

Rental Assistance Program (RAP)

A program of Region 5 Systems

Orientation Handbook November 2025

Move in. Move Forward.

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Email: raphousing@region5systems.net

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DEFINITIONS

To familiarize yourself with housing terms and ensure the correct person is completing the required documentation for the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and signing the appropriate forms, we ask you to read and consider the following definitions. Your RAP Housing Specialist will work with you to best identify who should complete and sign the various documents. In some cases, this may change during the time you are enrolled with RAP.

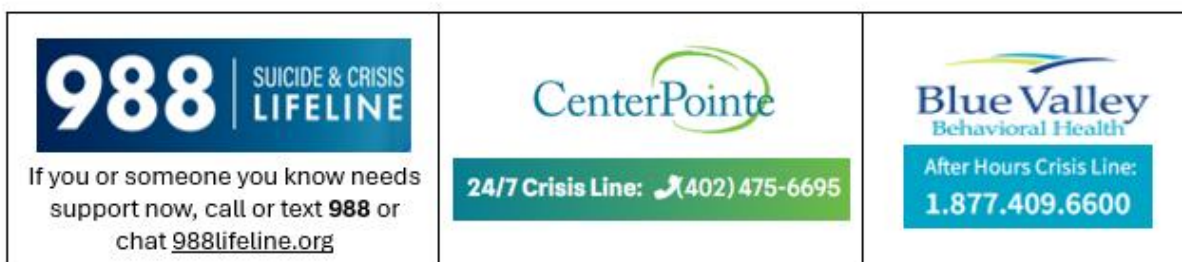
1. **RAP Participant** – A person participating in RAP, a program which provides financial assistance or a subsidy for housing.
2. **Property Owner or Manager** – The individual or company that owns or manages the property where the RAP participant lives.
3. **Behavioral Health Services** – Services provided to address mental health, substance use, or other behavioral health needs. This could include counseling, therapy, or treatment programs.
4. **Payee** – A person or entity responsible for receiving payments on behalf of someone else (often used in the context of financial management for those unable to manage their funds).
5. **Legal Guardian** – An individual who is legally responsible for the care and well-being of another person. This person is appointed by the court system.
6. **RAP Housing Specialist** – A Housing Specialist working with RAP, helping participants find and maintain housing with the assistance of Case Managers in the community, conducting inspections, communicating with landlords, providing guidance on housing-related issues, assisting with housing-related needs and handling administrative tasks such as data entry, payments to landlords, and meetings with Case Managers.
7. **Case Manager** – A professional who helps participants navigate various services, including housing, behavioral health, and other social services. A Case Manager typically works to coordinate care and support for individuals facing various challenges.
8. **14/30 Notice** – A notice to the RAP participant indicating they have 14 days to address certain violations (e.g., non-payment) or 30 days to vacate the property. The specifics can vary depending on the jurisdiction and the lease agreement.
9. **5-Day Notice** – Typically used to inform the RAP participant that they have 5 days to pay overdue rent or face legal action (such as eviction).
10. **Notice to Vacate** – A formal notification given to the RAP participant telling them to leave the premises by a specified date, usually due to non-payment, violation of lease terms, or other causes. This is not an eviction.
11. **Shut-off Notice from Utility Companies** – A notice issued by a utility provider (e.g., electricity, water) informing the RAP participant that their service will be discontinued due to non-payment or other reasons.
12. **Eviction Notice** – A formal notice from a landlord or property owner to the RAP participant informing them of the intent to evict them from the rental property. This could be due to non-payment, lease violations, or other reasons.

13. **Notice of Non-Payment (7-day Notice)** – A notification from a landlord or property manager stating that the RAP participant has not paid rent, and that action may be taken unless payment is made within 7 days.
14. **NSPIRE** – National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate. A standardized system for assessing the condition of housing properties to ensure the health, safety, and functional adequacy of properties.
15. **Lease** – A legally binding contract between a landlord (lessor) and the RAP participant that grants the participant the right to occupy a property for a specific period in exchange for regular payments, typically called rent. This agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of both parties, including the lease duration, monthly rent amount and due date, security deposit details, and rules regarding property maintenance, utilities, and move-out procedures.
16. **Fair Market Rent** – An annual estimate by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the average gross rent and utility costs of standard units in a specific local housing market used to set payment standards.

CRISIS INTERVENTION NUMBERS

**IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING AN EMERGENCY
OR PERSONAL CRISIS, PLEASE CALL:**

HELP IS JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY 24/7, 365 DAYS A YEAR.



