
TBRA Program Manual

State of Wisconsin
Department of
Administration
Division of Energy,
Housing, and
Community
Resources

December 2018

Program Rules and Guidance
for the HOME Tenant Based
Rental Assistance Program

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Chapter 1: General Information

INTRODUCTION

The Wisconsin Department of Administration's (DOA) Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources (DEHCR) developed this handbook as a resource for the HOME Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program. TBRA grantees are required to follow all state and federal requirements, policies, and procedures in this guide. Grantees may only operate the types of programs that have been included in the written contract agreement with the state. In the event of conflict between the language specified in the contract and this handbook or other supporting documents, the provisions in the contract shall take precedence.

This manual can be found at <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/divisions/housing>.

HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (HOME)

The HOME Program was signed into law as Title II of the Cranston Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act in 1990 and has been amended several times by subsequent legislation. The HOME program is federally administered by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The federal HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) was created to help produce housing opportunities for households that earn not more than 80% of County Median Income (CMI). In Wisconsin, TBRA participation is limited to those who are at or below 60% CMI and meet all criteria for eligibility.

The intent of the HOME Program is to:

- Provide decent affordable housing to lower-income households.
- Expand the capacity of nonprofit housing providers.
- Strengthen the ability of state and local governments to provide housing.
- Leverage private-sector participation.

HOME funds are allocated by formula to state and local governments that are called Participating Jurisdictions (PJs). PJs utilize the HOME funds for four main categories of housing activities:

- Homeowner rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- Homebuyer assistance (acquisition & rehabilitation, new construction).
- Rental housing development and rehabilitation.
- Tenant based rental assistance (TBRA).

The HOME Program allows PJs to create flexible programs that provide rental assistance to program beneficiaries that enable them to rent market-rate units.

TENANT BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE (TBRA)

TBRA is a rental subsidy that sub-recipients can use to help individual households afford housing costs such as rent and security deposits. Sub-recipients may also assist tenants with utility deposits, but only when HOME is also used for rental assistance or security deposits.

There are several types of TBRA programs. The most common type provides payments to make up the difference between the amount that a household can afford to pay for housing and local rent standards. HOME TBRA programs differ from other types of HOME rental housing activities in three key ways:

1. TBRA programs help program beneficiaries (people rather than a specific project).
2. TBRA assistance moves with the tenant. If the household no longer wishes to rent a particular unit and the lease has expired, the household may take its TBRA and move to another rental property. Sub-recipients may also establish a "portability" program permitting tenants to use the assistance outside the jurisdiction or may require tenants to use the TBRA to rent a unit located within the jurisdiction. Inspection and recertification requirements still apply.
3. The level of TBRA subsidy varies. The level of subsidy is based upon the income of the household, the particular unit the household selects, and the sub-recipient's rent standard rather than being tied to the sub-recipient's high and low HOME rents.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

DEHCR's competitive TBRA application process operates on a two-year cycle. During competitive years, all Units of General Local Government (UGLGs) and non-profit agencies in Wisconsin which are not part of a presiding jurisdiction¹ are eligible to apply. Successful competitive applications may be renewed for up to two (2) consecutive years.

Applicants must be registered with the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) and may not be listed on SAM's list of debarred contractors. Applicants listed on the debarred list are not eligible to receive and administer HOME TBRA program.

USE OF FUNDS

TBRA funds awarded by DEHCR are divided into two categories: Program Funds and Administrative Funds. Further, grantees are required to make a best effort to provide matching funds. Grantees are required to track all three subsets of funds, all of which have different uses. Each grantee's allocation of funds is specified in their contract.

Program Funds

Program funds are used to operate the program. See Chapter 3: Eligible Services for more information on how to use Program Funds.

¹ Presiding Jurisdictions include the cities of Eau Claire, Green Bay, Kenosha, La Crosse, Madison, Milwaukee, and Racine; the Waukesha/Jefferson/Washington/Ozaukee County Consortium; and Milwaukee, Dane, and Rock counties.

Administrative Funds

Administrative funds (admin) may only be used to pay the costs of administering the TBRA program. Eligible administrative costs are detailed in 24 CFR 92.207 and include staff salaries and other costs related to executing TBRA administrative activities.

Matching Funds

Grantees are required to make a best effort to provide \$1 of matching funds for every \$4 of Program Funds awarded. Matching funds, often referred to as match, should be provided in the form of supportive services to TBRA clients. Supportive services include but are not limited to case management, mental health services, transportation assistance, and life skills training. Non-federal funds used in the provision of outreach and support services can be used toward the best effort twenty-five percent (25%) match requirement.

Chapter 2: Program Administration

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

To receive HOME TBRA funds, grantees must commit to providing ongoing outreach to potentially eligible beneficiaries as well as providing ongoing supportive services to the participant household to facilitate success in achieving and maintaining housing stability.

A well-defined Administrative Plan must be developed and maintained. This plan must include:

- Written Tenant Selection Policies
- Written Outreach and Marketing Policies
- Written Waiting List Administration Policies

These documents must be available for review during monitoring visits or when requested by DEHCR.

The primary contract for HOME TBRA administration will be between DEHCR and an identified grantee. As part of their application, grantees must submit a Contract Administrator Identification Form specifying their contract signatory, fiscal contact, and program contact person or persons. DEHCR will use this as each grantee's official contact list. Grantees must notify DEHCR and submit an amended form whenever there is a change in the agency's contact person.

A sub-recipient may administer all elements of its TBRA program directly or sub-contract with a local Public Housing Authority (PHA), another public or private agency, or a nonprofit organization. The grantee is encouraged to involve its local Continuum of Care (COC) partners.

The grantee will maintain primary responsibility for all issues of participant management, housing placement, tenant-landlord relations, required inspections, assurance of all necessary certifications and verifications, program accountability, match and other required documentation.

Each grantee will either:

- Develop an agreement with an eligible agency who is qualified to administer TBRA Housing Coupons (i.e., income certification, HQS inspections, lead paint certification, owner contracts, etc.); or
- Demonstrate capacity to fulfill the responsibilities of directly administering TBRA Housing Coupons (which may include contracting out certain functions).

