

**PRE-ARRIVAL x HOUSING**

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

(Refer to this document as a template meant for your program to edit and pull from to creatively form long term solutions for common issues. The significance of establishing an internal Standard of Procedure is to fill in the gaps where there are no housing specific staff. This should serve as a guide for new staff, refresher for current staff, and written steps in place for how to operate in your specific area.)

**Understanding the role of this program:**

The housing team or staff’s responsibility is to find a client’s FIRST housing option that fits all requirements (safe, sanitary, suitable). With a comprehensive understanding of what is included in initial housing, expectations amongst staff and clients can easily be set forth with clarity.

*Additional Responsibilities:*

* Organize Temporary Housing arrangements
* Initial coordination with USTIE
* Application for home/apartment
* Procurement of Initial groceries and hot meals
* Connecting client with available community resources
* Provide and Secure items from the required list of supplies
* Purchase of additional essential needs, utilizing RP funds
* Maintain positive relationships with property owners/landlords
* Provide mediation between landlord and clients
* Set expectations that build on top of existing RP guidelines

**Receive Arrival Notice – check for potential USTIE details**

If applicable, contact the listed USTIE 1-2 weeks before the client’s scheduled arrival. Determine if and how they can support within the arrival process (Airport pickup, Housing securement, Temporary housing assistance, Hot meal, etc.) It is important to begin setting expectations at this stage – take the USTIE’s preferences into consideration but avoid making housing guarantees. Placements by staff will be secured based on availability, affordability, and quality IF the USTIE shares that they are unable to assist.

* If the USTIE is providing temporary housing support, note how many bedrooms and bathrooms there are, the number of individuals living in the home, the case composition of the family (e.g., number and gender of children), as well as how much rent they may expect to pay (for longer stays). Ensure that a site visit is conducted to evaluate the home safety and determine which of the required items the USTIE can provide vs what will need to be supplemented by the agency.
* If the USTIE wants to assist in securing housing near them, allow them the opportunity with a firm deadline. This deadline will ensure that agency staff can step in and secure housing if needed.
* Does your team complete the USCCB/MRS US Tie Assessment (RF-10)\*? with all USTIEs? This tool can help shape a productive conversation about how USTIEs can (or cannot) assist with core service provision.

*\*All USCCB/MRS R&P case file forms can be found on the* [*R&P Case File Forms page*](https://mrsconnect.org/resettlement-services/reception-and-placement-rp/case-file-forms/) *of MRSConnect.*

**Secure Housing**

1. Check family members’ biodata to determine what type of home will best fit their needs
2. *Note occupancy standards specific to your locality* and ensure the family/cases have an appropriate amount of space
3. *Form a list/directory of trusted and established housing partners* to track/check availabilities and notes that can be shared amongst RP team members

**Purchase of Groceries, Hot meals, and Cell Phones**

1. *Create a list of culturally appropriate groceries* to provide to clients upon arrival. This can be organized by quantity based on case size. (Logistically, it can be useful to work with stores that offer curbside pickup, cutting down staff time.)
2. All cases must have a way to access 911.
3. If clients are being provided cell phones by your program, *create a spreadsheet* where phone numbers and account information for clients can be recorded. Remember to complete all needed financial forms (\*RF-19 and RF-35 for items purchased for R&P funds, donation/in-kind forms for donated items).

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**Furnishing**

Having a solid structure for how volunteer engagement can assist here is a way for your team to maximize capacity. With clear training and direction, volunteers can help with a range of tasks such as: picking up groceries and delivering to the unit, collecting community donations and bringing it to the home or storage space, contact artisans to encourage help in restoring old furnishing items for a good cause, and unlocking numbers when gathering friends/family to assist with housing setups.

1. *Create a comprehensive list of provisions* to streamline the shopping experience when donations are not available
2. Establish the need for gently used/new donations within the community (*word of mouth, outreach and presentations to parishes, colleges, schools, clubs, local businesses, hotels*)
3. If purchasing, remember that furniture invoices should be split equitably between cases (if working with a separated family or singles).
4. If donated items are used, the same principle is used for R&P and MG: “If the donor’s receipt or the price tag are unavailable, calculate the fair market value of the item using the Salvation Army, Goodwill, or another reliable donation valuation guide.” *(from USCCB/MRS MG Program Operations Manual)*
5. Ensure all staff understand protocols around unusable donations – i.e., if an item of clothing or furniture is soiled or broken, it should not be provided to clients. What should staff do with those items? Do staff understand how to check items for signs of wear and tear, insect infestation, etc.?

