staff without identifying you or your program by name. That said, because we are only interviewing twenty rapid re-housing programs, it is possible that some responses may be attributed back to you. We will do our best to remove any information from your responses that might identify you or your program or organization. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. We encourage you to answer these questions honestly and thoroughly, however, you do not have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

Do you have any questions? [PAUSE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS IF NECESSARY]

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 2528-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is approximately 2 hours, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

If you have questions about this interview or the study itself, you can contact Ms. Mindy Ault, Social Science Analyst, Office of Policy Development and Research, HUD at (202) 402-3116 or Ms. Lauren Dunton, the Abt Associates Project Director at (301) 634-1779.

Interviewer Instructions:

Prior to the program interview, the interviewer should thoroughly review the RRH program's response to the web survey, as well as the response of their CoC to the CoC-level questions. Once the interviewer has an understanding of the program's components, he or she will then compile a one-page synopsis of the RRH project being interviewed, using answers submitted as part of the web survey as well as administrative data from HUD (APR) or VA (SSVF) programs and send it to the RRH program contact prior to the interview. Reviewing this information will offer an opportunity for the RRH program director (or other staff) to clarify any answers and make any corrections needed ahead of the in-depth interview.

Based on the information in the one-page synopsis, the interviewer should decide what series of questions are most appropriate to include in the interview.

Participant Name: _____

Organization: _____
Rapid Re-housing Program Name: _____
Job Title/Role (*likely RRH Program Director*): _____
Date: _____

Overview of Organization

1. Can you describe the geographic region your agency serves? Your rapid re-housing program (if different)?
2. Other than rapid re-housing, what types of programs does your organization operate? In what ways do these programs interact? (*Examples, our shelter is the single point of entry for other programs, street outreach provides referrals to our PSH and rapid re-housing programs, they interact very little as they serve different populations, etc.*)
3. How does your RRH program fit into the community's overall strategy for ending homelessness? Your own agency strategy? How about your own agency's mission and goals?

Program Capacity

4. Prior to this interview, we sent you a synopsis of your program capacity based on what we have from your HIC and web survey response. Was the information in that synopsis accurate? [*If no*] What needs to be corrected?
5. Which programs or organizations are key partners in implementing your rapid re-housing program? Partners include organizations or agencies that: provide critical funding, provide referrals, regularly provide services to households in the program, etc.
 - a. Were these existing partnerships or were they developed for this program?
 - b. Do you have written agreements, such as an MOU, with any partner that outlines respective roles and responsibilities?
 - c. Are any partners or subcontractors, if so which?
6. In the web survey, you reported serving (*insert # ____*) of families as of the PIT count. How many households does your rapid re-housing program serve annually?

Access, Eligibility, and Targeting

7. Does your rapid re-housing program have a specific target population? If so, what is the target population? Are there any populations you don't serve? If so, why?
8. How did you decide which population(s) to serve with rapid re-housing? Have those populations changed over time?
9. You reported that you [*DO/DO NOT*] participate in a coordinated entry system, is that right? Could you describe how that works? How is coordinated entry implemented in your area? Which populations are part of coordinated entry? How does it affect your RRH program? [*Skip if CoC doesn't have coordinated entry system yet*]
 - a. If you do participate in coordinated entry, did you get to specify the eligibility criteria for your project, or do you have to consider anyone referred through the coordinated entry system?