As a part of administering the program, your agency must participate in TBRA trainings, events or workshops, and must commit to using and participating in applicable Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) trainings throughout the contract period. HMIS is a web-based data-tracking system designed to ascertain the scope of homelessness in Wisconsin, to improve service delivery to homeless persons, and to evaluate the effectiveness of service interventions. See the section titled HMIS for more information.

HOMELESS PARTICIPATION

To the maximum extent practicable, grantees must have representation of a person who is homeless or was formerly homeless on either:

- The Board of Directors; or
- An equivalent policymaking entity directly responsible for writing and overseeing policy for the project(s) for which funding is being requested, to the extent that the entity considers and makes policies and decisions regarding any facilities, services, or other assistance which receive TBRA funding. The policymaking entity must be an established committee at the agency which:
 - Meets at least quarterly; and
 - Can provide an agenda or meeting minutes listing meeting dates, times, and topics of discussion.

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT AGREEMENTS

TBRA grantees must share housing data for TBRA clients with the local health department on a quarterly basis, at minimum, to match assisted unit addresses with lead-poisoned children. To satisfy the requirement, your agency must establish an agreement with the local health department which outlines how your agency will meet the requirements stated in 24 CFR 35.1225.

- If the agency is notified by a medical health professional that a child has an environmental intervention blood level, and the child resides in a TBRA assisted unit, the agency must report the name and address of the child to the public health department within five (5) days of being notified of the issue.
- If the agency receives notification from anyone other than a public health or medical professional that a child age 6 or under may have an environmental intervention blood level, the agency must immediately verify the information with the public health department or other medical health care providers.
- If the agency receives notification from the public health department or other health care providers that a child age 6 or younger has an environmental intervention blood level and resides in a unit receiving a TBRA subsidy, the agency must conduct a risk assessment within fifteen (15) days and upon completion, provide the assessment to the landlord.
- The owner, within thirty (30) days, must complete the reduction of lead-based paint hazards. A hazard reduction is considered complete when clearance is achieved and a clearance report states that all lead-based paint hazards identified in the risk assessment have been treated or when the public health department certifies that the hazard reduction is completed. If the owner does not complete the hazard reduction required, the dwelling is in violation of the Housing Quality Standard (HQS).

Please note that reporting to the Health Department is not required if the Health Department states that it does not wish to receive the report. However, your agency should retain a copy of the Health Department's response in your records.

LEAD BASED PAINT DISCLOSURE

All TBRA participants must be notified of the hazards of lead-based paint and of the symptoms and treatment of lead-based paint poisoning. Participants are to be provided with the Lead Paint Disclosure and a copy of the disclosure is to be retained in the client's file.

SUB-CONTRACTS/SUB-GRANTEES

TBRA grantees must encumber all sub-recipients with the program delivery requirements outlined in their contracts and program applications. Grantees must either:

- Demonstrate the capacity to fulfill all the responsibilities of directly administering TBRA (e.g. income certifications, housing inspections, lead paint certifications, etc.); or
- Develop agreement(s) with outside provider(s) who are qualified to meet any unfilled responsibilities of directly administering TBRA.

HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS) REQUIREMENTS

All grantees and sub-grantees must comply with Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) participation requirements. HMIS is a web-based data-tracking system that measures the scope of homelessness in Wisconsin, tracks service delivery to people who are homeless, and helps evaluate the effectiveness of service interventions. In Wisconsin, the HMIS designated by the HUD COCs is Wisconsin Service Point (WISP).

CONTRACT AMENDMENTS

TBRA grantees may amend their contracts only with written approval from DEHCR. To request a contract amendment, TBRA grantees must electronically submit the following:

- A formal written request on the grantee's letterhead and signed by someone with contract signature authority (which must define and justify the changes being made);
- An amended budget if any changes are being made (Excel files preferred).

DEHCR must receive all contract amendment requests no later than thirty (30) days before the end of the contract period.

COORDINATED ENTRY

Coordinated entry refers to a single place or process for people to access homelessness prevention, housing, and related services within a given COC. It may be the only "door" for particular kinds of assistance, or there may be other ways to access assistance. It includes the following core components:

- Information so people will know where or how to access coordinated entry.
- A place or way to request assistance, such as a walk-in center or a 211 call center.
- A screening and assessment process and tools to gather information about the person, their housing and service needs, and program eligibility and priority.
- Information about programs and agencies which provide housing or services.
- A process and tools for referral to appropriate programs or agencies.

- In some cases, a process and tools for making program admissions decisions.

HUD COCs are required to develop and implement coordinated entry. TBRA grantees are *strongly encouraged but not required* to participate in coordinated entry and use any applicable coordinated entry procedures to evaluate client eligibility.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Grantees must develop and implement written confidentiality procedures to ensure all records containing personally identifying information (as defined by HUD) of any person or family who applies for and/or receives TBRA assistance is kept secure and confidential.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Grantees must comply with organizational, individual, and procurement conflict of interest provisions. Grantees will be required to repay any TBRA funds disbursed for persons with whom there is an identified conflict of interest unless an exception is granted by DOA and HUD.

Organizational Conflicts of Interest

Grantees must not condition TBRA assistance on a client's acceptance of housing owned by the grantee, a parent or subsidiary of the grantee.

Procurement Conflicts of Interest

In the procurement of property and services, the conflict-of-interest provisions at 24 CFR 85.36 and 24 CFR 84.42 apply. These regulations require grantees to maintain written standards governing the performance of their employees engaged in awarding and administering contracts. At a minimum, these standards must:

1. Require that no employee, officer, agent of the grantee shall participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by TBRA funds if their participation would create a real or apparent conflict of interest.
2. Require that grantee employees, officers and agents not accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors, or parties to sub-agreements.
3. Stipulate provisions for penalties, sanctions, or other disciplinary actions for violations of standards.