We also suggest knowing the following crisis intervention numbers:

Boys Town Nebraska Family Helpline (call only).....1-888-866-8660

- 24/7 National Hotline
- Parenting advice.
- Issues ranging from bullying and family problems to substance abuse and suicidal thoughts.

Keya Warmline.....402-261-5959

Honu Warmline.....402-975-2032

- 24/7 Peer Support Hotline

Crisis Text Line (text only).....Text HOME to 741741

- 24/7 National Text Line
- Any painful emotion and anytime you need support.
- Anxiety, depression, suicide, self-harm, loneliness, gun violence, coronavirus, eating disorders.
- En Español.

Other Numbers

Poison Control.....1-800-222-1222

Police Department (Emergency).....911

WELCOME

Welcome to RAP! This handbook is your go-to resource for understanding the ins and outs of RAP, ensuring that you can access the support you need with confidence. The goal of this handbook is to equip you with the knowledge and resources necessary to make the most of the program. We are here to support your journey through RAP. If you have any questions or need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out.

RAP Housing Specialists maintain regular business hours of Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; however, accommodations will be made to meet your schedule and to aid in crisis situations. ***Please be aware that RAP Housing Specialists do not have an office at the Region 5 Systems' building. If you need to meet with a specialist, you will need to schedule an appointment with them directly. If you come to the office without an appointment, you may not be able to meet with someone that day.***

You can expect a response to your communication within 24 business hours. Email or text are preferred communication methods. **It is best to direct all communication through your Case Manager.**

Your intake Housing Specialist is: Wade Fruhling

Email: wfruhling@region5systems.net

Phone Number: 402-429-9236

Your ongoing Housing Specialist will be: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Your Case Manager is: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

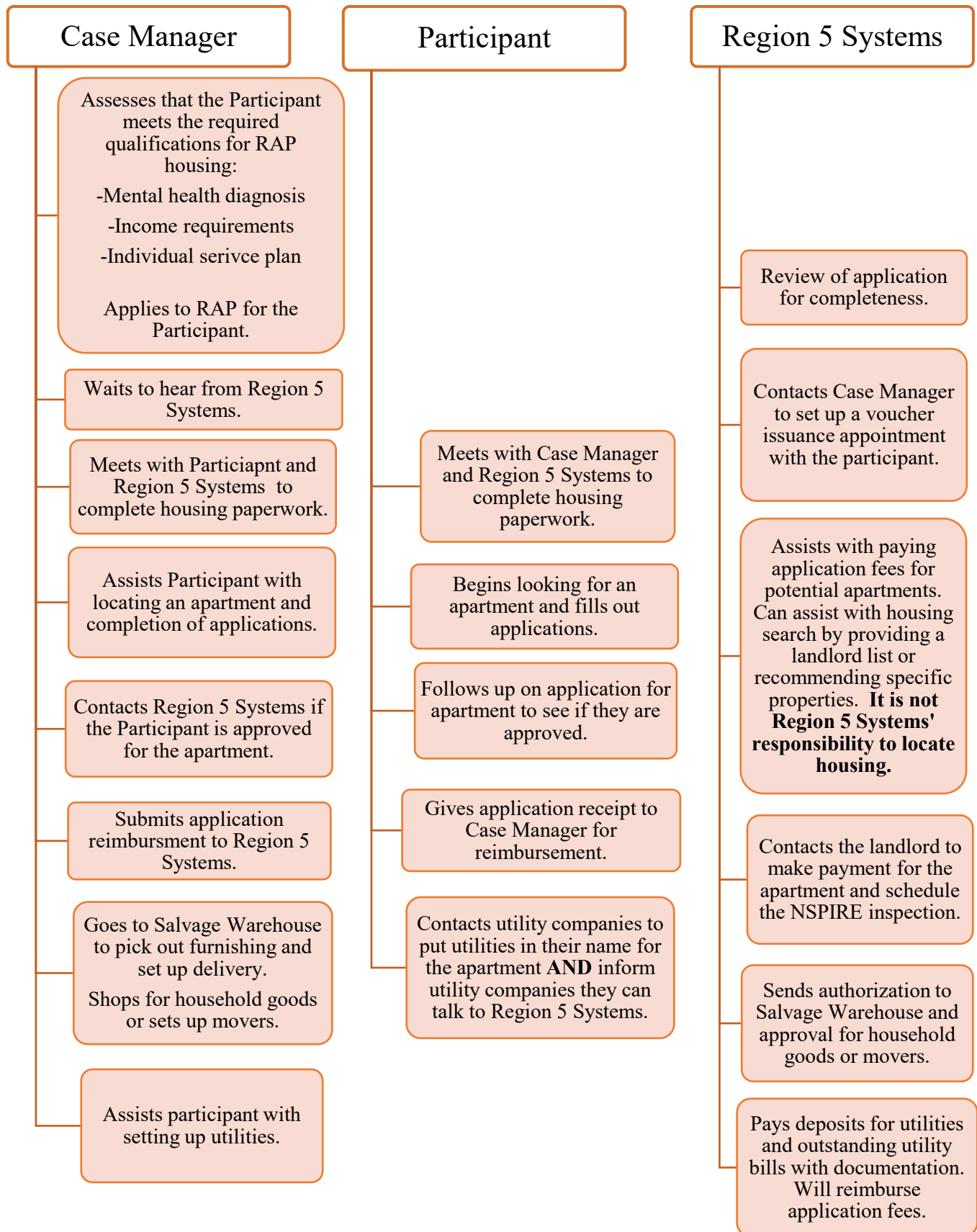
The Manager of Housing Services is: Jade Fowler

