

Evaluation of the Section 811
Project Rental Assistance Program – Phase II

Recruitment Letter and Interview Guide – Property
Owner/Managers

PROPERTY OWNER INTERVIEW (PROPERTY MANAGER OF PRA-SUBSIDIZED UNITS) – RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date:

Dear [PROPERTY MANAGER NAME]:

I am part of a research team at Abt Associates that is under contract to the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct a study on HUD’s Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) program., The goal of the study is to track the implementation of the program and examine overall housing costs, healthcare utilization and the quality of life of program residents. As part of this study we are conducting interviews with select owners and property managers of properties with PRA-subsidized units in six states, including [STATE].

The purpose of the interview is to understand your perspective on the Section 811 PRA program. We will ask about the process of participating in the program as a property owner or manager, the resident application process, the process of applicants transitioning into PRA units, and ongoing tenancy support of residents who live in PRA-subsidized units.

We will call you in a few days to discuss scheduling and ask whether you are interested and available for an interview at [NAME OF PROPERTY] or by telephone if an in-person interview is not possible. We expect each interview to take about 90 minutes.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2 hours per response, including the time for scheduling the call, compiling information for the interview, and completing the interview. HUD may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection information unless that collection displays a valid OMB control number 2528-0309, expiring xx-xx-xxxx.

Our study is sponsored by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development. This study is completely voluntary. We are not conducting an audit. All findings will be reported back to HUD in aggregate form, but given the small number of participating properties it may be possible to identify specific sites. Your decision to participate or not will have no impact on your ability to participate in the Section 811 program now or in the future. All responses will be kept private. We will not use your name or property location or the names of any residents in any of our reports back to HUD.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact [SITE LEAD] at [SITE LEAD PHONE NUMBER]. You may also contact the Abt project director, Melissa Vandawalker at (617) 349-2611 or HUD’s project officer for this study, Teresa Souza, at (202) 402-5540.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

[SITE VISIT LEAD]

PROPERTY OWNER INTERVIEW (PROPERTY MANAGER OF PRA-SUBSIDIZED UNITS) – INTERVIEW GUIDE

State: _____

Organization: _____

Property/Location: _____

Respondent name(s): _____

Lead Contact Phone: _____

Lead Contact Email: _____

Date(s) of Interview(s): _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us. Abt Associates has been contracted by HUD to conduct an evaluation of the Section 811 PRA program. We are speaking with property owners participating in the program in six of the states that are implementing the program. We are also talking with [GRANTEE] and [MEDICAID AGENCY] and other organizations that have responsibilities for the PRA program.

We hope that you will be candid in the information you provide about the program. The information you provide is crucial to improving programs that provide housing and services for non-elderly people with disabilities. In particular, we are interested in capturing your perspective and hearing more about how property owners or managers interact with the population and service providers. In addition, this information will be used to inform the implementation of future rounds of Section 811 PRA grants.

While we will make every effort to protect your privacy, HUD staff will read our reports, and it is not possible to guarantee complete anonymity given the high level of HUD involvement in the PRA program effort. However, your name or the name of your property will not be used in reporting what we have learned during this onsite visit, and your responses will be combined with those of other property owners in [name of state] and in other states.

There may be some questions you may not be able to answer or that are more appropriate for other staff in your organization. Would it be possible for us to contact you or someone else you designate after the interview in case we have missed any necessary information in this interview?

Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

OVERVIEW OF PROPERTY OWNER/MANAGER IN THE PRA PROGRAM

Overview of Organization and Role in the PRA Program

1. I understand that you are the [describe what you think the person’s job is—for example, head of property management for the XYZ housing company.] Is that correct? What are your responsibilities for the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance program?
2. Does your organization own or manage exclusively affordable housing or also market-rate housing? If market rate, what is the market rate rent of units in your property by bedroom size?
3. Does the property have other sources of operating funding that subsidizes rent? Does the property have any sources of capital funding to subsidize rent like Low Income Housing Tax Credits?
4. Is this your first experience with housing programs for low-income people with disabilities? Do any of your other properties have substantial populations of people with disabilities? Can you estimate the proportion of people with disabilities at this property?
5. How did your organization learn about the availability of Project Rental Assistance subsidies? Why did your organization decide to apply for Section 811 Project Rental Assistance? (*Probe for: part of organization’s mission to support low income people or vulnerable populations, previous experience administering housing subsidies, previous relationship with GRANTEE or MEDICAID AGENCY, availability of rental subsidies to meet operating costs*)
6. Has your organization ever worked with [GRANTEE] or [MEDICAID AGENCY] before the PRA program? In what way? (*Probe for:*
 - a. Tenant-based rental subsidies such as the Housing Choice Voucher program
 - b. Project-based rental subsidies such as HUD’s Project-Based Voucher program
 - c. Programs that serve people with disabilities such as Nonelderly Disabled vouchers, Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA)
 - d. Programs that serve people experiencing or at risk for homelessness such as the Continuum of Care permanent supportive housing, (formerly) Shelter Plus Care)

RENTAL ASSISTANCE CONTRACTS AND PAYMENTS

7. Overall, how would you summarize your experience with executing Rental Assistance Contracts and receiving rental assistance payments? Is there anything you would change about the process?

Rental Assistance Contracts

8. How did your organization decide how many units to commit to the PRA program? (*Probe for: maximum number permitted by grantee, minimum number required to receive incentives or points in funding competitions, based on estimated turnover and vacancy rates of property.*)
9. Do you have any concerns about being able to fully lease the number of 811 PRA units that are under contract with [GRANTEE]?
10. Describe the process of executing Rental Assistance Contracts with [GRANTEE AGENCY].
 - a. How long did the process take?

- b. Did the process work as expected?
- c. Were there any delays in executing the RAC with [GRANTEE AGENCY]? If yes, please describe the delays.

11. How long do units typically remain vacant before they are matched to a participant?

- a. How long would you keep a unit vacant while waiting for an applicant to move into a PRA unit?
- b. If vacancy payments were requested, could you describe why vacancy payments were requested?
- c. How many residents have the vacancy payments covered and for how long?
- d. What changes, if any, would you like to see in [GRANTEE's] policies or procedures around vacancy payments?

12. Are properties and/or units inspected before going under contract?

- a. What is the process for inspecting properties or units?
- b. How often are units inspected?
- c. What happens if a unit does not pass inspection?

Rental Assistance Payments and Reporting Systems

13. Describe your organization's experience submitting vouchers to the [GRANTEE AGENCY].

- a. Was this process already familiar to you?
- b. Is the process working as expected?
- c. Do you complete the information, or does a vendor or service provider do it for you?
- d. Have there been any administrative issues or delays in submitting voucher information? If yes, describe the issues or delays and whether and how they have been resolved.
- e. Did you receive any TA or support from the grantee or HUD with this process?

14. Describe your organization's experience receiving PRA rental assistance funds from the [GRANTEE AGENCY].

- a. Is the process working as expected?
- b. Have there been any administrative issues or delays in receiving PRA funds? If yes, describe the issues or delays and whether and how they have been resolved.

15. Describe your organization's experience providing tenant and property information to HUD through TRACS or Form 50059.

- a. Did staff in your organization have previous experience with submitting tenant and property information to HUD prior to the Section 811 PRA program?
- b. Has your organization had any difficulty submitting information to HUD? If yes, please describe the difficulties and if and how the issues have been resolved.

RESIDENT APPLICATION AND ELIGIBILITY

16. Overall, how would you summarize your experience with the tenant selection and move in process for PRA residents? Is there anything you would change about the process?

17. Do you have a written tenant selection plan for selecting residents to live in PRA units? [Site leads should obtain copy of tenant selection plans.] If yes,