FAITH-BASED ACTIVITIES

All TBRA-funded activities must be administered in a manner which is free from religious influences and in accordance with the following principles:

- Agencies must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment and must not limit employment or give preference in employment to persons on the basis of religion.
- Agencies must not discriminate against any person applying for services and must not limit shelter or services or give preference to persons on the basis of religion.

- Agencies must provide no religious instruction or counseling, conduct no religious worship or services, engage in no religious proselytizing and exert no other religious influence in the provision of programs or services funded under TBRA.
 - If a grantee conducts these activities, the activities must be offered separately in time or location from the programs or services funded under TBRA, and participation must be voluntary for TBRA program clients.

INVOLUNTARY FAMILY SEPARATION AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Based on amendments made to HUD rules by the Gender Access Rule regarding the definition of Family and Household, the following rules apply to all grantees:

- All individuals or groups of individuals regardless of age, gender identification, sexual orientation, and marriage status identifying as a family must be served as a family by any project which serves families. There can be no involuntary separation.
- There can be no documentation requirement or need for “proof” of family, gender identification, and/or sexual orientation. Examples of prohibited inquiry and documentation include but are not limited to parentage, birth certificates, and marriage certificates.
- Families with children under age 18 must not be denied services based on the age of any child under age 18. For example, a family could not be denied assistance because there is a 16-year-old in the family.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA)

VAWA prohibits denial or termination of assistance or eviction solely because a person is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This protection applies to all eligibility and termination decisions that are made with respect to TBRA rental assistance.

Agencies that determine eligibility for or administers TBRA rental assistance are responsible for ensuring that a notice of VAWA protections is provided to each applicant for TBRA rental assistance and each program participant receiving TBRA rental assistance at the following times:

1. When an applicant is denied assistance
2. When an applicant is approved to receive assistance
3. When a program participant is notified of termination of assistance
4. When a program participant receives notification of eviction from the housing owner

Emergency Transfer Plan

Grantees must develop and implement an emergency transfer plan compliant with 24 CFR 92.359(g).

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of TBRA, DEHCR defines the following terms:

- **Homeless or imminently at risk of homelessness [42 USC 11302]:** an individual or family is considered homeless or imminently at risk of homelessness if they fall within category 1 or 2 of the HEARTH definition of homelessness.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

Notification of Monitoring Visit

DEHCR will periodically monitor the performance of each grantee. In conducting performance reviews, information will be obtained from the records and reports from onsite or desk monitoring, audit reports, and information from IDIS and HMIS. Monitoring reviews to determine compliance with specific program requirements will be conducted as necessary.

Desk monitoring

All requested documentation for a desk monitoring must be sent electronically to TBRA program staff. These materials must be received by DEHCR within the timeframe listed in the monitoring appointment letter. Agency staff, including finance and program staff, must be available to discuss any questions. Desk monitoring reviews often take more than one day due to supplemental documentation requests and follow-up questions.

Onsite Monitoring

Monitoring questionnaires for onsite monitoring visits must be returned via email at least seven (7) days in advance of the monitoring visit. Other requested documentation does not need to be sent via email since TBRA staff will review these forms during the onsite visit.

Onsite monitoring visits typically last 4-6 hours. During the visit, TBRA staff will review client files, financial procedures and records, and agency policies. TBRA staff will interview two program clients for 5-10 minutes each (if possible) during the visit. TBRA staff will also visit at least one TBRA-subsidized unit if possible. Agency staff involved in the administration or fiscal operation of the program will be needed to go over program and fiscal materials and respond to questions during the visit.

Non-compliance with Program Requirements

If it is determined that the grantee has not complied with a program requirement, the agency will be given written notice of this determination and given an opportunity to demonstrate compliance.

RECORD-KEEPING AND RETENTION

Grantees must retain all program files and records (including client files) for a minimum five (5) years after the contract period ends. All files must be available for review or audit by HUD upon request from DEHCR. Often the turnaround for request for files is short; therefore, files must be readily accessible and received by DEHCR within the timeframe requested.

Chapter 3: Program Requirements

CLIENT ELIGIBILITY

Eligible clients must both:

- (1) Have a household income at or below 60% of the county median income;
 - Households with incomes up to 80% CMI may be eligible with DEHCR approval
- (2) Be homeless or at risk of homelessness

ELIGIBLE SERVICES

Eligible services which may be paid for with TBRA program funds are:

- Rental assistance;
 - The term of rental assistance with HOME funds may not exceed 24 months, but may be renewed, subject to DEHCR approval and the availability of funds;
 - Not to exceed the difference between the client's rent and thirty percent (30%) of the client's household income [24 CFR 92.209(h)(1)];
- Security deposit assistance;
 - The maximum amount of security deposit assistance per client is the equivalent of two months' rent for the unit;
- Utility assistance;
 - Only for clients who are also receiving rental assistance;
 - Grantees define which utilities they cover; they may only choose to cover utilities permitted under a Public Housing Authority utility allowance, including heat, electric, water, sewer, and trash;
 - Phone, internet, and television are ineligible expenses;
 - Grantees define the maximum amount of utility assistance per client (usually by setting a flat dollar cap or by paying only for certain utilities, e.g. heat/electric or water/sewer/trash);
- HQS inspections;
 - Grantees can charge *whichever is less*:
 - \$50 per inspection (\$35 per re-inspection) plus mileage reimbursed at the current federal rate; or
 - The actual staff or contractor costs of the inspection;
- Staff time spent on TBRA client household income determinations;
 - Grantees can charge *whichever is less*:
 - \$50 per income determination; or
 - The actual staff cost of the income determination;
 - If income determinations are conducted outside a grantee's office, the grantee may charge *whichever is less* for mileage reimbursement:
 - The current federal rate; or
 - The rate at which the grantee reimburses for mileage.

INELIGIBLE SERVICES

Any services not explicitly listed in Eligible Services section of this manual are ineligible.

