

## **Five County Mental Health Authority Shelter Plus Care Policy and Procedures**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the Five County Mental Health Authority Shelter Plus Care (SPC) program is to provide housing, and support to homeless Adult individuals living with disabilities in the Vance, Granville, Franklin, Warren and Halifax communities.

### **Eligible Expenditures:**

SPC rental assistance provides supplemental payments for housing costs (rent and utilities). Participants pay 30% of their adjusted income toward their housing costs: the SPC pays the balance.

If funds are available, SPC funds may also be used to pay other costs associated with the rental assistance program. Tenant security deposits can be advanced to landlords. Landlords may also receive limited reimbursement for vacancies, up to month's rent. If utilities are not included in the monthly rental payment to the landlord, the utility company for the tenant's benefit may receive a direct utility allowance payment from SPC.

Five County Mental Health Authority is allowed an administration fee for management of the grant. This amount may not exceed 8% of the total monthly expenditures.

No other costs may be paid by SPC funds. Program funds may not be used to pay application fees, utility deposits, cost of furnishings, moving expenses, etc.

### Participant Eligibility:

To be eligible for participation in the Five County Mental Health Authority SPC program, an individual must be homeless according to HUD definition 42 U.S.C. 11302, have a very low income (less than 30% of median), and be certified as having a disability as defined 24 CFR 582.5

### Referrals and Application:

Outreach workers, case managers, and community service providers make a referral to the Shelter Plus Care coordinator of a potential SPC participant. The participant will complete an initial application; SPC coordinator will conduct assessment of the individual's program eligibility and ability to live safely without supervision. The participant is then given an application packet to be completed and return to SPC coordinator prior to leasing of a unit. Once a participant is eligible for the SPC program the process of leasing begins.

Individuals found ineligible for the SPC program will be referred to alternative housing resources. The individual will also be provided with the Five County MHA document entitled "How a Client Can Resolve Problems". That details procedures for pursuing grievance should they desire further consideration.

### Leasing:

SPC coordinator will work with the participant, to provide assistance in locating housing of their choice that are the number of bedrooms for which the participant is qualified, and that meets both Housing Quality Standards and Rental Fair Market Price.

SPC coordinator, familiar with the prevailing housing conditions and costs in the local area assure that prospective units are being offered at a rental rate that is in keeping with comparable units on the market. Fair Market Rental rates provide a guide, and every effort is made to find units that are decent, safe and sanitary at the lowest rents possible. Under no circumstances are SPC funds used to pay extra "fees" or to lease units that are priced above the rates prevailing in the market.

The private landlord is free to evaluate the applicant's eligibility for leasing and to reject an applicant who fails to meet standard leasing criteria. Once a unit is located and the landlord agrees to work with the SPC program, the unit is inspected by SPC coordinator to assure that it meets HUD's Housing Quality Standards. No unit is placed under lease until it passes this inspection.

#### Housing Assistance Payments Contract:

Once the unit has passed inspection, the SPC coordinator will prepare a rent calculation form to determine the amount of rent paid by tenant, and utilities allowance if applicable.

The coordinator will then prepare the Five County Mental Health Authority Housing Assistance Payment Contract (HAPC). The HAPC describes the rental assistance payment to the landlord/owner, and the obligations; conditions under which the amount of assistance may be increase, reduced, or terminated by Five County MHA. The contract also describes the conditions and limitations under which Five County Mental Health Authority will make vacancy and damage payments to the landlord.

The Five County Mental Health Authority HAPC will be valid for the term of the lease (maximum of one year) and can be renewed if the tenant and landlord agree.

No rent payments will be made to landlords until all paperwork is completed and signed by all parties.

#### Move – In

The applicant should never move in a unit until 1) the unit passes inspection 2) The Five County Mental Health Authority HAPC is signed 3) the tenant-landlord contract is signed. No payments will be made to cover occupancy of unit before these items have been completed.

#### Move - Outs

If a participant moves from a unit, the SPC coordinator will perform a move inspection of unit. Security deposits paid by Five County MHA funds will be refunded if applicable. Security deposit paid by participant will be refunded to participant.