- a. Was the development of a tenant selection plan a requirement by the grantee for participating in the program?
 - b. Describe how the plan was developed.
 - c. Describe the main components of the plan.
 - d. Did your organization add any additional program guidelines beyond those that were required by [GRANTEE]?
- 18.** How do individuals learn about available PRA units at your property/properties?
- a. Describe how your organization coordinates applicant referrals with [GRANTEE], [MEDICAID AGENCY], and other PRA partners.
 - b. How do you communicate the availability of PRA units to [GRANTEE], [MEDICAID AGENCY], or potential applicants? How often?
 - c. Is there a centralized agency from which or staff person from whom all PRA applicants are referred? If yes, describe this process.
 - d. Do you or your staff spend any time marketing or conducting outreach to potential applicants? If so, what type of outreach do they do?
 - e. Is the process any different when PRA units turn over?
- 19.** How do potential applicants apply for a PRA unit at your property? [SITE LEADS SHOULD OBTAIN COPY OF ANY TENANT APPLICATION MATERIALS.]
- a. What role does your site/organization play in processing applications?
 - b. What information and documentation must an applicant provide to complete an application for a PRA unit?
- 20.** Is there a waiting list for PRA units at your property?
- a. Who maintains it?
 - b. How often is it updated?
 - c. Is there any eligibility determination conducted for applicants prior to being placed on the waiting list?

Tenant Screening and Eligibility

- 21.** Describe the applicant screening process which determines eligibility for a PRA unit at your property.
- a. Who conducts the screening process?
 - b. What eligibility determinations does your agency conduct (rental history, credit check, criminal background, interview, etc.)?
 - c. Is there any flexibility in determining eligibility for PRA applicants? (For example, applicants may not have a rental or credit history or might have criminal records for an old or minor offense.)
- 22.** To date, how many applicants have been found ineligible for PRA units?
- a. What are the reasons applicants have been found ineligible?
 - b. Are there any differences in ineligibility rates between PRA applicants and other applicants to live at the property? If yes, describe these differences.

23. To date, how many applicants have withdrawn their application, fallen out of the application process, or have chosen not to sign a lease? Why?

Transition to PRA Units

24. Once a participant has been approved for an available PRA unit, describe the process for moving the eligible applicant into the PRA unit from the property manager perspective.
- How do you ensure timely coordination between available units and applicants who are ready to move into them?
 - How does staff from your organization coordinate the move-in process with the tenant and any tenant representatives?
 - Once an applicant is approved, how long does it typically take for a person to move into the PRA unit?
 - If there have been delays in the move-in process, describe the delays.
 - If there have been any challenges with the move-in process, describe these challenges and if and how they have been overcome.
25. Does your organization provide or coordinate services for PRA participants as they transition to PRA units? (Probes: assistance with moving, obtaining furniture and house goods, tenant education, housekeeping skills, setting up utilities, accessibility modifications.) If yes, (*Complete **Transition Services Cost Table** in Cost Section*)
- Describe the services provided.
 - Who provides these services?
 - Who funds these services?
 - Are services available to all residents of the property?
26. Have any PRA residents requested a reasonable accommodation? If yes,
- Describe the accommodation and the reasons for the accommodation.
 - Have all requests been accommodated? If not, why not? Have any PRA applicants not been able to move into the unit as a result of a rejected reasonable accommodation request?
 - Was there a cost to your organization for making disability-related modifications? If yes, what was the cost? What is the source of funding for these accommodations? (*Complete **Reasonable Accommodation Cost Table** in Cost Section.*)
 - Do you have a schedule of approximate costs, or could you provide estimates, for the types of modifications you have made or (may make in the future) for PRA units?
27. What guidance or assistance has your organization received from HUD, [GRANTEE], or [MEDICAID AGENCY] about the tenant selection and move in process for PRA residents? Probe for: assistance with developing a tenant selection plan, adapting tenant screening criteria, processing tenant applications, coordinating referrals of applicants, supporting resident tenancy?
- Which areas of guidance or assistance were most helpful

- b. Are there areas of guidance or assistance that are needed that were not provided by HUD, [GRANTEE], [MEDICAID AGENCY], or other organizations? If yes, describe what guidance or assistance is needed.

RESIDENT TENANCY AND SUPPORT

Supportive Services

- 28. Does your organization or partners provide any ongoing services directly to residents? If yes,
 - a. Describe the services and how often they are provided.
 - b. Are services available to all residents at the property? What proportion of residents receives services?
 - c. Who provides these services?
 - d. Who funds these services?
- 29. Does this property have a service coordinator or case manager who works with the residents of the PRA units after they have moved into the property? If yes:
 - a. What is the role of the service coordinator or case manager?
 - b. Which organization employs the service coordinator or case manager? Do you know the source of funding for the position?
 - c. How often do service coordinators or case managers meet or talk with participants?
 - d. How often do service coordinators or case managers meet or talk with property management?