DEHCR would also like to clarify that TBRA funds may not be spent:

- To make commitments to specific landlords for specific units;
 - Clients must be free to use TBRA for any eligible unit
- On a rental unit that is owned in whole or part by any TBRA grantee;
- On clients who are resident landlords of cooperative housing that qualifies as home landlordship housing;
 - However, TBRA *may* be spent on clients who are renting from a cooperative unit landlord
- To prevent displacement of, or provide relocation assistance to, tenants as a result of activities other than the HOME program;
- To pay for overnight or temporary shelter;
 - TBRA subsidies must be sufficient to enable clients to rent units that meet HQS
- To pay for arrearages, including rent and utility;
- To pay for a single month's rent;
 - TBRA may only be spent on leases whose term is longer than one month (i.e. no month-to-month leases)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

DEHCR requires grantees to make a best effort to provide supportive services to TBRA clients. Grantees may provide supportive services directly or contract services through another agency.

Supportive services include but are not limited to case management, mental health services, transportation assistance, and life skills training.

Clients may be encouraged but *cannot* be required to participate in supportive services; as such, they cannot be terminated from a TBRA program due to non-participation in supportive services.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

Grantees may choose to operate their TBRA program as a Self-Sufficiency Program. For the purposes of TBRA, DEHCR defines a Self-Sufficiency Program as:

A program whose goal is to increase clients' earned income and reduce their dependency on public assistance by providing education, job training, counseling, and other forms of social service assistance in addition to rental assistance so that clients can acquire the skills necessary to obtain self-sufficiency.

Unlike other TBRA programs, Self-Sufficiency Programs *may* require clients to participate in supportive services; however, clients still *cannot* be terminated due to non-participation. They may, however, be refused a renewal of TBRA assistance.

MARKETING AND OUTREACH

Client Marketing

Grantees are required to publicly announce the availability of TBRA. To further fair housing objectives, grantees should identify those households *least likely to apply* and determine what special outreach activities will ensure they are fully informed about the program.

To ensure that program access is not limited to a particular facility's or program's clients, the marketing approach must address:

- How the program will be announced (i.e. a marketing and outreach strategy);
- How long applications will be accepted;
- Where and how to submit applications; and
- How applicants will be contacted regarding program acceptance or denial.

Landlord Marketing

Landlord willingness to participate in TBRA significantly affects the options and opportunities available to clients. DEHCR encourages grantees to create an outreach plan for local landlords. Mailing program notices to landlords using tax or Public Housing Authority (PHA) records as sources and participating in local landlord/realtor association meetings are often effective.

CLIENT APPLICATIONS

Application Details

Applications must be submitted in writing (either in-person or electronically). Applications must include all information required by the grantees to determine the client's household income and eligibility. Grantees may develop application forms that meet their specific needs.

Pre-Screening

Grantees may choose to use a shorter pre-screen form to place potentially eligible applicants on a waiting list. When an applicant is selected from the waiting list, they must then complete the full application form, which must include new/updated (i.e. current to the full application form) information to be used to determine eligibility.

Eligibility Determination

Applicants must be selected from each grantee's waiting list in the order established by the grantee's Tenant Selection Policy. To determine a client's eligibility, the grantee must verify that the client meets all criteria listed in the *Client Eligibility* section of this manual.

Client Files/Checklist

A client file must be created for each applicant who at minimum submits a pre-screen form regardless of whether the applicant is eventually accepted or denied. This file must contain the checklist, application, all associated documentation, and all written correspondence between the client and grantee. Files may be paper or electronic.

For accepted clients, files must contain the client's:

INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT	
	Provider Application/Intake Form
	TBRA Briefing Notification
	Income Determination/Cost Calculation Form
	Rent Calculation
	3 rd Party Income Documents
	Utility Allowance Worksheet
	Fair Market Rent Assessment Form
	Rent Reasonableness Assessment Form
	Comparable Unit Documentation
	Verification of Homelessness Form
	3 rd Party Verification of Homelessness
	Verification of Disability Form (if applicable)
	3 rd Party Verification of Disability
	PHA Waiting List Notification (if applicable)
LEASING	
	Request for Tenancy Approval
	TBRA Tenant Briefing Certification
	Rental Coupon
	Initial HQS Inspection (must be passed)
	Lease and Lease Addendum
	Housing Assistance Payment Contract
OTHER DOCUMENTATION	
	Termination and Grievance Policy
	VAWA Notification
	Releases of Information for All Household Adults (program and WISP)
	Annual Income Recertification and 3 rd Party Income Documents (if applicable)
	Annual HQS Re-inspection (must be passed) (if applicable)
	Lead Paint Disclosure
	Case Notes

Denial

Applicants who are determined to be ineligible must be notified in writing. The written notice must identify why the applicant is ineligible. It must also inform the client that they have ten (10) calendar days from the date of notice to request a review of the decision. Reviews must be requested in writing to the grantee.

WAITING LIST POLICY

If a waiting list is used, an agency must establish a written Waiting List Policy which defines how the waiting list is managed. The following is a non-exhaustive list of parameters grantees may use to organize their waiting lists:

- The order in which assistance is offered (i.e. approved preference selection policy based on aggregate needs, first come-first served, lottery, etc.);

- The length of time for utilizing the waiting list (i.e. maintaining the list for a fixed period of time, then starting over; accepting applications for a fixed period of time, then closing until all eligible applicants receive assistance; continuously accepting applications; etc.);
- The severity or intensity of each client's need.

PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY WAITING LIST (SECTION 8) COORDINATION

Grantees must coordinate with their local PHAs to ensure that TBRA will not affect the status of families on PHA waiting lists (e.g. for Section 8). Grantees must document this with a signed document from the PHA (e.g. a signed letter or an agreement between the grantee and PHA).

TENANT SELECTION POLICY

Each grantee must have a written Tenant Selection Policy that specifies how clients will be selected to receive assistance. Participation (admission to the waiting list and receipt of program benefits) may be restricted to persons/households within the grantee's identified target population as long as basic fair housing requirements are met.

Access to the waiting list and subsequent rental assistance cannot be limited to a particular facility, provider agency or service program. It can, however, be targeted to a particular category or class (i.e., households participating in transitional housing, family in wrap-around services, etc.). If admission is restricted (targeted), the assistance must be made available to all persons who fall into the target population identified in the policy.