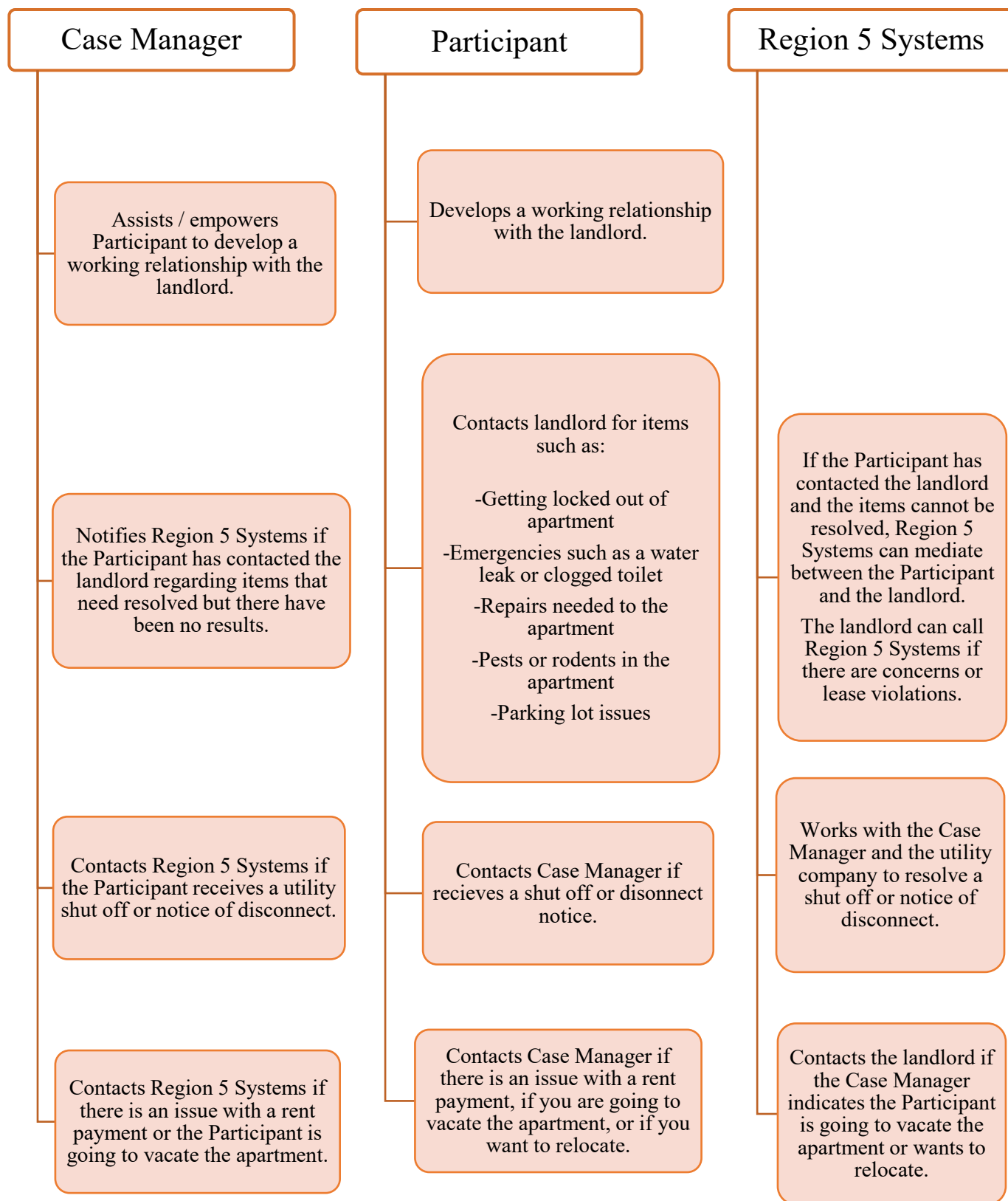
Email: jfowler@region5systems.net

Phone Number: 402-441-3807

Case managers assigned to RAP participants are not employed by Region 5 Systems. Our relationship to case managers is that of a contractual collaboration for the program. Any concern regarding your case manager should be directed to the organization they work for.

