

# **eliminating racism empowering women**

**ywca**

## **YWCA PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM**

### **Participant Handbook**

**The mission of the YWCA Quincy's Supportive Housing Program is to provide personal growth in individual residential settings for homeless individuals and families, to allow them to more effectively manage their own lives through education, guidance, and support.**

**The express goal of the supportive housing program is to assist program residents to remain permanently housed in the community.**

Dear YWCA Quincy Supportive Housing Participant,

Welcome to our program! Our Supportive Housing Program (SHP) is based on the premise that everyone possesses the potential to recognize, define, and develop healthy living patterns. Services offered by the YWCA Quincy's SHP include permanent housing and intensive supportive services. Supportive Services can include case management, advocacy and referrals, information, life skills training, and individual counseling. Your participation in these services is vital to your success.

As a participant in the YWCA Quincy's Supportive Housing Program, additional services can include access to job training and/or vocational training, childcare, medical and dental health services, substance abuse services, mental health counseling, food pantry services, transportation, and assistance with other social service providers.

The YWCA is a non-profit agency designed to help you on many levels. By choosing to enter this program, we know that you have the ability to succeed in achieving a healthy, independent lifestyle. The staff has made a commitment to assist you in obtaining this goal.

The Board and staff are committed to treating each individual in a respectful and compassionate manner, while being clear regarding program guidelines and being consistent in maintaining them. As a participant in the YWCA Quincy's program, you will be expected to set realistic goals for yourself in order to increase self-sufficiency.

At this time, you must make a commitment to yourself, your family and the YWCA Quincy's program. We have created this Participant Handbook package to help support you on your way to independent living.

We wish you much success.

The Staff and Board of the YWCA Quincy

## **YWCA Supportive Housing Program Overview**

Our mission: YWCA Quincy is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

Our philosophy: At the YWCA Quincy we believe that everyone has the potential and strength to overcome difficult life circumstances and to accomplish goals that will lead to an enhanced quality of life. The YWCA Quincy is committed to treating each individual in a respectful and compassionate manner while valuing the unique qualities and needs of each family.

### **What is Permanent Supportive Housing?**

Permanent means participants may live in their homes as long as they meet the eligibility criteria.

Supportive means participants have access to the supportive services that they need and want to retain housing.

Housing means participants have a private and secure place to make their home, just like other members of the community, with the same rights and responsibilities.

### **Fair Housing Act**

No person seeking services shall be discriminated against because of race, religion, color, gender, age, national origin, sexual preference or disability. The program complies with local, state and federal laws regarding fair housing and nondiscrimination including but not limited to:

- Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968
- 1982 Civil Rights Act of 1866
- 1981 Civil Rights Act of 1866
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Fair Housing Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act

Children in the household are not based on age and/or gender to remain in the project.

Further, No member of a household is prohibited based on age, gender, biological relationship and/or marital status to reside together.

Attendance at or solicitation of membership or counseling on the beliefs of an organization (church, union, political, fraternal, etc.) shall not be required for receipt of supportive housing program services.

### **Eligibility for Permanent Supportive Housing**

HUD has established permanent supportive housing eligibility guidelines and each family seeking assistance from our Supportive Housing Program must be determined eligible for services.

The following criterion is necessary to be eligible:

1. One individual of your household must have a disabling condition as defined by 24 CFR 583.5. YWCA Quincy staff will assist you in explaining and documenting “disabling condition” to determine eligibility. Documentation of a disabling condition must be provided by a professional licensed to treat the disabling condition or evidenced by your receipt of SSI or SSDI benefits.
2. You must be deemed homeless as defined by 24 CFR 583.5 under the following two

categories:

- a. Literally homeless-defined as having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation, or is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels or motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs) or is exiting an institution where an individual has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering that institution. YWCA staff can assist you in explaining and documenting your homeless status.
  - b. Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.
3. Primary focus for the YWCA Quincy is with female head of households with dependent children, however in accordance with the Fair Housing Act, male head of households or single individuals are also eligible.

