

Making Landlord Partnerships Work: Lessons from a Housing Navigator

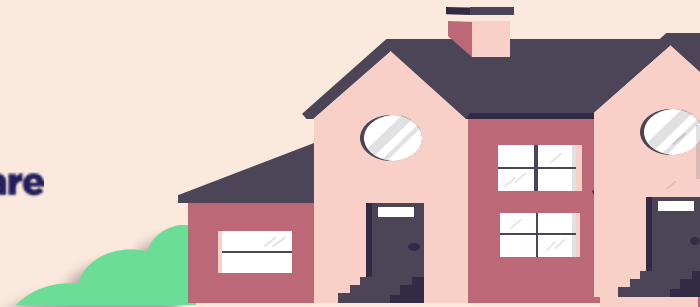
Nick Dodson - Community Housing Navigator



Heartland
HOUSED



Heartland
Continuum of Care



Nick Dodson

- Career Entrepreneur, Community Advocate, & Musician
Emo Rock Band - **The Junior Varsity**
- Hired in **2021** on a 1 year contract
- American Rescue Plan - Emergency Housing Vouchers
- 2nd in state for Utilization in State - 51st in USA of 610 HAs
- Recruited **70+ Landlords** - Created Directory
- Developed Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund



What is Housing Navigation ?



Housing Navigation is...

- Recruiting & Building Relationships with Landlords
- Expediting Housing Opportunities & Placement
- Educating Landlords & Stakeholders
- Providing Support for Case Workers, Tenants & Landlords
- Mediation & De-Escalation Services
- Develop New Programs



Working with Landlords Multi-Prong Approach

Relationship First: Meet Landlords where they are, at their offices, on site at new purchases, coffee shops, housing organization meetings - work on building authentic relationships with trust.

Consistency: Follow up with regular check ins, even when there's no client referral or need. You're in it for the long run and connections matter.



Working with Landlords Multi-Prong Approach

Education: Helping landlords understand sometimes complex incentives and programs that can provide case management, rental assistance can be really good for business. Landlords may be hesitant to work with these programs because they are not familiar with the benefits and requirements.

Incentives: Highlight what we offer - from guaranteed rent payments, double deposit opportunities, case management, & **Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund.**



Where we've seen the most success

Small to midsize local landlords: Especially those who manage their own properties and are tied to the community.

Landlords Burned by Traditional Leasing: Bringing back jaded landlords is possible but a lot of work.

Word of Mouth: When you do good work that benefits the community and makes money - people talk.

Roundtables: Attending and Sponsoring events property Owner gatherings help surface new leads and stay viable.



Working with Clients

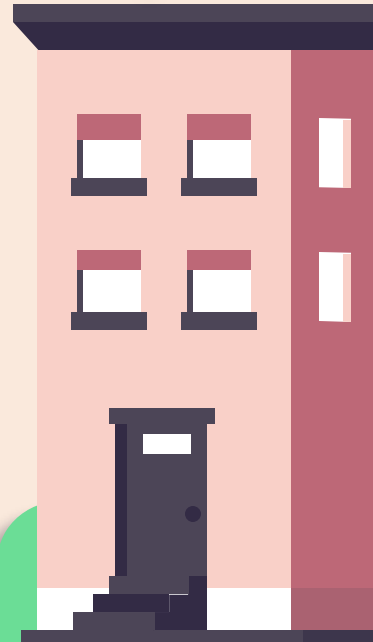
Meet people where they are at. Remove all top down language from your vocabulary. Hierarchy has no place in these relationships.

Locating units for Supportive Housing Programs biggest part of my position - 308 housed in 2024 alone.

Help fill out applications, explain options, local market prices, help coach communication & Problem Solve

Case workers from housing agencies are biggest support system once housed. Service Plan & Wrap around services.

Clients can call or text my work number. Some people communicate better when they can re-review what is being said.



**Is there a way to
protect both
landlords &
expedite tenant
placement?**





LANDLORD RISK MITIGATION FUND

**A New Community Resource
for Springfield Housing
Providers and Agencies with
supportive housing programs**

The Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund (LRMF) is a partnership between property owners, managers, and service providers. The goal is to create and maintain access to housing through a 'Housing First' approach that emphasizes rapid placement and support in housing.

This is specifically to support persons who have serious barriers to meet screening criteria and maintain compliance with fair housing laws by providing protection for both property owners and agencies providing services.

Cities across the country have utilized similar programs successfully to support landlords renting to individuals and families who are homeless and face significant impediments to housing. The LRMF will reimburse up to \$3,000 for physical and operational losses for up to 2 years after move-in such as:

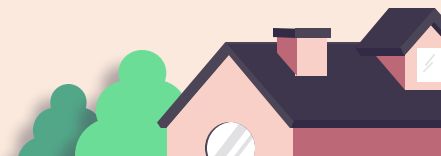
- Damages
- Non-Payments
- Court Costs



LANDLORD RISK MITIGATION FUND

Pioneered in 2021 by the Heartland Continuum of Care

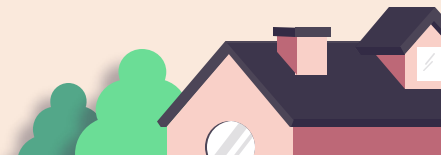
A true community resource for landlords, direct service providers and agencies with supportive housing programs. Clients must be in Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing SH, Payee services or have an Emergency Housing Voucher for the Landlord to utilize the fund.



