



Cultivating Positive Relationships with Landlords

Service providers working in housing cultivate many important relationships, including partnerships with landlords. This guide offers providers practical strategies for building and maintaining these partnerships, starting with initial outreach, moving into early support, and continuing with longer-term maintenance.

Introduction

Landlords are essential community partners whose cooperation directly determines the quality and quantity of housing available to newcomer clients. Service providers working in housing, along with their leadership teams, should prioritize developing and maintaining strategic relationships with landlords. Organizations that invest consistently in landlord relationships build necessary program resilience to support clients long-term.

Landlord and Property Manager Perspectives

Landlords' perspectives are essential to your strategy. A 2024 survey on [Incentivizing Landlords to Rent to Refugees](#) (Refugee Housing Solutions [RHS]) found that landlords consistently prioritize four things when

evaluating prospective tenants: **ability to pay rent, good communication, good credit history, and no criminal background.** This knowledge lets you address landlords' concerns directly and make a strong, data-driven case for why newcomers make reliable tenants.

Common Barriers to Accessing Rental Housing

Many landlords use standardized vetting processes to screen housing applicants. that require documentation that newcomers lack:

- **Credit history:** Newcomers arrive without a U.S.-based credit profile
- **Rental history:** Without prior U.S. tenancy, newcomers have no references from previous landlords

- **Employment verification:** Newcomers arrive with work authorization but can't provide employment documentation in the immediate post-arrival period
- **Criminal background check:** Standard background checks won't return results for newcomers; many landlords don't know about U.S. Refugee Admissions Program vetting

Service providers can offer alternate documentation to address landlords' concerns:

Landlord Priority	Service Provider Response
Payment ability	Share documented benefits, assistance funds, and income
Communication	Provide translation and interpretation services, offer regular check-ins
Credit History	Provide program support and fair housing guidance
Criminal Background Check	Review the U.S. government's vetting processes

Landlords who haven't worked with newcomers before may bring concerns rooted in unfamiliarity, such as:

- Uncertainty about a newcomer's **immigration status** and their legal basis for tenancy in the U.S.
- Worry that language differences will complicate everyday landlord-tenant **communication**, such as late payment notices, maintenance requests, etc.
- Concern that newcomers may be unfamiliar with U.S. **cultural norms** around housing, neighbors, and community expectations
- Hesitation about **stability** and whether the tenancy will last long-term

The strategies in the next section can help.

Approaching New Landlords

Come Prepared

Develop a portfolio of relevant resources you can use when reaching out to a new landlord. Include materials that describe your organization, the services you provide, what clients you serve, and what benefits a partnership could provide. This helps alleviate typical landlord concerns before they come up.



Consider [Fair Housing](#) regulations when working with landlords. **Landlords are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or familial status.** If appropriate, gently remind landlords of their legal obligations.

Consult RHS' [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) Renting to Refugees and Eligible Newcomers](#) and [Fact Sheet on Renting to Refugees and Other Eligible Newcomers](#) for clear answers to common landlord concerns, including:

- The legal basis for refugee and other newcomer residency in the United States
- The extensive background and security checks conducted by the U.S. government prior to admission
- Work authorization and benefits access
- Legal alternatives to credit checks that remain compliant with fair housing laws

Emphasize Landlord Benefits

In your [initial landlord outreach](#), **clearly articulate what landlords gain from the partnership.** For example, describe how your organization provides:

- Lease review and translation services so all parties understand their obligations
- Cultural orientation for tenants covering housing norms, maintenance expectations, and community conduct
- Ongoing case management support during the initial resettlement period through the Program for Initial Resettlement (PIR)
- A reliable pipeline of prospective tenants for landlords who manage multiple units, reducing vacancy periods and marketing costs

For more, see the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) [Landlord Benefits Checklist](#), which outlines the benefits landlords receive from

working with a housing search program, and [Landlord Marketing Letter](#), which provides a template to advertise your program to landlords in your community.

Gracefully Accept Rejection

Not every initial outreach will result in a partnership. When you encounter a refusal, **respond professionally, but do not treat it as a fully closed door.** Document the interaction and follow up six to 12 months later to see whether the landlord's circumstances or perspective have changed. With patience, you may find former rejections become some of your most productive landlord partnerships.

Early Relationship Support

The **early months of a newcomer's tenancy are the most critical** for establishing the landlord's confidence in a long-term relationship.

Hold Proactive Check-Ins

Conduct regular check-ins with landlords during the initial period of a tenancy, ideally monthly. This demonstrates that you are a responsive partner and can help address concerns before they escalate into formal complaints or eviction proceedings.

Provide Orientation and Housing Education

Many issues that arise early in a newcomer's tenancy are linked to limited familiarity with U.S. housing norms and expectations. Help address this by offering thorough, culturally appropriate orientations that cover:

- Noise levels, neighbor relations, and community expectations
- Lease obligations and tenant responsibilities
- Unit maintenance and cleanliness standards

See [Switchboard](#) and [Settle In for housing orientation materials, including Welcome to Your New Home: A Simple Guide for Home Maintenance, Housing in the U.S., Hygiene in the U.S., and What is an Eviction?](#)

Long-Term Partnership Maintenance

Communicate Regularly

Regular, structured communication is the single most important factor in sustaining a landlord partnership over time. Schedule a quarterly touchpoint, by phone, email, or in person. Even when there are no active issues, predictable communication shows that you value the relationship.