If there is only one facility, provider, or program offering these services/programs in the community, clients may be required to participate in that agency's program. If there is more than one agency that provides services, access cannot be exclusive to a specific facility or program. Clients should be encouraged to obtain services to live independently, however, the client must be free to select where to go to obtain services.

TBRA BRIEFING

Grantees are required to deliver a TBRA Briefing to each new client. The purpose of the briefing is to ensure that clients understand their responsibilities (as well as the grantee's and landlord's responsibilities) and has sufficient guidance to make an informed choice of housing.

At minimum, the TBRA Briefing must engage the following topics:

- Roles and responsibilities of the client, landlord, and grantee;
- Limitations on how much rent a landlord may charge, including how utility allowances is incorporated in the TBRA subsidy;
- Rent calculations, including how grantee and client shares will be calculated;
- Security deposit policy, including how much will be charged, who pays, and who receives any refund;
- Housing coupon issuance and extension policy;

- Guidance on selecting a unit, including HQS requirements and procedures for submitting the Request for Lease Approval/Rental Unit Information form;
- Clients should not sign a lease until the grantee has approved the unit;
- Lead-based paint;
- Fair housing information, including the process for submitting a complaint in case of discrimination;
- Prohibited lease provisions and the lease addendum (i.e. that the lease must comply with 24 CFR 92.253).

TBRA Briefings should be delivered in person to each client and documentation of the briefing meeting must be placed in each client's file.

HOUSING COUPONS

The issuance of a TBRA Housing Coupon authorizes the client to begin the search for housing. The initial coupon issuance period must be for a minimum of 60 days with the opportunity for up to two 30-day extensions, or one 60-day extension. The coupon period cannot extend past 120 days. The coupon is issued in person during the briefing session. See the TBRA Briefing section.

REQUEST FOR UNIT APPROVAL

Once the client has located a unit and the landlord has agreed to participate, the client and landlord jointly submit the Request for Unit Approval/Rental Unit Information form. This form provides essential information about the property (bedroom size, utility combination, proposed rent, ownership information). The submission of this document triggers the grantee's inspection, rent negotiations and review of the landlord's lease.

RENT DETERMINATION

TBRA programs must set a payment standard for each available unit size. The payment standard must represent the cost (rent and utilities) of moderately priced units in the service area that meet HQS.

LEASE REVIEW

The grantee must review the landlord's lease to assure that it does not include any of the prohibited lease provisions. All HOME TBRA-assisted units must have the TBRA Lease Addendum attached at signing.

EXECUTION OF DOCUMENTS

The Lease Agreement and Lease Addendum are executed by and between the client and landlord only. The Rental Assistance Contract is executed by and between the grantee and landlord only on behalf of the tenant. Rental Assistance Contracts should begin on the first day of the month whenever possible.

Chapter 4: Income and Rent Calculation

INCOME LIMITS

Income limits are established by household size and revised annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In order to be eligible, the client's total Gross Annual Income must be at or below the applicable income limit as defined by the agency, but not more than 60% of the county median income.

Income must be verified by a third party not affiliated with the agency before assistance is provided and re-verified annually thereafter. Gross and Adjusted Annual Income are calculated using the HUD definitions of income and allowances:

- **Income Limit at Admission:** Household Gross Annual Income must be at or below sixty percent (60%) of the county median income (income up to 80% CMI may be eligible with DEHCR approval);
- **Income Limit after Admission:** Assistance must be terminated if the client's Gross Annual Income exceeds eighty percent (80%) of the county median income at the end of one (1) year of participation. The client must receive thirty (30) days written notice of the termination.

Third Party Income Verification

Grantees must verify participant's income using third party source information for each participant. Third party source documentation may include, but is not limited, to paycheck stub or other wage statements, interest statements, and unemployment or worker's compensation statements. Keep a copy of source verification documents in each client's file.

Grantees must use the Part 5 annual income definition for all program clients:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2701/sample-format-for-calculating-part-5-annual-income/>

Income determinations for new TBRA recipients are valid for six months.

CLIENT RENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Clients must contribute a minimum of 30% of their Adjusted Monthly Income toward their rent. The actual percentage or dollar amount of the minimum tenant payment must be defined in the grantee's policies and procedures.

The TBRA subsidy may not exceed the difference between the grantee's rent standard and the client's contribution. In other words, the grantee's and client's rent payments together may not exceed the unit's rent or the grantee's rent standard.

PROHIBITION AGAINST DUPLICATIVE ASSISTANCE

Clients cannot receive TBRA if they are receiving rental assistance under another federal, state or local rental assistance program **IF** the TBRA subsidy would result in duplicative subsidies.

However, if the client's other rental subsidy program does not provide assistance sufficient to lower a tenant's rental payment to thirty percent (30%) of their adjusted income, TBRA may be provided as supplemental assistance to further reduce the client's rent payment to thirty percent (30%) of the client's adjusted income.

BLENDING FUNDS

Grantees may blend TBRA with other funds; for example, other state or federal rental assistance funds may be used to pay for clients' security deposits while TBRA pays for their monthly rent. However, DEHCR recommends that grantees not use TBRA in combination with other funds to pay the same month's rent. In addition, state and federal homeless funds should not be used to extend a client's participation in the TBRA program when the client has received the maximum months of TBRA subsidies.

Plans to blend funds should be listed in the grantee's application and discussed with DEHCR.

RENT PAYMENT STANDARDS

Grantees have two choices for creating their rent payment standards:

1. The payment standard may be based on HUD's Fair Market Rent (FMR) standards. The payment standard for each unit must be at least eighty percent (80%) of the published FMR but may not exceed the FMR or HUD-approved community-wide exception rent. Most grantees use this method, as it requires little market analysis on the grantee's part.
2. The payment standard may be set at any level (higher or lower than the FMR) *as long as the standard is based on the grantee's own market analysis*. This method is more complex and time-consuming, and it must be approved by DEHCR on a case by case basis before going into effect.

Grantees must also ensure all TBRA units meet Rent Reasonableness standards as defined in 24 CFR 982.4.