### **Disqualifying Criteria**

When determining whether a person is qualified for the SHP, YWCA Quincy will make that determination based on a limited number of disqualification categories. These may include:

- A history of convictions of perpetrated domestic violence.
- Registered sex offenders.
- Other restrictions imposed by federal, state or local law or ordinance. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis.
- A formal background screening is not a requirement prior to program entry.

### **Priority for Housing**

In the event of a vacancy in our program we will comply with HUD Notice CPD 16-11, and accept the household in the highest position on the prioritization list. YWCA Quincy will use the following as a guide to select families for our housing program:

1. First priority is given to chronically homeless families who have been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR an individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.
2. Second priority is given to families fleeing domestic violence who have been denied emergency shelter due to no vacancy.
3. Third priority is given to families who have been in shelter for the longest periods of time. Priority is given to families who have or will in the near future lose their emergency shelter.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

Employees of the YWCA Quincy Supportive Housing Program will not share participant information with anyone outside the project except in specific instances to coordinate the participant's care with other agencies and then only after receipt of appropriate consent form signed by the participant within a specified time frame. In cases of emergency where the participant poses a threat to self or others, the YWCA Quincy staff may be forced to break confidentiality.

Information about participants will not be shared (computerized, file copies, by fax, modem, or any other ways, including spoken communication) except when needed to serve that participant.

Participants sign a Consent Form, which allows staff to share information with other agencies as necessary. This consent can be revoked at any time by the participant.

**Prior to being accepted into the YWCA Quincy's Supportive Housing Program participant must:**

- Complete a pre-screening application and provide documentation of eligibility that includes proof of your homeless status and disabling condition. Definitions of homelessness, eligibility requirements and documentation requirements from HUD will be explained to you one-on-one.
- Must have custody of your children to qualify as a family unit, exceptions are on a case- by-case basis and require approval.
- Review and accept the YWCA Quincy's Supportive Housing Program handbook and sublease.

**All participants are encouraged to do the following to benefit the most from the program:**

- Participate in all meetings with YWCA Quincy staff. Meet regularly with the YWCA case manager in order to establish a service delivery plan within the first five days of program entry and review at 30, 60, 90, 180 day intervals. Meet at least twice per month with your case manager.
- Participate in supportive services provided and outlined in your service plan.
- Continue to meet daily, weekly and/or monthly with YWCA Quincy staff for on-going review and modification of the plan. How often the meetings take place will be determined by you and your case manager.
- To seek employment, community service, enroll in job training; pursue an education, apply for SSI, TANF, child support or a combination of these activities within four weeks of entering the program. Our program encourages all participants to pursue an education and/or career opportunities regardless of your disabilities.
- Undergo a Mental Health Evaluation and/or Substance Abuse Evaluation within 30 days of entering the program to determine appropriate services.
- Actively participate in domestic violence education and/or counseling within 30 days of entering the program and to continue if you included this in your service plan.
- Advise your case manager of all prescription and non-prescription medication you or any member of your family are taking when entering the program and to keep your case manager advised of any changes to your medications immediately so we can assist in managing your wellness goals.
- Abstain from further debt including student loans, car loans, traffic fines, library fines, etc.
- Exhaust all other avenues of financing your education before taking out a student loan. Work with your case manager to develop a plan to finance your education that fits your household budget.
- Follow a household budget developed by you with your case manager.
- Contribute 75% of all your net income to settle current expenses, personal debt, then contribute to a savings (sources of income include but are not limited to wages, SSI benefits, TANF, child support, income tax returns).
- To submit to random drug and alcohol testing as requested by YWCA Quincy staff for the sole purpose to measure progress. We understand those in recovery may test positive. The results will be used to determine level of supportive services needed to address your substance abuse issues and individuals will not be given a violation if they test positive.
- Follow the service plan developed by participant and YWCA staff.
- Develop a needs-versus-wants budget and work to improve your financial literacy skills.

