



## Horizon Housing Development Company

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### **HORIZON HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY HOUSING FIRST POLICY**

Horizon Housing Development Company (HHDC) has adopted the concepts of “Housing First” as a key operating policy. HHDC’s Housing First approach rests on the belief that helping people access and sustain permanent, affordable housing should be the central goal of our work with those experiencing homelessness. By providing housing assistance, case management and supportive services responsive to individual or family needs long-term after an individual or family is housed, communities can significantly reduce the time people experience homelessness and prevent further episodes of homelessness.

Housing First for the chronically homeless is premised on the notion that housing is a basic human right and so should not be denied to anyone, even those abusing alcohol or other substances. The Housing First model, thus, is philosophically in contrast to models that require the homeless to abjure substance-abuse and seek treatment in exchange for housing.

With its special mission to serve individuals with disabilities, HHDC provides permanent and “affordable” housing - costing only 30% of tenants’ income. Income is not required for entry. Then the agency works with the St. Louis Office for Developmental Disabilities (DDR) and the St. Louis Regional Center (SLRC) to provide wraparound case management services to the tenants. This case management provides the clients with stability, accountability, and self-sufficiency.

The focus is on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible. Various services are delivered primarily following a housing placement to promote housing stability and individual well-being. These services are long-term and are predicated on assertive engagement, not coercion. Housing is not contingent on compliance with services. Instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement. At the same time, clients are protected by the lease and legal tenant protections. The services and supports that are necessary to help clients live in HHDC housing successfully often include a “harm-reduction” approach to addictions and full support to those committed to recovery. Unlike the policies of some housing agencies, the Housing First policy does not mandate abstinence.

To summarize briefly the HHDC’s Housing First policy:

1. Move people with disabilities on the streets or in shelters directly into housing.
2. Collaborate with DDR and SLRC to provide robust support services.
3. Provide continued tenancy without mandating participation in services.
4. Embrace a “harm-reduction” approach to addictions.
5. Provide legal protection through leases and tenant protections.