**Landlord Engagement Strategies**

*The information below is about Housing Navigation and Landlord Engagement from a series of presentations the WI BOS did in collaboration with West CAP staff in February 2021.*

* If a Landlord says they will not work with your program, what is the best strategy to use?
  + Ask them what their experience has been in the past that would cause them to not work with your agency/program. Let them tell you in their words what went wrong. Then look into the issue. Was it actually your program/agency? If not, clarify and sell the benefits of your program, the case management, payment of damages (if your program allows for that), etc.
* Always be honest. If there have been issues with your program/agency in the past, don’t blame others but talk about what is different now. Be honest about what the background of the client might be (as long as you have client consent and ROI) to mitigate problems right away.
* Have your client write a letter to the landlord or if there is a criminal background and they have a probation or parole officer, have them write a letter on behalf of the client. If they have drug, especially meth charges, let the landlord know if they have completed treatment or other classes relating to their addiction. Even try to get a letter from the treatment center or facilitator of the class.
* What are some ways to find landlords?
  + Go to the zoning office and find if there are any new registered landlords. Try to get contact information and contact them.
  + If you have a real estate license or know a realtor, you can try to find units that have been sitting empty for a long time. Then you can contact the owners and see if they would be willing to rent instead of sell.
  + Drive around your areas looing for For Rent signs in the community.
  + Facebook, Marketplace, Craigslist, Zillow, Realtor.com
  + Stop into Real estate offices and smaller management companies.
* Get paper applications, if possible, from rental companies so that you have them.
* When you stop into the management companies, try to set a meeting with the actual property manager, the one who has the final say and processes the applications. Don’t settle for the receptionist.
* If they charge application fees, again, talk to the property manager and ask why. If it is because of background checks, explain that your program runs background checks (if it does) and you can provide credit and criminal background to them (with client consent) and ask if they would waive the fee.
* Personally deliver any paper applications and background checks.
* Attend Landlord Association Meetings
* Do lunch and learns or other events that give the landlords incentive to meet with you and hear about the programs.
* Landlord Awards where you give awards to the landlords for going above and beyond in some way.