Tenancy Support

- 30. Overall how would you summarize your experience with the ongoing tenancy of PRA residents?
- 31. Once the person is housed in the PRA unit, do you have any contact with [GRANTEE]? With [MEDICAID AGENCY]? With the individual case managers/service provider organizations? If yes, how often and under what circumstances?
- 32. Do you have any agreements in place to share resident information with service providers, [MEDICAID AGENCY], or [GRANTEE]? If yes, describe the agreements and under what circumstances you share resident information.
- 33. Do you find that property management or other staff spend more time providing tenancy support for PRA residents than for other residents? (*Probe for:*)
 - a. Assisting with the recertification process
 - b. Responding to requests for assistance or information
 - c. Identifying behaviors that might jeopardize housing (lease violations, late rental payment)?
 - d. Educating tenant on roles and responsibilities
 - e. Linking tenants to community resources to prevent eviction

- 34.** What is the process when there is a disagreement or issue between the property manager and a PRA resident?
- Is there someone you would contact if you there was a disagreement or issue between your organization and a PRA resident?
 - Have you found that PRA residents have more or less disagreements or issues with the property manager and other residents?
- 35.** What is the process when there is a disagreement or issue among residents?
- Is there someone you would contact if you there was a disagreement or issues between a PRA resident and other residents?
 - Have you found that PRA residents have more or less disagreements or issues with the property manager and other residents?

Transfers and Turnover

- 36.** Describe the process for when a PRA tenant wants to transfer to a different unit within the same property.
- What criteria must residents meet in order to transfer to another unit?
 - Is there a waiting list to transfer? If yes, how long do people typically spend on the waiting list before transferring to another unit?
 - What are the common reasons that residents request to transfer from one unit to another? If any PRA residents have transferred from one unit to another within the same property, describe the process and the reason(s) why.
 - If any PRA units have turned over so far, what have been the reasons for the turnover?
- 37.** Have there been any evictions from PRA units? If yes, for what reasons?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- 38.** Do you think the program is a success? Why or why not? Are there any changes or modifications to the PRA program you would suggest as a property manager/owner?
- 39.** Do you think the program is targeting the right population based on local need?
- 40.** Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to mention about your experience with the PRA program?

PROGRAM STAFFING AND COSTS

PRA Program Administration and Staffing

1. How many staff at your organization work on aspects of the Section 811 PRA program? What percent of their time do they spend on the PRA program? (in a typical week or month)

(Probe: work related to housing applications and eligibility determinations, property management, contract administration with GRANTEE, voucher processing, entering tenant data, inspections, provide tenancy support, supportive services, etc.)

(COMPLETE TABLE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE)

Staff Position (do not include names)	PRA Program Tasks	% FTE Spent on PRA Program	Approximate salary of position

2. Is the commitment of staff time to administer PRA subsidies about what you expected it would be?
 - a. If not, describe why.
 - b. Describe any aspects of the program that require more staff time than you had anticipated. Has this had any effect on your organization’s ability to administer the PRA subsidies?
3. In addition to staff time, are there any other costs associated with participating in the PRA program? If yes, describe these costs.

(Probe: billing, accounting or resident certification software purchases or services contracted out to a vendor, meeting reasonable accommodation requests, meeting inspection requirements, meeting documentation requirements, making reasonable accommodations to the unit or to the resident, tenancy support services, company overhead costs)

Cost of Reasonable Accommodations

(COMPLETE TABLE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE)

Property name/address	Modification type	Cost of modification

Cost of Transition Supportive Services

Approximate monthly cost of services provided

[COMPLETE TABLE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE]

Transition service provided to residents	Service provider	Approximate monthly cost of service	Funding source(s) for service (and approximate share)	Number (or share) or residents participating in services

Cost of Ongoing Supportive Services

Approximate monthly cost of services provided

[COMPLETE TABLE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE]

Ongoing service provided to residents	Service provider	Approximate monthly cost of service	Funding source(s) for service (and approximate share)	Number (or share) or residents participating in services