

## **Rental Assistance Services (RAS) Guidance for the Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI)**

### **Background**

The Addictions and Mental Health Division (AMH) believes that the state and our local partners have excelled at developing structured residential programs and resources. However, we must do more to develop the other step in the continuum of housing supports, including Rental Assistance Services (RAS). There are currently not enough resources in place to transition people from the Oregon State Hospital or residential facilities to independent living. One of the largest barriers to independent living is the ability to pay rent along with all associated move-in costs.

AMH is providing non-Medicaid funding to the MHO's to support Rental Assistance Services (RAS) through AMHI. All MHO's will develop policies and procedures on RAS. RAS funds are meant to be temporary and individuals are expected to move toward self-sufficiency. Rental Assistance should be provided through time-limited authorizations.

### **Who Can Receive Rental Assistance?**

MHO's can provide RAS to assist adults and young adults in transition, age 18 or over with a mental illness who meet the defined criteria of AMHI. MHOs should use RAS for those individuals who are moving from a state hospital or a structured residential setting to a non-licensed community-based setting.

### **What Services Are Eligible To Be Funded?**

Rental Assistance Services are to be used to assist people who meet the AMHI targeted population criteria in paying for rental housing that will allow them to live as independently as possible. The primary purpose of the Rental Assistance is to help an individual address **some** of the financial barriers they experience while attempting to secure housing in the community.

Department of Human Services (DHS)/Oregon Health Authority (OHA)  
Addictions and Mental Health Division (AMH)  
Adult Mental Health Division (AMHI)

Rental Assistance funds can be used for:

- Move-in costs;
  - Cleaning and security deposits;
  - Payment for background/credit check (related to housing).
- Utilities;
  - Initial deposits for heating, lighting and phone; and
  - Payment of previous utility bills that may prevent them from receiving utility services.
- Cash payments made on behalf of individuals to cover a portion of the monthly rent.

MHOs may use a portion of the AMHI funds for creation of a revolving loan fund. MHOs would need to ensure that individuals who access the loan funds are able to become financially self sufficient and could repay a loan. MHOs must not exclude individuals from RAS based on their inability to repay the loan amount. MHOs may include basic furnishings (e.g., bed, couch, cooking utensils and dishes) in a loan based program. Regardless of the category, AMHI funding should only be used as a last resort after exhausting other resources.

MHOs should develop their RAS to ensure that rental assistance payments per individual do not exceed the average of the one bedroom Housing Assistance Payment paid by the Housing Authority serving the County.