LANDLORD RISK MITIGATION FUND

The program aims to:

- Mitigate the traditional risks associated with less stringent screening criteria
- Cover costs for Damages, Court, Non-Payments
- Protect the interests of landlords and service providers
- Recruit and incentivize buy in from community members
- Help Landlords feel more protected in renting to our population



LANDLORD RISK MITIGATION FUND

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Claim Process:

Landlord and Case Worker fill out a simple form including photos and invoices whenever necessary. We also ask that they provide a letter with a narrative explaining the situation.

This claim is then moves on to be submitted to our LRMF Board for review.

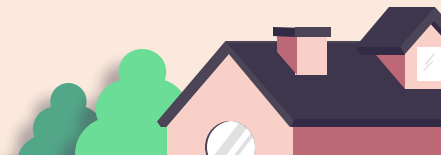


LANDLORD RISK MITIGATION FUND

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Board Oversight:

We have established a 5 member board of local community members involved in a wide range of social services. After claims are submitted to the board for review they then meet to discuss. Reviewing any questions, gaps or clarity needed from a claim. I act as a liaison for the board for the meetings often asking for more information when needed to accurately review the claim.



LANDLORD RISK MITIGATION FUND

HOW IS IT FUNDED?

Two local Philanthropist families believe deeply in the work of the Heartland Continuum of Care and funded the LRMF \$30,000.

Since launch **we still have \$7,000** in the fund and have recruited countless Landlords. This truly is a recruitment tool.

This program is a prime example of how Non- Government Agencies and Private Landlords can thread healthy partnerships with the best results - people being housed.



LANDLORD RISK MITIGATION FUND

HOW IS IT FUNDED?

Community Activists & Advocates in Champaign County educated their County Board members about Heartland Continuum of Care LRMF and they funded it!

Champaign County Regional Planning
Commission: Landlord Risk
Mitigation Fund

\$ 136,548





Things I've Learned

Landlords love having one point of contact person -someone they know that they can call directly when unsure about what to do. Agency rosters can be complex and confusing.

Don't ignore communications in hard situations. Sit in the discomfort - often the landlords just want to be heard. It's okay to say "I don't know but I'll find out"

Master Leases held by agencies doing housing are powerful tools on removing barriers and expediting placements.





Things I've Learned

Celebrate your wins - Housing work is exhausting, hard and complex.

You can't do this alone - Collaborations with community agencies and services are essential for client success.

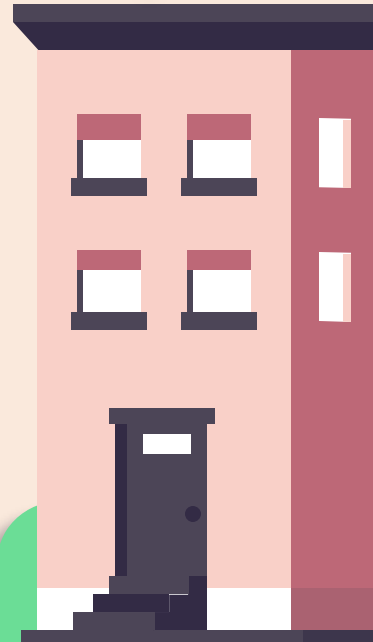
Don't wait for perfection - start with a pilot LRMF fund - even if low. Prove the viability of it in your community.



Notes for Higher Ed

Offer credit or paid internships for students to work with local housing agencies, helping bridge higher ed and community housing systems

Partner with your Continuum of Care. People in your communities are doing this work. Create an MOU with a local homeless provider or CoC agency to station a navigator part-time on campus (or virtually) Share data on student housing needs, and allow warm referrals from campus services.

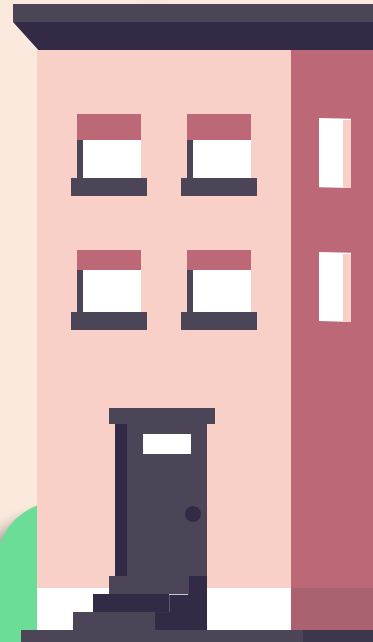


Notes for Higher Ed

Train academic advisors, RA staff, and student support teams to recognize signs of housing insecurity and make warm referrals to community resources.

Allow for institutional flexibility in residency requirements, financial aid disbursement timing, or academic standing policies for students experiencing housing instability.

Host housing stability resource fairs or pop-up clinics during peak times - start of semester, holidays, lease renewals.

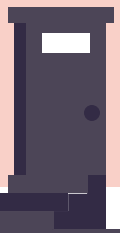
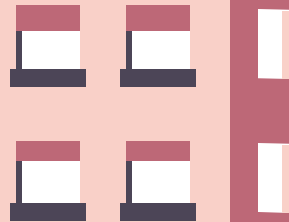


Notes for Higher Ed

Offer internships or capstone projects around housing. Policy, social work, public admin students could help create and manage housing lists, landlord contacts. Students could serve as support to one another and get real world experience.

Host housing stability resource fairs or pop-up clinics during peak times (start of semester, holidays, lease renewals).

Fund or support research and data collection on student homelessness and housing instability to drive policy change. Help drive data to policy makers, the statehouse and beyond.



Thanks!

Any Questions? Let's talk.

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**Scan to access our LRMF
Policy, Application, One
Sheet & HUD study around
LRMF in other communities.**