The following flow chart helps in outlining the roles and responsibilities of the housing specialist, case manager, and participant in the housing process.





ABOUT REGION 5 SYSTEMS

Region 5 Systems, a political subdivision of the State of Nebraska, serves southeast Nebraska by providing publicly funded behavioral health programs. **Our mission is to support the wellness and recovery of people in southeast Nebraska through the ongoing development and coordination of a behavioral health system of care.**

RAP is one division of Region 5 Systems among many other programs and services it supports and/or funds. For more information about Region 5 Systems, please visit our website at www.region5systems.net. We strive to ensure that consumers are well informed about our strategic planning efforts. Our Annual Report and Strategic Plan are posted annually on our website for your convenience. If you do not have access to a computer, you may request hard copies of these documents from your Housing Specialist.

WHAT IS THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM?

Philosophy & Description.

In partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health, Region 5 Systems extends housing assistance to support individuals eligible for the program in their pursuit of independent living as a part of their journey to recovery. Access to safe, affordable, accessible, and decent housing is vital for individuals to navigate behavioral health challenges and living with very low income. Through RAP, individuals are offered the opportunity to secure and maintain housing while receiving personalized behavioral health services that facilitate their recovery.

RAP allocates funding to assist financially eligible, very low-income adults living with serious mental health or substance use disorders (or both) as they transition toward accessing other housing resources, such as Federal Housing Choice Voucher Programs (Section 8), public subsidized housing, or facilitating their transition to self-sufficiency or independent housing without rental assistance.

Established in 2005, The Housing Related Assistance (HRA) Program utilizes Nebraska state documentary stamp dollars (as per Nebraska Revised Statute 71-812(3)) to provide housing assistance to individuals eligible for the program, while receiving behavioral health services funded by the DHHS. Additionally, state general funds are allocated to support the continued efforts of stable housing.

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM GOALS?

To enhance the stability and well-being of individuals living with behavioral health challenges that have very low income by providing access to safe, affordable, accessible, and decent housing through RAP. This goal aims to support individuals' journeys to recovery and independent living while ensuring that they receive personalized behavioral health services tailored to their needs. The goal is to support the transition towards accessing other housing resources, thereby promoting long-term housing stability and reducing homelessness, hospitalizations, and incarcerations among eligible individuals.

WHAT TYPE OF ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO YOU?

1. **Application Fee Reimbursement:** You may be eligible for application fee reimbursement.
 - Remember to submit your receipts to your Case Manager for submission and reimbursement by Region 5 Systems.
2. **Deposit Assistance:** You may be eligible to receive assistance with your full security deposit, not exceeding the approved fair market rent and monthly rent.
 - Your Housing Specialist will make payment directly to the property owner or manager.
3. **On-Going Rent Assistance:** You may be eligible to receive monthly rent assistance, up to the approved fair market rent specified on your voucher issuance letter. If you have income, you will contribute 27% of your income directly to your landlord.
 - Your Housing Specialist will make payments directly to the property owner or manager.
 - If you have income, you will make payments for the tenant portion directly to your property owner or manager.
 - Region 5 Systems will not approve units that exceed fair market rent.
4. **Moving Costs:** You may be eligible to receive assistance with movers for your move.
 - Your Housing Specialist will guarantee payment to Black Belt Movers.
 - You will set up movers with your Case Manager after the guarantee.
5. **Household Goods:** You may be eligible to receive support in acquiring essential household items, such as kitchenware, bathroom essentials, and bedding.
 - Your Housing Specialist will send an approved invoice to your Case Manager.
 - You will work with your Case Manager to acquire necessary items.
6. **Furniture Assistance:** You may be able to get support with furnishing your approved unit.
 - Your Housing Specialist will send an invoice to Salvage Warehouse.
 - You will work with your Case Manager to acquire items and set up delivery.
7. **Housing-Related Debt:** You may be eligible to receive help addressing any outstanding housing-related debts that are preventing you from qualifying for Section 8 housing or securing approval for a unit.
8. **Utility Assistance:**
 - If you have zero income, RAP can provide ongoing utility assistance. Be sure to follow the utility guidelines provided at the voucher issuance meeting to ensure utility payments are made by Region 5 Systems.
 - If you have income, you can receive one-time assistance to help you successfully transition to independent living.
 - Basic utilities such as water, electricity, gas, trash, sewer, community area maintenance fees, and rental insurance required by your lease can be covered.