- Work toward the goal of increased income.
- Attend financial literacy education.
- Inform YWCA Quincy staff regarding any changes in employment, financial status, or any other changes that will impact your ability to participate in the program including custody of your children.
- Abide by all living standards and guidelines as outlined in the Agreement for Supportive Housing.
- Enroll children in school and ensure that your children attend school on a regular basis.
- Sever all contact with perpetrators of past or current domestic violence.
- Provide receipts to verify expenditures.

Because we receive funding from many funding sources, we are held accountable to review the following statements:

- I understand that the goal of the PSH program is not only housing my family but gaining the financial literacy skills to live within my means. Further, I understand that this program offers me many monetary benefits which allow me the privilege of utilizing my income to pay court fines, settle debt and save for emergencies and housing stability. \_\_\_\_ (initial)
- If I choose to participate in the voucher program, I understand that I will be required to turn in receipts to verify expenditures for any vouchers given to me by the YWCA Quincy. (initial)\_\_\_\_
- I understand if YWCA Quincy staff has reason to believe that I am engaging in illegal or dangerous activities within the YWCA Quincy leased unit, that staff will report such suspicions to DCFS or local law enforcement and that I may be subject to a search of the residence. I further understand that YWCA Quincy will only do so if probable cause exists. \_\_\_\_ (initial)
- I understand that the YWCA Quincy leased unit is for the use of my family only. I understand that I am personally responsible for any actions of people I allow into the home. It is recommended that individuals notify their case manager of any guests wishing to stay over. Further, no personal belongings are to be stored in the unit that do not belong to anyone other than the persons on the sublease. \_\_\_\_ (initial)
- I understand that I need to report to my DHS case worker and Social Security Administration that I am housed in the YWCA Quincy Permanent Supportive Housing and that this may affect my benefits from those agencies. \_\_\_\_ (Initial)
- I understand that I will notify the YWCA Quincy case manager if there are any changes in status related to employment, finances, daycare, enrollment in an educational institution, custody of children, legal status, health, medications, counseling, community service or need for housing. \_\_\_\_ (Initial)
- I give permission to allow the YWCA Board of Directors the right to general information regarding situation and status in program solely for the purposes of monitoring the program. (No names will be used) \_\_\_\_ (Initial)
- If I own a car, I agree to maintain a current, valid driver's license, valid car insurance, and to use car seats for children as required by IL state law. \_\_\_\_ (Initial)

### **Financial Guidelines:**

Upon acceptance into the YWCA Quincy Permanent Supportive Housing, I understand that it is best practice to log all income and expenses (all money received and spent) for the full time I am in the program. This includes (but is not limited to) food stamps, child support, TANF, SSI, paychecks, unemployment, tax returns, insurance settlements, etc. I acknowledge that it is best practice to

review this log with YWCA Quincy staff on a regular basis. (  ) Initial to agree

I understand that participation in the financial program comes with added benefits. I understand that it is also best practice for all households to develop and follow a very specific budget while in the YWCA Quincy's housing program to benefit my family. I understand that the budget will include a line item for emergency use to assist with miscellaneous expenses and receipts related to these purchases should be turned in.

(  ) Initial to agree

By participating in the YWCA Quincy's housing program, I further understand that it is best practice to designate a minimum of 75% of my income to paying debt, to paying court fines, to paying necessary bills, and providing security and utility deposits to the YWCA. The 25% of my remaining income, while discretionary, may still be needed to purchase items that are essential to the well-being of my family. When all past debt is cleared, I further understand that it is best practice to continue the placement of 75% of my income in a savings account for use upon my departure from the program. Any requests for withdrawals from savings prior to my departure from the program must be made to my Case Manager for processing. (  ) Initial to agree