If a participant moves from a unit without given proper notice to landlords, SPC coordinator will inspect the unit as soon as possible to document any possible damage claims. Damage claims are not to be paid unless SPC coordinator documents damages before repairs are made.

### Support Services:

The referring case manager or referring agency is required to provide ongoing supports to the participant for the entire time the client is in the program. This support is the “Care” component of the Shelter Plus Care Program. The supports are necessary to help the tenant comply with the lease and program requirements, document efforts to actively move the client towards self sufficiency, to comply with HUD program requirements for support dollar match, and to appropriately use this time limited resource. Each SPC participant will assist in the development of their own individualized treatment plan with access and referral to a full range of treatment and support services. Service plans are designed to meet individual needs and goals and tailored to assist the participant in managing their illness, maximizing their economic and social potential, and maintaining their housing. Treatment plans will be reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis.

### Ongoing Rental Assistance Administration:

Five County Mental Health Authority Business Management office and SPC staff works closely on a month-to-month basis to track all rental expenditures and fund distribution to safeguard the misuse of SPC funds. A system is in place in which three separate departments are included in the distribution of monies:

1. Each month the SPC coordinator informs the Five County MHA finance department the status of each SPC participant, which includes the number of participants served, the number and size of units leased and the amounts of rent and utilities to be paid. The finance department verifies utility rental payments.
2. The finance department then enters appropriate information into HUD LOCC’s system to draw down necessary funds, once funds are verify by the finance dept requests for rental and utility payments are made to accounts payable department.

3. A request is then submitted to the Five County MHA accounts payable department who then would generates rental payments to be paid directly to the landlords and any utility allowance payments directly to specific utility company.

Follow up and Communication:

The Shelter Plus Care program coordinator and the landlords will communicate with each other about any problems with the tenant or unit. It is the tenant's responsibility to communicate any maintenance needs to the SPC coordinator, who will then pass information on to the landlord. The coordinator should be notified of any failure by the landlord to make requested repairs. The SPC program is responsible for ensuring that the landlord provides the services and maintenance required under the rental contract.

As appropriate and as confidentiality and release of information rules allow, information may be shared with the tenant's case manager or other service providers.

Interim and Annual Certification:

SPC participants must be re-certified annually. An interim re-certification before the annual anniversary is advised if there is any change in tenant's income. Prior to the annual re-certification deadline, the tenant will be requested by the SPC coordinator to submit verification of income forms. The SPC coordinator will complete a recalculation of tenant income and rental share and generate a revised Five County Mental Health Authority HAP Addendum contract. Changes in tenant share and or status require 30 days notice to the tenant before taking effect.

Leases with the participants are renewed on an annual basis as part of the annual re-certification process.

### Termination from Program:

Through every effort should be made to engage and maintain a participant in treatment and services, it is the policy of Five County Mental Health Authority and the SPC program that continuation as a participant is not contingent on compliance with treatment.

Participant's ability to continue with the program is based upon their behavior as a tenant and in keeping with traditional tenant/landlord rights and responsibilities.

SPC coordinator will work closely with each tenant, (and their case manager/service provider) to monitor the tenant's ability to live within the lease and continue as participants in the SPC program.

Participants will not be terminated except for serious and repeated violations of the lease that cannot be successfully addressed by increase service interventions and or treatments.

### Grounds for termination include:

- Refusal to pay rental share
- Refusal to comply with Shelter Plus Care program requirements for providing accurate information about changes in familial status and or income
- Refusal access to unit to conduct HQS inspections
- Repeated behaviors that interfere with the peaceful and of the site or pose a threat to the health and safety of the other residents
- Participant, involvement of any criminal activity
- All other serious and repeated violations of the lease agreement

Participants will receive verbal and written warnings indicating problematic behaviors and will be given an opportunity for corrective action prior to termination. Participants will be given Five County Mental Health Authority's document "Procedures for termination of SPC Participant Rental Assistance"

Both the tenant and landlord case manager/service provider will receive written notification of termination.

Eviction from a SPC unit is not per se grounds for termination from SPC program. If increased treatment and supports could remedy the behaviors that resulted in eviction, SPC coordinator has the option of continuing assistance in another unit.