

Birch House Tenant Selection Plan

Revision date 3/19/09

The Birch House Project is a HUD subsidized Section 811 PRAC Property. We are located at 745 Pepper Drive, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. We are a project specifically designated for adults who are diagnosed with a chronic mental illness. We offer 5 co-ed 1 bedroom units in the facility, with tenants sharing a common kitchen, bathrooms, laundry facilities, and living room areas.

FAIR HOUSING/EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

It is the policy of the Hillcrest Family Services Birch House Program to comply fully with all federal, state, and local non-discrimination laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations governing Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, the Fair Housing Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1975.

No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, marital status, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national or ethnic origin, familial status or disability, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under this program.

Individuals with disabilities may need a reasonable accommodation in order to take full advantage of the Birch House program. Any applicant, at any time, may request reasonable accommodation. When such accommodations are granted, they do not confer special treatment or advantage for the person with a disability, rather, they make the program accessible to them in a way that would not otherwise be possible due to their disability.

Project eligibility requirements:

1. Head of Household must be eighteen years or older and diagnosed with a chronic mental illness.
2. Applicant's annual income must not exceed the very-low income limit (gross income may not exceed 50% of median income for the Iowa City area-) This amount is re-determined annually.
3. Disclosure of Social Security numbers: Applicants **MUST** disclose social security numbers in order for the owner to make an eligibility determination. Applicants must provide documentation of social security numbers. Adequate documentation means a social security card issued by the Social Security Administration or other acceptable evidence of the SSN.

Provisions for Accepting Applicants without documentation of SSNs:

- When an applicant has a SSN but does not have the required documentation, the applicant may submit the SSN and certify that the

number is accurate but that acceptable documentation could not be provided.

- Owners must accept the certification and continue to process the individual's application.
 - However, an applicant may not become a participant in the program unless the applicant submits the required SSN documentation to the owner. The applicant must provide SSN documentation to the owner within 60 days from the date on which the applicant certified that the documentation was not available.
 - If the owner has determined that the applicant is otherwise eligible for admission into the property, and the only outstanding verification is that of the SSN, the applicant may retain his or her place on the waiting list for the 60-day period during which the applicant is trying to obtain documentation.
 - After 60 days, if the applicant has been unable to supply the required SSN documentation, the applicant should be determined ineligible and removed from the waiting list
 - An owner may extend the time period for an additional 60 days if the applicant is at least 62 years old and unable to submit the required documentation within the first 60-day period.
4. Not currently using illegal drugs and does not have drug-related criminal activity/convictions or does not present reasonable concern that a pattern of illegal use of drugs would interfere with the health, safety, peaceful enjoyment by other tenants.
 5. No reasonable concern that the applicant displays a pattern of abuse of alcohol that would interfere with the health, safety, or the peaceful enjoyment by other tenants.
 6. Has not been evicted from a federally-assisted housing program for drug-related criminal activity within the past three years. Exceptions may be made if the applicant has successfully completed an approved, supervised drug rehabilitation; or if the circumstances for the eviction no longer exist (i.e. the household member no longer resides with the applicant household).
 7. No convictions of arson/fire setting, because it may threaten the safety of the owner, staff, and tenants.
 8. No reasonable cause to believe that the applicant is currently engaged in or has been engaged in up to five years before the admission, the following criminal activities, based upon a preponderance of evidence, regardless of whether the applicant has been arrested or convicted of such activity:
 - Drug-related criminal activity (defined in 24 CFR 5.100);
 - Violent criminal activity (defined in 24 CFR 5.100)

- Other criminal activity which may threaten the health or safety or right to personal enjoyment of the owner, staff, or other tenants. For example, theft, forgery, fraud, or gang activity.

Examples of supporting evidence may be from such sources as a probation officer, a landlord, neighbors, social service agency worker or criminal records that were verified by the owner.

9. Good previous rental history:
 - Outstanding monies should not be owed to previous landlords (Birch House may consider an exception if the individual now has a person designated to be in charge of their finances, ie. Payee), no previous evictions from a federally funded or non-federally funded housing within the last three years; or no past violation of lease and or house rules, such as poor housekeeping habits, a history of disruptive behaviors, no past failure to cooperate with applicable recertification procedures, or past termination of assistance for fraud.
10. The applicant must have the ability to self-administer medications at Birch House, due to staff not being certified medication managers. This is certified by the applicant's physician.
11. The applicant must not be on a state sex offender lifetime registration list.

Acceptance of Eligible Applicants:

Application Process: The application process involves two phases.

1. The first phase requires the applicant to provide limited basic eligibility information on a preliminary application form, to ensure that there are no obvious factors that would make the applicant ineligible. If the applicant's preliminary screening indicates that they may be eligible, but there are no open units available, the applicant will be placed on the waiting list. (Note: placement on the waiting list does not guarantee acceptance).
 - a. Preliminary application completed
 - b. Initial screening looks like individual is eligible and no units are available, they are placed on waiting list, and are notified in writing of the date and time of placement on the waiting list.
 - c. If there is an opening in the project, and the applicant is at the top of the waiting list, they will proceed with phase two.
 - d. If the applicant appears to be ineligible, a written notice will be mailed out stating the reasons and offer the applicant an informal review of this determination.
 - e. An applicant must at any time, report changes in their status in writing; including changes in household composition, income, legal domicile, address, or preference factors. The applicants file will then be updated.