CALCULATING RENTAL SUBSIDIES

Three factors affect the amount of the grantee's subsidy payment and the household's required share towards the rental payment:

1. The family's income -- the lower the family's income, the higher the grantee's subsidy payment.
2. The payment (rent) standard the grantee establishes for each bedroom size.
3. The cost of housing and utilities for the unit the family selects.

In addition, the subsidy depends upon the TBRA model selected by the grantee. Determining the subsidy under the different methods is discussed in the following two sections.

Using the HUD Certificate Model

The HUD Rental Certificate Program model assumes a fixed tenant payment.

- The tenant's share of housing costs (Total Tenant Payment, or TTP) is calculated by formula. The grantee then pays the difference between the tenant's share and the approved rent for the unit.
- The formula for computing TTP under the HUD Rental Certificate Program requires a tenant to pay the greater of:
 - 30% of monthly adjusted income; or
 - 10% of monthly gross income

EXAMPLE 1

The Cleavers were issued a two-bedroom HOME TBRA Coupon. Their annual (gross) and adjusted incomes are \$22,500 and \$18,300, respectively. They find an apartment that rents for \$725 (including utilities).

The Cleavers must pay the **greater** of:

\$457.50 30% of adjusted monthly income ($\$18,300 / 12 \times 0.30$)

OR

\$187.50 10% of annual (gross) monthly income ($\$22,500 / 12 \times 0.10$)

The grantee must pay the difference between the tenants' share and the approved rent.

Approved rent	\$725.00
Less Total Tenant Payment	<u>-\$457.50</u>
Sub-recipients share of the rent	\$267.50

Using the HUD Rental Voucher Model

The Rental Voucher Program model assumes a fixed sub-recipient payment.

- The maximum grantee subsidy is calculated, and the tenant pays the difference between the subsidy and the approved rent for the unit.
- Using the HUD Rental Voucher method, the grantee first establishes a payment (rent) standard for the program as a whole.
- The grantee generally pays the difference between its payment (rent) standard and thirty percent (30%) of the tenant's adjusted monthly income. However, a minimum tenant payment is required.

EXAMPLE 2

The Cleavers have been issued a two-bedroom HOME TBRA Coupon. Their annual (gross) and adjusted incomes are \$22,500 and \$18,300, respectively. As in Example 1, their monthly annual (gross) and adjusted incomes are \$457.50 and \$187.50 respectively. They find an apartment that rents for \$800 (including utilities). The grantee rent standard is \$775.

The maximum sub-recipient subsidy is:

\$775.00	Rent Standard
<u>\$457.50</u>	(less) 30% of adjusted monthly income
\$317.50	Maximum grantee subsidy

The Cleavers' share of the rent is:

\$800.00	Approved rent
<u>\$317.50</u>	(less maximum subsidy)
\$482.50	The Cleavers' payment

In this example, the Cleavers will pay more than 30 % of their adjusted income for housing because they selected a unit that rents for more than the payment (rent) standard. If the Cleavers had found a less expensive unit the requirement that the beneficiary must pay at least 10% of monthly gross income might apply.

\$500.00	Approved rent
<u>\$317.50</u>	(less) Maximum subsidy
\$182.50	Calculated tenant share

However, the Cleavers must pay at least 10% of gross monthly income.
 $(\$22,500 / 12 \times 0.10 = 187.50)$.

Therefore, the grantee's subsidy payment is reduced by \$5 in this example. The client's share would be \$312.50.

UTILITY ALLOWANCE SCHEDULES

Utility Allowance Schedules are used to estimate the average cost of utilities for typical types of housing (single family, duplex/townhouse, apartment, etc.) and for various utilities (natural gas, propane, electricity, etc.).

The household's contribution is intended to cover both rent and utilities. If all utilities are included in the rent, the household's entire contribution goes to the owner. Most tenants are responsible for payment of at least some utilities and in some instances, may receive a utility reimbursement.

Grantee Options for Utility Allowance Schedule:

Use local Public Housing Agency's HUD Voucher Program Utility Schedule. Below are two examples (with and without a Utility Reimbursement):

Example #1 - No Utility Reimbursement

Assumptions

- Rent Standard = \$600
- Monthly Adjusted Income = \$1000
- Total Tenant Contribution = \$300 ($\$1000 \times .30$)
- Rent for Unit = \$575
- Utility Allowance = \$75 (gas & electricity)
- Gross Rent = \$650 ($\$575 + \75) – (this is higher than the Rent Standard)

Maximum Subsidy = \$300 ($\600 Rent Standard - $\$300$ Total Tenant Contribution)

Calculating Subsidy Payment

\$600	Lesser of Rent Standard or Gross Rent
- <u>\$300</u>	Total Tenant Contribution (30% of Monthly Adjusted Income)
\$300	TBRA Subsidy Payment

Calculating Tenant Rent to Owner

- \$575 Rent to Owner
- \$300 Subsidy Payment
- \$275 Tenant Rent to Owner²

Example #2 – Includes a Utility Reimbursement to Tenant

If the Gross Rent (Rent to Owner + Utility Allowance) for the unit is less than the Rent Standard **AND** the Total Tenant Contribution is less than the Utility Allowance, a Utility Reimbursement may occur (NOTE: both conditions must exist in order to have a Utility Reimbursement).

Assumptions

Rent Standard = \$600

Utility Allowance = \$75 (gas & electricity)

Monthly Adjusted Income = \$167

Total Tenant Contribution = \$50 ($167 \times .30$)³ - this is less than the Utility Allowance.

Rent for Unit = \$500

Gross Rent = \$575 (\$500 + \$75) – Note this is less than the Rent Standard

Maximum Subsidy = \$550⁴ (\$600 Rent Standard - \$50 Total Tenant Contribution)

Calculating Subsidy Payment

- \$575 Lesser of Rent Standard or Gross Rent
- \$ 50 Total Tenant Contribution (30% of Monthly Adjusted Income)
- \$525 Total Subsidy Payment (TSP)
- \$500 Rent to Owner (If Less than TSP)
- \$ 25 Utility Reimbursement to Tenant (or utility company on tenant's behalf)

Calculating Tenant Rent to Owner

- \$500 Rent to Owner
- \$500 Subsidy Payment to Owner (Lesser of Rent to Owner or TSP)
- \$ 0 Tenant Rent to Owner

Tenant is responsible for paying gas and electricity and will receive \$25/month toward the expense.