- b. Do you specify when you have openings, or does coordinated entry (or specified system partners) make referrals on a rolling basis?
 - c. If the program does not participate, what is the reason? Who makes referrals to your project? Is there a standard process by which they determine a referral to your project is appropriate? Can people apply for assistance directly, or do they need to go through another agency/process?
10. Can you describe the process from screening and referral to eligibility determination? *[Probe for description of entire process, using follow-up questions below.]*
- a. Who makes referrals to your project and is there a standard process by which they determine a referral to your project is appropriate? Can people apply for assistance directly, or do they need to go through another agency/process?
 - b. *(If right to shelter community)* Does the referral to housing happen simultaneously to the eligibility and enrollment processes?
 - c. Once you get a referral or application, on what basis do you assess “goodness of fit” for your project? Do you use a standard screening or assessment tool? Which one? How are the results used to make a determination (is there a score associated with appropriateness? Do assessment results only inform eligibility, or are they used to identify service needs?)
 - d. Do you get any information about the household from the referral process, or do you have to collect all of this information directly from the household?
 - e. How is final eligibility determined?
11. Once a household is determined eligible, what happens? Can you describe the process from eligibility determination through enrollment?
- a. How is the decision to enroll the household made? Case conferencing? All eligible households are enrolled?
 - b. Are households prioritized if more households are eligible than you can serve at one time? How are they prioritized?
 - c. How do you identify potential barriers to housing/determine and prioritize the needs for the household?
 - d. Who conducts intake with the household?
 - e. In a given year, how often do households offered assistance through your RRH decide not to participate after being determined eligible? What are common reasons for households to do so? What other services do households who choose not to participate access instead?
12. Does your program serve households with high service needs and housing barriers? *[Add definition]*
- a. If not, can you explain why? Do you refer households with high needs/barriers to other programs?
 - b. Has this decision been made with input from coordinated entry administrators?

Housing Identification

13. Please describe the housing search and identification process for households enrolled in the program. Can you walk me through the process?*[Probe for the steps in the housing search process (e.g., screening, assessment, eligibility determinations)]*
- a. When does it begin?
 - b. Who is involved in this process? (If staff) What are the key qualifications of staff involved in this process?
 - c. How long does the process usually take?
 - d. When identifying housing options for households, are household preferences around unit characteristics and unit location taken into account? How?

- e. What happens when the program and households have been unsuccessful in identifying and securing housing? What are the most common barriers to finding or securing housing?
 - f. Do you employ any specific strategies for households identified as having high service needs or housing barriers? If so, describe.
 - g. [*PROBE for high rent and right to shelter communities*]
14. What issues or challenges have you faced in finding and securing appropriate housing for households in the program? [*Probe using information from the web survey.*] Have any of these issues been a problem? Are there local housing market challenges (high cost, low vacancy)? Lack of rental housing? Landlords are not willing to participate in the program? Please describe.
15. Do you have a network of landlords that you use for this program?
- a. How many landlords do you work with?
 - b. How have you recruited and engaged them? Please describe your approach to recruiting/engagement. [*Probe using information from the web survey*]
 - c. Do you collaborate with other rapid re-housing or homeless assistance programs to recruit landlords?
 - d. Are there key partners (e.g., elected officials, apartment or realtor associations) that have helped you recruit landlords? If so, how?
 - e. Are there ways in which the division of responsibilities among community partners adversely affected your ability to recruit or retain landlords?
16. Does your program have a diverse base of landlord partners and housing options to meet the needs of households you serve?
- a. Do you have landlords in different areas?
 - b. Do you have access to different size units?
 - c. Do you have landlords that will accept people with different housing barriers (such as negative rental/credit/criminal histories or no/low income)?
 - d. If not, how has this affected your program and ability to quickly re-house people? What challenges have you experienced trying to recruit more landlords?
17. Have you been able to negotiate with landlords to have them lower or change their screening criteria, rent, security deposit, or other requirements to accommodate your households? If so, please describe.
18. In what ways does your program respond to address landlord concerns to ensure they remain satisfied? What kinds of concerns do landlords have about RRH programs? [*Probe, using information from the web survey*]
19. When considering housing options for households in the program, how does your program address housing affordability? Do you offer shared housing? Any other alternative forms of housing? (If yes), who can the household live with and who helps pay the rent?

Rent and Move-in Assistance

20. What is the standard package of rent and move-in assistance offered to households in the program?
- a. How was this determined? Has it changed over time?
 - b. [*If process changed*] What motivated the change in the package of assistance offered?
 - c. Are households offered other types of financial assistance besides rent and move-in assistance? How is the amount/type of assistance determined? Do some households only get these other types of financial assistance? Approximately what share of households receive only other financial assistance?