### **Voucher Information**

You may be allocated Vouchers monthly to assist in providing for your nutritional needs. This is an added benefit to qualifying members of the YWCA Quincy's housing program. If you choose to participate in the program, you must sign for these vouchers in the YWCA Quincy Business office Monday through Friday, 8a.m. to 12pm. You can also pick up vouchers from 1-4p.m. if scheduled in advance. Receipts are required for reporting purposes and are due by the 21<sup>st</sup> of each month. Receipts should be placed in an envelope with the individuals name and placed in the lock box in the business office. No cash back is allowed when using vouchers. It is recommended that the food vouchers should be reserved for use after your Food Link (SNAP) funding has been exhausted.

(  ) Initial to agree

### **Use of Credit**

I further understand that the use of credit cards, payday loans, cash-title loans, installment loans or obtaining any other additional credit is not best practice while in the program.

(  ) Initial to agree

I further understand that the YWCA Quincy will turn my focus to identifying needs vs. wants in prioritizing my purchases. As my financial situation improves, my household budget will be revised to include expenses that I can afford. (  ) Initial to agree

I will discuss with my Case Manager any financial needs that arise so that she may advocate for me and my children and utilize resources available to the YWCA Quincy to help meet those needs.

(  ) Initial to agree

### **Services Available**

**Case Management** (  ) Initial to agree

The YWCA Quincy utilizes a case management model of assessment, utilizing a partnership between the case manager, you and your family, and service providers. Multiple functions occur as part of the process, including, but not limited to:

- Counseling
- Developing, securing and coordinating services;
- Obtaining federal, state and local benefits;
- Monitoring and evaluating participant progress;
- Providing ongoing risk assessment and safety planning for victims of domestic violence
- Developing an individualized housing and service plan, including planning a path to permanent housing stability.
- Annual Assessment of Service Needs – to determine appropriate services
- Assistance with Moving Costs – reasonable one-time moving costs – restrictions apply
- Child care – restrictions apply
- Educational services – restrictions apply
- Employment services – restrictions apply
- Food – restrictions apply
- Housing Search
- Legal Services/Counseling – restrictions apply
- Life skills – include but not limited to budgeting of resources, money management, household management, conflict management, shopping for food and other needed items, nutrition, the use of public transportation and parenting skills.
- Outpatient health services – restrictions apply
- Substance Abuse treatment
- Mental Health Services
- Transportation services
- Utility deposits

### **Housing Guidelines**

**Dwelling Care** ( ) Initial to agree

For the health and safety of your family and to properly maintain the residence we ask:

- The dwelling should be kept in a safe and sanitary state.
- Children should not be left unsupervised. Do not allow children to write on walls, play with the window blinds or stand/jump on beds or furniture.
- All clothing should be hanging in a closet, stored in a dresser, plastic storage container or laundry hamper. Resources will be provided to you.
- Washers and dryers have been placed in your dwelling, be sure to clean the lint trap after each use. Never leave the washer or dryer running when you leave the dwelling. This is a flood and fire hazard.
- Do not use space heaters.
- Do not leave heating pads or electric blankets unattended.
- Please be respectful of the dwelling and its furnishings. Do not deface items, walls, or doors with stickers, excessive nails, etc. Painting, wallpapering, stickers and removable wall graphics are prohibited.

### **Kitchen**

- Dishes need to be washed and food needs to be put away to prevent pest infestations and spread of disease.
- All sightings of pests need to be reported immediately to your case manager.
- All appliances should be cleaned and turned off when finished with use.



- Store your kitchen and household garbage properly. An outdoor trash receptacle with a lid has been provided to place household trash.

### **Bathroom**

- To avoid plumbing problems, be sure to place only liquids in the sink, and toilet paper in the toilet. **DO NOT POUR GREASE DOWN SINKS or ATTEMPT TO PUT SOLID FOODS DOWN THE SINK.** Dispose of all diapers and feminine hygiene products in the trash; do not flush pads or tampons/applicators/diapers/baby wipes.
- Make sure that all curling irons, hair dryers, irons, etc. are turned off and unplugged.
- Use care not to operate electrical appliances near water sources.