² Tenant is also responsible for paying gas and electricity

³ $\$167 \times .30 = \50.10 . In this case, round downward to \$50

⁴ Rent plus the \$50 for utilities

Chapter 5: Unit Characteristics and Lease Provisions

ELIGIBLE UNITS

TBRA clients may select units that are publicly or privately-owned. Clients cannot select units that do not have their own cooking facilities or bathroom (e.g. boarding homes or efficiencies with shared facilities.)

HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (HQS)

Units must be inspected to confirm that the units meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS) at initial move-in and then annually during the term of TBRA assistance. If a unit initially fails HQS, the landlord may be given a reasonable amount of time to correct deficiencies or the client may elect to look for a different unit.

A lease (Housing Assistance Contract) cannot be signed until the unit passes HQS. An exception may be made for corrections to exterior paint during the winter in climates where the weather makes this impossible. The results of each inspection must be recorded on a HUD HQS Inspection Form, which must be signed, dated and retained in the client file.

UNIT SIZE AND OCCUPANCY STANDARDS

These occupancy standards comply with HQS requirements and specify how the number of bedrooms required by the client's household will be determined as related to both (1) determining the appropriateness of the actual unit size and (2) calculating amount of TBRA rental assistance. They may be modified by grantees on a case by case basis to accommodate specific household composition and circumstances (e.g. pending child custody cases, chronic illnesses, family member who is absent most of the time, etc.).

General Guidance on Bedroom Requirements

Generally, households require one bedroom per each of the following configurations:

- Each pair of married or coupled adults, regardless of sex or gender;
- Each unmarried/uncoupled adult;
- Each pair of children of the same sex.

Additional Guidance on Bedroom Requirements

- Unborn children may be considered for purpose of assigning the bedroom size on housing coupon.
- A live-in care attendant who is not a member of the family is not required to share a bedroom with another household member.
- Individual medical problems (e.g. chronic illness) sometimes require either a separate bedroom for household members who would otherwise be required to share a bedroom or an extra bedroom to store medical equipment.

- In most instances, a bedroom is not provided for a family member who will be absent most of the time, such as a member who is away in the military. A larger size housing coupon may be issued for an absent family member if individual circumstances warrant.

Smaller or Larger Units

Fair housing rules permit clients to select smaller units that do not, from the grantee's perspective, create seriously overcrowded conditions. Clients may also select larger units at their own expense under the HUD Voucher Model (meaning TBRA subsidy will not cover the increased cost of a larger unit). In addition to the number of bedrooms, both the size of the unit and the size of the bedrooms should be considered when evaluating the individual circumstances of the family.

Annual Review

Grantees must annually re-examine each client's household size and composition to determine if circumstances have changed for the household. If there are substantial changes, the grantee must determine if the change is significant enough to warrant the household to find a more suitable living unit.

UNIT SIZE AND SUBSIDY CALCULATION

When calculating a client's subsidy, grantees must adhere the following guidance:

- If a client selects a unit *smaller* than their Housing Coupon, the Rent Standard and utility allowance is based on the actual unit size;
- If a client selects a unit *larger* than their Housing Coupon, the Rent Standard is based on the Housing Coupon, while the utility allowance is based on the actual unit size. A client is not rewarded with larger subsidies for selecting larger units or penalized for selecting smaller ones.

LEASE ADDENDUM AND PROHIBITED PROVISIONS

Grantees must ensure each lease does not include any prohibited lease provisions. This is accomplished through the required Lease Addendum, which eliminates the need for in-depth legal review. The Lease Addendum also includes key HOME program requirements.

The following lease provisions are prohibited beyond the scope of the Lease Addendum and must be removed from any TBRA lease:

- Agreement by the client to be sued or to admit guilt, or a judgment in favor of the landlord in a lawsuit brought in connection with the lease.
- Agreement by the client that the landlord may take, hold or sell the personal property of the client without notice to the client and a court decision on the rights of the parties (this does not apply to personal property left by the client after move-out).
- Agreement by the client not to hold the landlord or its agents legally responsible for any action or failure to act, whether intentional or negligent.
- Agreement by the client that the landlord may institute a lawsuit without notice to the client.

- Agreement that the landlord may evict the client without a civil court proceeding where the client has the right to present a defense, or before a court decision on the rights of the client and the landlord.
- Agreement by the client to waive a trial by jury.
- Agreement by the client to waive the client's right to appeal or otherwise challenge a court decision.
- Agreement by the client to pay attorney fees or other legal costs, even if the client wins in court.

A copy of the lease and the addendum is to be kept in each client's file.

LEASE AND PROGRAM DURATION

Minimum Lease Duration

Leases should not (during their initial term) be for less than 12 months unless by mutual agreement of the client and landlord. Month to month leases are prohibited.

Maximum Lease Duration

Leases may be extended by mutual agreement of the client and landlord and with the grantee's consent up to a maximum of 24 months.

Maximum Program Duration

Clients cannot receive more than 24 months of assistance total. This applies regardless of whether clients move to a different unit. For clarification and exemptions, contact the TBRA Program Manager.

TERMINATION OF TENANCY BY LANDLORD

Landlords may evict clients following applicable state and local laws. Generally, that means landlords may only evict clients in the event of:

- Serious or repeated lease violations;
- Legal violations in connection with the unit or its premises;
- Criminal activity;
- Other causes specified by state or local law.

Grantees must develop written policies outlining how a termination of tenancy will impact clients. These policies should, at minimum, must specify:

- Under what circumstances that a client will be removed from the program as a result of an eviction; and
- The length of time clients has to locate a new unit before their subsidy expires.

These policies must be included within the lease and/or in the program agreement between the grantee and the tenant.