When arrival numbers are down, use the slower pace to deepen existing relationships and build new ones to prepare for busier periods. In unpredictable times, **a brief, direct message that acknowledges uncertainty is better than silence.**

Celebrate and Engage Strong Partners

Establish structured mechanisms for landlord recognition, particularly for those with long-standing relationships or a history of housing many clients. This can include mentions in your materials, invitations to events, or expressions of appreciation by note or email.

When landlords understand the broader context of the work they're supporting, they're more likely to stay engaged even when challenges arise. **Consider creating structured opportunities for landlord engagement.** These might include:

- Invitations to meetings or working groups that bring partners together and reinforce their connection to your organization's mission
- Landlord advisory groups or feedback sessions that invite partners to share their experiences and contribute to service improvement
- Including landlords in newsletters or email updates to keep them informed of program developments, policy changes, etc.
- Peer connection opportunities that allow experienced landlord partners to share insights with those newer to the program

Document Institutional Knowledge

Maintain internal policies around who communicates with landlords, what information can be shared, and when outreach should happen. **Think about relationships at the institutional level** rather than through a single point of contact so that staff transitions on both sides are minimally disruptive.

Keep centralized, up-to-date records for every landlord relationship in your network, including:

- Contact information for all relevant individuals at the property or management company
- A history of placements, including unit types, tenancy outcomes, and any issues that arose
- Notes on the landlord's preferences, communication style, and any accommodations or agreements specific to the relationship
- A record of all formal and informal communications, including check-in dates and outcomes, with appropriate management of personally identifiable information (PII)

Store these records in a shared system that all relevant staff can access. During staff transitions, brief incoming staff members on the relationship's history before they make initial contact.

Managing Relationship Breakdowns

Look for Warning Signs

Even with the best efforts, some landlord relationships will weaken over time. If a landlord is increasing their complaints, going silent or ignoring your outreach, or declining new placements, your partnership may be deteriorating. Reach out and see if the landlord has concerns you may be able to help address before issues reach a breaking point.

Try to Prevent Overgeneralizing

Some situations may escalate despite everyone's best efforts. Evictions happen, and sometimes newcomers choose to break a lease and move on. Clients have the right to act in their own best interest, even when those choices do not fully align with the goals of their service provider or landlord. **Help landlords understand that these outcomes are the result of individual or household decisions**, rather than a reflection on your organization or newcomers as a whole.

End Partnerships Respectfully

If a landlord decides to end the partnership despite your efforts, respect that decision and accept the outcome professionally. Remove them from active referral lists and stop applying for their rentals on behalf of new arrivals.

Document the relationship and the circumstances of its conclusion to retain organizational knowledge of the relationship even as active engagement winds

down. Set a timeline for a respectful follow-up to see whether the landlord's position has changed.

Emphasize that a breakdown in the organizational relationship does not affect the individuals currently living at the property. Tenants who have committed no violations and hold valid leases retain their full legal rights as residents, regardless of what has happened at the partnership level. Monitor closely for any concerns and respond if needed.

Continually Assess Your Landlord Network

Build capacity before you need it. A landlord network that looks sufficient today may not be tomorrow. Networks with a broad range of partners are more flexible, reduce pressure on individual landlords during high-arrival periods, and make partnerships more sustainable.

Conduct an annual structured review of your landlord portfolio:

- Are we over-reliant on a small number of landlords? If two or three partners were to withdraw, how significantly would our capacity be affected?
- Do the available units reflect the likely profile of arriving clients (i.e., family size, accessibility needs, proximity to schools and employment)?
- Do we have enough landlord partners who have indicated they're open to urgent or short-notice placements?
- Are there neighborhoods or jurisdictions in which we have limited or no landlord presence, creating geographic gaps in our network?
- Which landlord relationships have not had recent contact and may be at risk of becoming dormant?

Use the results of your review to define priorities for outreach or re-engagement. Develop an action plan outlining who will complete which steps and on what timeline.

Conclusion

Landlords and property managers are essential partners in resettlement. By developing and sustaining a robust landlord partnership network, you will help newcomers find secure, stable housing even as the resettlement landscape continues to change.

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Resources

[Creating Your Welcoming Landlord Network](#): This Welcoming America guide will help you foster discussion with regional landlords and encourage them to rent properties to incoming refugee families.

[Incentivizing Landlords to Rent to Refugees](#): This Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) report shares survey results on the factors influencing landlords' review of rental applications, as well as incentives that could help them appreciate how choosing refugee tenants could positively affect their business operations.

[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) Renting to Refugees and Eligible Newcomers](#): This RHS FAQ answers questions that landlords and property managers may have about renting to refugees and other eligible newcomers.

[Navigating Difficult Conversations with Newcomers](#): Service providers often need to engage in conversations with newcomers on sensitive and challenging topics. This Switchboard guide provides context and tips for trauma-informed conversations.

[Newcomer Housing Tips: Four Steps for Outreach to Landlords](#): The tips in this blog post from Switchboard and RHS will get you started in landlord outreach.

[Welcome to Your New Home: A Simple Guide for Home Maintenance](#): Use this Settle In guide as part of your housing orientation curriculum to educate newcomers about key home maintenance topics.

[Landlord Toolkit](#): This RHS toolkit contains comprehensive resources on renting to refugees.

To learn more about
Switchboard, visit
SwitchboardTA.org.