### **Outside**

- The outside of your dwelling is also your responsibility. Keep your family's items picked up. Toys, bikes and outdoor items should not be left on the sidewalk or laying in the yard. Leaving your possessions out could lead to theft and also presents a safety hazard to pedestrians and impedes lawn mowing.
- Outside toys should be stored in an outside storage unit if available.
- If you smoke, place all cigarette butts in an ashtray or other fireproof container, not thrown on the ground.

### **Requesting Repairs ( ) Initial to agree**

If you need assistance with an item in the dwelling please call your case manager.

### **Garbage ( ) Initial to agree**

All bagged garbage requires stickers in the city of Quincy. The stickers are provided to you by the YWCA Quincy. This means that for each bag of trash, one sticker must be placed on a small bag and two on a large bag. Trash will not be picked up unless the appropriate stickers are attached. Your case manager will provide you with stickers on a monthly basis. Garbage needs to be placed outdoors in the bin provided to you. The bin should be stored near the dwelling, not left at the curb.

- You may only bring the can to the curb on the night before pickup.
- Be sure to bring the lidded garbage can back to the side of house once it has been emptied.
- Lids must be on outdoor cans at all times. Make sure to retrieve your lid if it blows off.

You are encouraged to participate in the city recycling program. An orange recycling bin is provided for you as well.

### **Recycle:**

- Tin/aluminum cans should be rinsed so they don't attract animals/insects.
- Plastic containers numbered 1 or 2 (see examples below), rinsed or closed lids
- Newspaper, cardboard, magazines and catalogs. This includes cereal boxes, macaroni and cheese boxes, soda boxes, etc.
- Your garbage and the recycle bin are collected on the same day.
- The City does not recycle glass.

**Noise**(  ) Initial to agree

You may find yourself sharing walls, ceilings and floors with others if you live in a duplex. Your other neighbors may also be very close. We ask that you and your family observe “quiet hours” from: 10PM – 7AM

**Mail**(  ) Initial to agree

In order to protect the anonymity of our housing units and allow privacy for program participants, all participant mail should be addressed in your name to c/o YWCA Quincy, 639 York St. Room 202, Quincy IL 62301. This program serves many victims of domestic violence and anonymity of our housing is important for participants’ safety.

**Security**(  ) Initial to agree

The YWCA Quincy is not responsible for your lost or stolen property. To ensure your security, always lock your dwelling doors and windows. You should consider purchasing rental insurance for your personal belongings. The YWCA Quincy insures only our own assets in the dwelling provided for your use.

If you have any questions about any of the regulations or policies outlined here please discuss them with your Case Manager and/or Executive Director.

### **Termination of Housing Assistance**

By accepting placement into the YWCA Quincy’s Supportive Housing Program due to your homeless situation, and having documented your eligibility, there is a good faith assumption that you are motivated to achieve an independent living situation and become self-sufficient.

There is also a good faith assumption that you are willing to participate and follow the recommended guidelines in order to achieve an increased level of self-sufficiency. You are free to terminate your relationship with the YWCA Quincy’s Supportive Housing Program at any time.

We request that you notify the YWCA Quincy staff of your intent to depart from the program. YWCA Quincy staff will establish with you your official departure date and assist you with locating other housing and work on a transition out plan for your success. Please note that any property of the YWCA Quincy or fixtures in the dwelling cannot be removed at any time. Any removal of property or fixtures will result in a report to law enforcement agencies.

### **Notice of Violations**

The YWCA Supportive Housing Program has adopted a “Three Strikes” policy that goes into effect after the initial 30-day probationary period. Depending upon severity, the first violation may result in a verbal reprimand and written documentation of the violation in your file.