2. The second phase is the final determination of eligibility.
 - a. The applicant is notified in writing that their name has moved to the top of the waiting list. If the applicant is no longer eligible, or they decline proceeding for admission at that time, the applicant will need to reapply in the future, if interested, as their name will be removed from the waiting list.
 - b. The applicant completes the full application and a briefing interview is scheduled to complete paperwork to verify income, disability, age, criminal history, social security, etc. and to sign required releases of information. It also provides the opportunity of letting the applicant become more familiar with Birch House.
 - c. Information is verified. If all information is verified and acceptable, acceptance into Birch House is granted and a move-in date is set.

WAITING LIST

Our waiting list is always open- we do not close it at any time. Placement on the waiting list is determined by the date and time the application is received. The waiting list will be updated at least annually to ensure that the applicant information is current. It is the responsibility of the applicants to contact the Birch House Program Manager at least every six months, in order to continue placement on the waiting list. Any changes in eligibility must be reported in writing to Birch House Management, also. Current addresses are very important.

Removing Names from the Waiting List:

Birch House management will not remove names from the waiting list, unless;

- a. The applicant no longer meets eligibility requirements;
- b. The applicant does not respond to a written notice of an eligibility review;
- c. The applicant is offered a unit and is declined twice; or
- d. Mail sent to the applicant's last given address is returned as undeliverable.

Reinstating Applicants to the Waiting List:

If an error was made in removing an applicant from the waiting list (i.e. the incorrect address was used), the applicant will be reinstated to their original place on the waiting list.

BRIEFING INTERVIEW:

When Birch House selects an individual from the waiting list and determines eligibility, the applicant is invited to attend a briefing interview to complete the process and explain how the program works. An applicant is given two chances to attend a briefing, and if they fail to attend one of them, they will be denied admission.

At any time in the process, an applicant may request a special accommodation/aid to assist them in completion of the process. Birch House staff will give consideration to any such requests.

At the briefing interview, paperwork is completed to verify income, disability, criminal history, social security, age to help determine eligibility. Releases of information are completed and the Manager will need a copy of the applicant's driver's license and social security card, also. Required information will also be given to the tenant on the program, their rights, etc.

REASONS FOR REJECTING INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

- The household doesn't meet the income requirements;
- The applicant is unable to or declines to disclose and document his/her social security number, or doesn't sign a certification stating that he/she has been assigned a SSN;
- Applicant does not sign and submit required verification consent forms or the Authorization for Release of Information;
- The applicant is requesting a unit larger than a single unit; or,
- The applicant does not meet screening criteria.

SCREENING CRITERIA:

Rejection criteria:

1. Any household member who is subject to a state sex offender lifetime registration is not eligible to live at Birch House.
2. Any household member currently using illegal drugs or have a drug-related criminal activity/convictions or does not present reasonable concern that a pattern of illegal use of drugs would interfere with the health, safety, peaceful enjoyment by other tenants.
3. There is reasonable concern that the applicant displays a pattern of abuse of alcohol that would interfere with the health, safety, or the peaceful enjoyment by other tenants.
4. Applicant has been evicted from a federally-assisted housing program for drug-related criminal activity within the past three years. Exceptions may be made if the applicant has successfully completed an approved, supervised drug rehabilitation; or if the circumstances for the eviction no longer exist (i.e. the household member no longer resides with the applicant household).
5. The applicant has been convicted of arson/fire setting, because it may threaten the safety of the owner, staff, and tenants.
6. There is reasonable cause to believe that the applicant is currently engaged in or has been engaged in up to five years before the admission, the following criminal activities, based upon a preponderance of evidence, regardless of whether the applicant has been arrested or convicted of such activity:
 - a. Drug-related criminal activity (defined in 24 CFR 5.100);
 - b. Violent criminal activity (defined in 24 CFR 5.100)

- c. Other criminal activity which may threaten the health or safety or right to personal enjoyment of the owner, staff, or other tenants. For example, theft, forgery, fraud, or gang activity.

Examples of supporting evidence may be from such sources as a probation officer, a landlord, neighbors, social service agency worker or criminal records that were verified by the owner.

7. Poor previous rental history:
 - a. Outstanding monies owed to previous landlords (Birch House may consider an exception if the individual now has a person designated to be in charge of their finances, ie. Payee), previous evictions from a federally funded or non-federally funded housing within the last three years; or violation of lease and or house rules, such as poor housekeeping habits, a history of disruptive behaviors, failure to cooperate with applicable recertification procedures, or termination of assistance for fraud.
8. The applicant must have the ability to self-administer medications at Birch House, due to staff not being certified medication managers.

If an applicant does not meet the above criteria, the applicant will be notified in writing of the rejection and the reason for the rejection. The applicant then will have 14 days to respond in writing or to request a meeting to discuss the rejection. Management may consider extenuating circumstances in evaluating information obtained during the screening process.

Occupancy Standards:

Birch House has 5 single units and can only have 5 people living in the house at a time.

Unit Transfer Policy:

Unit transfer requests are reviewed and granted if possible, depending upon the availability of the requested unit. All units are the same at Birch House.

Modification of the Tenant Selection Plan:

Tenants and applicants on the waiting list will receive written notification of any revisions to the Tenant Selection Plan or policies that may affect their application or tenancy.

