THE HOUSING SPECIALIST™

Housing Retention & Eviction Prevention Action Toolkit

Recognize warning signs • Document concerns • Coordinate assistance
Make timely referrals — without providing legal advice

Professional Resource #18 • 6 Pages • Electronically Fillable • Printable • Free
Housing Specialist Hub → Keeping Clients Housed

Client & Case Information

Specialist Name: _____ **Date Opened:** _____

Organization: _____ **Client / Case ID:** _____

Property Address:
_____

Move-In Date: _____ **Program:** ■ CityFHEPS ■ FHEPS ■ Section 8 ■ Other

Landlord Contact: _____ **Phone:** _____

1. Early Warning Assessment

Identify rent arrears, notices, payment interruptions and other threats to housing stability as early as possible.

Warning Signs Present

- ■ Client reports difficulty paying their portion of the rent
- ■ Program / subsidy payment appears delayed or interrupted
- ■ Client has received a rent demand, notice to cure, or similar written notice
- ■ Client has received a notice of petition / court papers
- ■ Landlord has threatened eviction or lockout (verbal or written)
- ■ Utilities have been shut off or are under threat of shut-off
- ■ Significant unresolved repair or habitability issues
- ■ Household composition or income has changed and not yet reported
- ■ Client has stopped responding to outreach for an extended period
- ■ Other emerging risk: _____

Date concern first identified: _____

2. Urgency & Referral Checklist

Recognize when legal, emergency or specialist assistance is required. Housing Specialists coordinate — they do not provide legal advice or court representation.

Immediate / High Urgency (act the same day)

- ■ Client has court papers or a scheduled housing court date
- ■ Client reports an illegal lockout or utility shut-off in progress
- ■ Client reports immediate safety threat in the home
- ■ Client is facing homelessness within days if no action is taken

Prompt Referral Needed

- ■ Written rent demand or notice to cure received — refer to legal services
- ■ Subsidy / benefit interruption affecting rent — refer to benefits specialist / HRA
- ■ Serious habitability issue unresolved — document and escalate per procedure
- ■ Client requests help understanding a legal document — refer, do not interpret

Referral Actions Taken

- ■ Legal services / Legal Aid / housing court help contacted or referred
- ■ Supervisor notified according to organizational protocol
- ■ Benefits / income support referral made (if payment issue)
- ■ Emergency shelter / homelessness prevention referral made (if needed)
- ■ Client given accurate contact information for the referred service
- ■ Referral date and organization recorded in case notes

Important: Do not advise the client on how to answer court papers, what defense to raise, or whether to appear. That is legal advice.

3. Housing Stability Action Plan

Assign clear responsibilities and follow-up dates so nothing is left open-ended.

Action Plan

Action	Responsible	Due Date	Status
Confirm exact status of rent / subsidy			
Obtain copies of any notices / court papers			
Refer to legal services (if applicable)			
Contact landlord (when authorized)			
Address benefits / payment interruption			
Update supervisor			
Update client with factual next steps			
Schedule next case review			

Client's stated goal / preferred outcome:

_____

4. Assistance & Verification Log

Track support requests without assuming that assistance has been approved or will arrive on a particular date.

Assistance Requests

Date	Type of Assistance Sought	Organization / Contact	Status

Verification Reminders

- Do not tell the client that emergency rent assistance “is approved” until official confirmation is received
- Do not promise that a legal services organization will take the case
- Record only verified information in case notes
- Follow up on pending assistance requests by the date you committed to

5. Escalation & Follow-Up Tracker

Monitor unresolved issues and document every next step so the case does not stall.

Escalation Log

Date	Issue	Escalated To	Response / Outcome	Next Step

Ongoing Follow-Up Dates

Next internal review date: _____

Next client contact date: _____

Next landlord / agency follow-up (if applicable): _____

6. Practical Case Exercise

Work through this fictional scenario to practice applying the toolkit without using real client information.

Scenario

A client moved into a CityFHEPS-assisted apartment 4 months ago. This morning the client calls and says: “I got a paper from the landlord saying I owe two months’ rent. I thought the City was paying. They said if I don’t pay they will take me to court.” The client is upset and asks you what to do.

Your Practice Steps

1. What information do you need to gather first before giving any guidance?

_____

2. Which warning signs from Section 1 are present?

_____

3. Does this situation require a same-day legal referral? Why or why not?

_____

4. What can you appropriately say to the client today?

_____

5. What should you avoid saying or promising?

_____

6. Who else (supervisor, benefits staff, landlord) might need to be contacted, and in what order?

_____

7. What would you record in the case notes after this call?

_____

Professional Safeguards

This toolkit is a working resource for Housing Specialists. It does not replace legal advice, court representation, employer policies or official program rules.

- Housing Specialists identify risks, document facts, coordinate support and make referrals.
- Housing Specialists do not interpret court papers, advise on legal defenses, or represent clients in court.
- Protect client confidentiality. Store sensitive information only in authorized systems.
- Escalate significant risks of housing loss through your organization’s established channels.
- When in doubt about legal issues, refer promptly and document the referral.