A second violation will result in written documentation of the same violation for your file along with written notice to you that any further violations will require termination from the program.

A third written violation will result in termination. See below for a list of possible violations.

(  ) Initial to agree

The specifics of your termination from the program will be discussed with you and you will be given an opportunity to appeal this decision.

- Written notice will be given to you stating the reason for your termination.

- You will be given the opportunity to present written or oral objections before the termination is authorized by the Executive Director.
- The final decision will be rendered in writing to you within five (5) business days.
- You shall vacate the SHP housing unit within 14 calendar days. Personal items remaining in the SHP housing unit shall be confiscated and kept for future participant use or donated to charitable organizations. (     ) Initial to agree

**The following may be grounds for violation or immediate dismissal:**

1. Physical abuse involving YWCA Quincy staff, service providers, family members, other program participants or private citizens.
2. Threats of violence to staff, service providers, or other program participants.
3. Criminal conviction after entering program.
4. Illegal activities in the dwelling as outlined in the sublease.
5. Possession of a firearm or other dangerous weapons or explosives.
6. Allowing someone other than persons on the lease to reside with you in the dwelling.
7. Allowing unauthorized persons in the dwelling as prohibited in the sublease.
8. Acts of fraud toward the YWCA Quincy or other mainstream providers: including but not limited to Illinois Department of Human Services, Department of Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Social Security Administration, Unemployment Services, Internal Revenue Service, Child Support Enforcement, West Central Child Care Connection, etc.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that the above actions can result in immediate dismissal from the YWCA Quincy's Supportive Housing Program. Further, I understand that depending on the severity of the violation, it could lead to an immediate lockout situation. The locks on the residence will be changed and retrieval of my personal items will be by appointment only and subject to safety stipulations as requested by the YWCA Quincy. I understand that the staff of the YWCA Quincy will report any violent, criminal or abusive actions to law enforcement or child protective services immediately. I understand that the

\_\_\_\_\_  
SHP Participant signature

**Grievance Policy**

All information concerning a grievance will be held in strict confidence.

1. Most participant complaints can be resolved informally through established supervisory channels and informal resolution is encouraged. If this fails and resolution seems impossible, participants may use the grievance procedure and are not to be penalized for doing so.
2. Grievances are submitted in writing to the case worker with a copy to the Executive Director. The grievance is a concise statement of facts upon which the complaint is based. It should include specific reference to the policies, procedures or practices that have allegedly been misinterpreted, misapplied or violated. It must be dated and

signed. Within three (3) working days of receipt, the case worker and the participant shall meet to discuss the grievance. The case worker must communicate a written response, with supporting reasons, to the participant and Executive Director within two (2) working days of the conference.

3. If the participant is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance or if no decision has been rendered within two (2) working days following the conference, the participant shall notify the Executive Director in writing of the intention to initiate the second step of the procedure. The case worker shall send to the Executive Director a copy of the decision rendered at the first step and a written appeal for reconsideration of the decision by the Executive Director. The appeal to the Executive Director must be filed within five (5) working days of the conference with the case worker. Following an immediate conference between the Executive Director and the aggrieved participant, the Executive Director shall communicate a decision with supporting reasons to the participant, in writing, with a copy to the case worker. This shall be done within five (5) working days.
4. If the participant is not satisfied with the Executive Director's decision they have the right to appeal this decision to the YWCA SHP Appeals Committee. The appeal must be made in writing to the President of the Board of Directors who shall convene the SHP Appeals Committee within three (3) days. The Executive Director shall send to the President a copy of the original decision rendered, the written appeal for reconsideration of the decision, a copy of the Executive Director's decision and the written appeal of the Executive Director's decision. The SHP Appeals Committee shall review the matter and render a final decision with two (2) days.

My signature indicates that I have reviewed and understand this YWCA Quincy participant handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**YWCA Case Manager**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**