Chapter 6: Ongoing Administration

PAYMENT PROCESS

Grantees must develop a payment process for disbursing TBRA payments to outside entities, including landlords and utility providers. This process must include guidelines about when rent and utility payments are made (e.g. on the first of the month, on the fifth of the month) and what triggers those payments (e.g. a case manager submits monthly invoices, payments are automatically generated by fiscal staff).

PORTABILITY

Grantees may either require clients to use their subsidy within the grantees service area or establish a portability policy allowing use outside the jurisdiction. If a grantee permits portability, they must develop procedures to satisfy HOME TBRA requirements.

Unless portability is limited to contiguous jurisdictions, it may be impractical for the grantee to oversee the program. Grantees may wish to make arrangements with another agency or PHA in the jurisdiction where the family relocates to administer the TBRA. Requirements that the grantee should consider in establishing a portability policy include the need to:

- Initially and annually inspect units occupied by the TBRA client;
- Execute necessary documents with the family and the landlord; and
- Make monthly rent payments and/or security deposit payments on behalf of the grantee to the landlord and/or utility companies.

Portability plans must be approved by DEHCR.

INTERIM RECERTIFICATION

Clients are required to notify grantees of all changes in income and family composition. If this occurs, the grantee must:

- Complete an interim recertification;
- Incorporate any changes to the client's payment/grantee's subsidy in the first month following the interim recertification;
- Notify both the client and landlord in writing of any changes in the payment structure.

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION

Each client's eligibility to participate in the program and its share of the rent must be recertified annually. The annual redetermination process should begin 90-120 days in advance of the client's one-year anniversary date to assure that the process is completed on time and that adequate notice is given to both the landlord and client of changes in the household's eligibility or share of the rent. State law requires landlords to provide at least 30 days' notice of any rent increases.

If a client's household income increases enough that no subsidy payment would be generated, they may remain enrolled at \$0 subsidy for up to 6 months.

RENT INCREASES

Most landlords will request a rent increase at the end of the first year of the lease. The Lease Addendum requires at least 60 days' written notice to increase the rent. This allows the grantee enough time to review and approve the requested increase (determine that the proposed rent is reasonable in comparison to rents charged for other comparable, unassisted units) and provide the client with the required 30 days' written notice of any rent changes.

CHANGING UNITS

Clients may elect to move to another unit as permitted by the lease. The TBRA Rental Assistance Contract contains provisions that terminate the grantee's agreement with the landlord when the household moves. To ensure that subsidies are not paid on units no longer occupied by an eligible client, the lease agreement must require that the client provide a minimum of 30 days written notice of their plans to relocate to both the landlord and the grantee.

Clients who wish to move can be issued another Housing Coupon. The agency should follow procedures utilized when the original coupon was issued.

MONTHLY REPORTING

Grantees are required to submit monthly reporting packets to DEHCR which must be received on or before the fifteenth (15th) of each month for the previous month's activities. The reporting packet must include but may not be limited to:

1. Tenant Based Rental Assistance Set-up Report;
2. Request for Payment of HOME Funds.

DEHCR reserves the right to require additional information or reports as needed.

PAYMENT REQUEST AND FINAL DRAW

Payment requests must be submitted by email to DOADEHCRFiscal@wisconsin.gov.

Grantees should refer to the contract agreement for additional information on final draw timelines and procedures.

SAMPLE FORMS LIST

The following is a list of forms and other information grantees are required or otherwise encouraged to use.

- MBE/WBE Report:
https://doa.wi.gov/DECHR/MBE_WBE%20Report.docx
- HOME TBRA Program Identification of Contract Administrators:
https://doa.wi.gov/DECHR/tbra-admin_final.doc
- Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Set Up Form and Instructions:
<https://doa.wi.gov/DECHR/tbra-setup.pdf>
- Sample TBRA Applications:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2128/tbra-applications-for-rental-assistance/>
- HOME Program Eligibility Release form:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2586/home-program-eligibility-release-form/>
- HOME Income Calculator:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/incomecalculator/>
- Rent Reasonableness Checklist and Certification:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2098/home-rent-reasonableness-checklist-and-certification/>
- HOME Rental Assistance Contract:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2099/home-rental-assistance-contract/>
- Housing Quality standards (HQS) Inspection Form:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2091/home-housing-quality-standards-hqs-inspection-form/>
- Lead Resources:
http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/healthy_homes/lbp/hudguidelines
- TBRA Budget Worksheet:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2279/tbra-budget-worksheet/>
- Verification of Employment:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2088/verification-of-employment/>
- Verification of Income from Business:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2104/verification-of-income-from-business/>
- Verification of Alimony or Separation Payments:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2085/verification-of-alimony-and-separation/>
- Verification of Income from Military Service:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2106/verification-of-income-from-military/>
- Verification of Public Assistance Program:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2108/verification-of-public-assistance-program/>
- Verification of Pensions and Annuities:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2107/verification-of-pensions-and-annuities/>
- Verification of Child Support Payments:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2087/verification-of-child-support-payments/>

- Verification of Recurring Cash Contribution:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2109/verification-of-recurring-cash-contributions/>
- Verification of Social Security Benefits:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2110/verification-of-social-security-benefits/>
- Verification on Unemployment Benefits:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2111/verification-of-unemployment-benefits/>
- Verification of Veterans Administration Benefits:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2112/verification-of-veterans-administrative-benefits/>
- Lease Addendum:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2092/home-lease-addendum/>
- HOME Rental Assistance Coupon:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2100/home-rental-assistance-coupon/>
- HOME Rental Assistance Program Request for Unit Approval:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2103/home-request-for-unit-approval/>
- Wisconsin Consumer Protection Laws-Landlord-Tenant Guide:
<https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Publications/LandlordTenantGuide.aspx>
- Section 3 Summary Report:
<https://doa.wi.gov/DECHR/Section%203%20Report.docx>
- Section 3 Information:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2330/24-cfr-part-135-section-3-regulations/>
- Part 5 Income:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2701/sample-format-for-calculating-part-5-annual-income/>
- Other sample forms:
<https://www.hudexchange.info/home/>