**Checking a Set-up Unit**

1. Walk through the furnished apartment and ensure it meets all home safety requirements/provision requirements *(use the USCCB/MRS Housing Safety Checklist on MRSConnect)*
2. Report issues with maintenance as needed and track completion of the ticket. Depending on the severity of the issue, the client may need to be placed in temporary housing until it is resolved.

**Coordinating Airport Pickup**

1. Make sure to leave any client cell phone(s), key(s), and any other materials on the desk of the staff member responsible for Airport pick-up and let them know when it will be there.
2. If staff will be meeting the USTIE at the airport to pick up the client together, ensure that relevant staff have the cell phone number of the USTIE(s). Staff should connect with the USTIE(s) on the morning of airport pickup, to ensure USTIEs understand the airport reception plan.
3. If the USTIE will be picking up clients at the airport alone – staff should have a plan for when they (staff) will first meet with the clients to deliver core services, such as home and personal safety orientation. *As a reminder – while USTIEs can successfully interpret for clients during airport pickup, USTIEs are not allowed to provide interpretation for other core services, such as housing and safety orientation, discussion about case clothing and food needs, etc.*

**Case Notes and Documentation**

1. Create a folder/section within the client file for **“Housing”**
   1. Include the Lease, completed housing documents (Housing Safety Checklist and Housing Supply Checklist), and anything related to housing
2. Ensure staff understand expectations around **case noting** and **case documentation**
   1. **How soon after completing a service are staff expected to complete case notes?** Many offices require staff to enter case notes within 24-48 hours of completing a core service, to complete all case notes about the day’s activities before leaving work for the day, etc.
   2. **Is there a dedicated day/time each week that staff are expected to complete paperwork and case noting** (e.g., “File Fridays” where case managers should not schedule appointments with clients, and should plan to be in the office working on files)?
   3. **What is your program’s quality-assurance process for files?** How will files be reviewed (by someone other than the staff working directly with the case) to ensure case file documentation is complete, case notes tell a coherent story, etc.?

**Paying Rent/Documenting Items**

1. If multiple, separate cases are placed in same apartment, rent is divided equitably
2. If multiple, separate cases are placed in the same apartment, staff must take care to report donated items accurately – i.e., if only 1 couch is present in the apartment, the couch could not be entered in 2 files as a donation to each case.

**Suggestions for Additional Resources to Materialize**

**Directory of Partners:** This should include addresses, gate codes, phone numbers, and potentially a prime point of contact that can be reached for changes/inquiries.

* Landlords
* Furnishing sources: consistent, volunteer groups in queue
* Complexes
* Misc Housing POCs

**Troubleshooting:** This section should address steps to take after certain inevitable changes.

* Case cancellation
* DV Spouse separation protocol
* Single cases (establish open line of communication with other local RA’s to place clients together if needed, look at prior clients in need of roommates)
* Temporary Housing solutions (where and how to book, partners your office works with)

**Temporary Housing:** As this is still under the umbrella of housing, it is important to ensure clients have the tools they need to comfortably wait while permanent housing is secured.

* Create a supply list to provide to clients that are expected to be in temporary housing (hotel) for longer than a week.
  + Temporary housing must always have sufficient number of beds for clients
  + Sufficient number of bath towels for members of case
  + Baby items (if needed) for length of stay
  + 1 small cooking pan
  + 1 box plastic utensils
  + 1 Package paper plates
  + 1 package plastic cups
  + 1 cooking spoon
  + 1 cooking knife
  + New toiletries (sufficient for number of case members), including:
    - Toilet paper
    - 1 shampoo/conditioner set
    - 1 package soap bars
    - One toothbrush per case member
    - Toothpaste
    - Feminine hygiene products as needed