

How-to Guide

Engaging Rental Property Providers to Dismantle Bias and Stereotypes

Everyone has implicit and hidden biases, and it is important to recognize that rental property providers may hold many preconceived notions about people experiencing homelessness.

Overcoming these biases can be difficult – but this guide can help you engage with rental property providers in ways that enable them to get past their reservations about renting to those most in need of housing. Knowing how to identify these rental property providers is a crucial first step in building long-term partnerships with them.



Confronting stereotypes

Contrary to public perceptions, many of those who experience homelessness are not in that position due to alcohol abuse, drug addiction, or mental health crises. In reality, a large number of people experience these afflictions even when housed. The difference is that a homeless person may not have resources, social supports, or alternatives to experiencing homelessness, and also must endure public scrutiny.



Helping rental property providers reconsider their beliefs about the homeless

When engaging with rental property providers who seem to possess implicit or hidden bias about the homeless, remember the following:

- React calmly and explain that people experiencing homelessness are as varied as those who are housed. Also, remind them that everyone is deserving of courtesy and respect.
- Leverage local data to support these claims (e.g., “Actually, homelessness in our community is most common among single mothers with children.”)
- Highlight resilience and adaptability, which are often common traits in those who have experienced homelessness.
- Resist labeling the behavior as racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic.
- Reframe the conversation in a positive, strengths-based direction instead of labeling the provider’s behavior as problematic.



Sample responses for **difficult conversations**

You may have to field uncomfortable questions and statements from time to time. Stay calm and reply as best you can, as in the following examples.

Q: "What are this person's problems?"

A: "All people have problems. Those who have experienced homelessness are no different, but they are often unfairly stigmatized. In reality, almost anyone could become homeless."

Q: "Why does this person come with support?"

A: "Everyone needs help from time to time. People who experience homelessness often need support to reestablish stability in their housing and in their lives. The support we offer is for clients and rental property providers alike."