21. [If not clear] Does your program use a progressive assistance/engagement model? [If necessary: *Progressive assistance is providing the minimum amount of assistance that may be needed to stabilize a household and then increasing or decreasing the amount of assistance based on the household's experience over time as assessed by the case manager.*] [If yes progressive engagement model used], please describe.
- What are households told at the beginning of the program about how much/what types of assistance they will receive and for how long?
 - At what points do case managers reassess the amount of assistance a household receives and its duration? On what basis? Does supervisory staff review those decisions? Are there written standards for making the decisions?
 - What are some of the challenges you have faced implementing a progressive assistance model? Have you adjusted your approach based on these challenges? If so, how?
 - What do you think are the benefits of a progressive assistance model?
 - How is progressive assistance/engagement individualized to households? Can you describe how the program determines when to change the amount, duration and/or intensity of assistance to meet individual household needs (whether increasing or decreasing assistance)? Is that decision made by the case manager? By program management?
 - What factors contribute to households receiving additional assistance? What about factors associated with households not receiving additional assistance?
22. How is the rent assistance paid to the landlord? [If the program has graduated/stepped down assistance] Do you inform the landlord of changing rent assistance amounts?
23. How does your program determine when to end rent assistance? Is there a standard set of criteria? If so, what are they? Is this just up to the case manager or is program management also involved in these decisions?
- Is rent sustainability (that is, a household's ability to pay rent without assistance) assessed at the end of rent assistance? If so, how is that information used?

Case Management and Services

24. What is the standard package of services provided to households in your program? Who offers provides those services? [Probe on web survey results of services required vs. offered.]
25. How is the service package for households determined? Do households identify their own service needs? Do case managers conduct needs assessments? When does this needs assessment happen?
26. Can you describe your approach to case management and other services? How often (and for how long) do households receive case management? What do case managers focus on with households? Is case management tailored? [Probe on hard-to-house households, especially in relation to progressive assistance.]
27. Do you have case managers or other service staff that focus on specific service needs (like assisting people with mental health or substance use issues, career development, housing search and assistance, etc.)? What about connecting households to benefits (e.g., SNAP, TANF, WIC, child care, disability)? Links to employment or education?

28. For which services are households referred to other organizations (for example, substance abuse issues, mental health services, job training, legal help)?
29. What is current case load of case managers? Is this the maximum caseload or the caseload size case managers typically maintain? What is the typical workload for each caseworker (number of meetings, length of meetings, other interactions with clients)?
30. Once a household is in housing, what is the role of the case manager?
31. What services do case managers or other service staff offer directly related to maintaining housing? What seems to be most effective relative to helping households stay in housing and avoid lease violations?
32. Are there instances when you only provide case management and related services and don't need to provide rent assistance? If so, describe.
33. Once rent, case management and other assistance ends, is there a formal discharge meeting? If so, do households attend that meeting? What are households told regarding the program's ability to meet any future needs?
34. Does the program help households create a housing plan to sustain housing after the term of assistance? What are some typical goals/actions in these plans?
35. How does the case manager continue to engage with households after they exit the program? Do they provide after care services for a period of time? How long? How often do households access aftercare services?
36. If a household becomes unstable in housing, how is that identified by the program? Do households make contact or do case managers' follow-up with households to assess stability?
 - a. Do case managers maintain contact with landlords? Has your program experienced any landlord-household relationship issues or challenges once the rent assistance has ended? How are those issues addressed?
 - b. What assistance is offered to households that do become unstable in their housing?

RRH Program Successes and Challenges

37. What does your program consider to be successful outcomes for *households* in the RRH program? Do you track those outcomes? How?
38. What factors indicate that your *program* is successful? How do you measure overall program success?
39. What would you consider to be the biggest challenge or challenges your program faces in helping households achieve successful outcomes? What about in achieving successful program outcomes?
40. In the past year, have any staff members left the program?
 - a. If yes, how many?
 - b. What was the most common reason for staff leaving the program?
 - c. Have you been able to find/hire qualified staff?
 - d. What strategies have you used to recruit and retain staff?
 - e. Are any roles particularly difficult to fill?
 - f. How long have jobs stayed vacant?

41. Have you experienced challenges with landlords once housing assistance ends?
42. *(If indicated the program uses progressive engagement)* What are some of the challenges associated with using a progressive engagement approach to serving households?
43. *(If applicable)* What are the challenges of operating in a right to shelter community?
44. Are there community factors that affect successful implementation of your RRH program (such as lack of landlord participants/diverse pool of landlords, low/high housing costs, low/high vacancy rates, lack of political will/strong support for RRH)?