WHAT THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CANNOT PAY FOR

RAP cannot pay for:

- Internet
- Cable
- Satellite
- Garage
- Pet fees or deposit
- Last month's rent
- Laundry fees
- Single room occupancy
- Long-term hotels
- Hotel/motel stays
- Cleaning fees or damages to the unit
- Costs associated with unauthorized relocation including but not limited to deposit, prorated rent, rent, moving costs, and application fees.
- A unit that exceeds the approved occupancy allowance. For example, RAP will not approve a 2-bedroom unit if you are approved for a 1-bedroom unit, even if the rent does not exceed your approved fair market rent.
- Extended absences from the unit beyond 90 days due to hospitalization, incarceration, treatment, etc.

HOW DOES THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WORK?

The RAP process is as follows:

1. **Application Submission:** Your Case Manager or referral source submits applications on your behalf to RAP if you meet the eligibility criteria.
2. **Review and Approval:** RAP employees review and assess your application for completeness and eligibility. If you are approved, you will be enrolled in the program based on priority criteria.
 - Some individuals may be placed on a waitlist.
3. **Voucher Issuance:** You will have a meeting with your Case Manager and RAP Housing Specialist to complete paperwork. You will have 90 days to secure housing.
 - If you need an extension, you will need to submit three housing applications.
 - Extensions are given 30 days at a time.
4. **Housing Search:** Once enrolled, you will work with your Case Manager to search for suitable housing options.
 - A list of potential landlords will be provided at your voucher issuance meeting.
 - Do not sign a lease until your inspection is completed.

5. **Housing Secured:** Once you find a suitable housing option and get approved, a Housing Specialist will conduct an NSPIRE inspection to ensure the unit meets programming standards and communicate findings to you and your Case Manager.
6. **Lease Signing:** You will sign a lease agreement with the property owner or manager, finalizing the housing agreement.
7. **Document Collection:** RAP will collect necessary documents from you and the property owner or manager, such as the lease agreement and W9 forms.
8. **Payment Issuance:** Once all documents are collected, RAP will issue payments to the property owner or manager, covering the agreed upon rental assistance amount.
 - Please note that there may be a delay in payment while we are collecting necessary documents and working through internal processes.
9. **Move In:** You can move into your chosen apartment once the lease agreement is finalized. RAP employees will send authorizations to the necessary agencies to ensure you have furnishings, movers, and household goods if needed. Region 5 Systems uses the following agencies:
 - Black Belt Movers
 - Salvage Warehouse
 - Case Manager for household goods

By following these steps, RAP will help you secure and maintain stable housing.

WHAT DATA IS COLLECTED?

By collecting and analyzing the following data, the program can track individual progress, access the effectiveness of interventions, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that services are tailored to meet the needs of individuals effectively. Additionally, data collection helps in reporting to stakeholders, funding agencies, and policy makers, demonstrating the programs impact and informing decision-making processes.

Demographic Data: Information regarding the demographic characteristics of eligible individuals, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, diagnosis, household composition, and income level.

Monthly Staffing with Case Management Agency: Regular updates on enrolled individuals' status, including changes in income, household composition, housing situation, changes in behavioral health services, and any other relevant factors.

Destination after Discharge: Data on where discharged individuals transition after leaving the program, including whether secure permanent housing, received a higher level of care, achieved self-sufficiency, or returned to unsheltered status.

Lease: Documentation of lease agreements between enrolled individuals and property owners or managers, including terms, duration, and rental amounts.

Referrals: Information about referrals made to other supportive services or agencies, such as past services, diagnosis, income, and other community resources.

YOUR RIGHTS WITHIN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

1. **Protection Against Discrimination:** You have the right to receive services regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth {and related medical conditions}, sexual orientation, or gender identity), age (40 and older), disability, genetic information, marital or family status, status as a covered veteran, political beliefs, source of income, or other factors which cannot be lawfully used as the basis for participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program.
2. **Right to Safe and Caring Services:** You have the right to receive caring and safe services free from physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse as well as neglect, harassment and physical punishment, humiliating, threatening, retaliating, or exploiting actions.
3. **Right to Respectful Treatment:** You have the right to be treated respectfully, impartially, and fairly by all employees and individuals in RAP. Your dignity and rights will be upheld throughout your participation in the program.
4. **Right to Fair Housing:** Property owners or managers cannot discriminate against you in accordance with the Fair Housing Policy based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national or ethnic origin, familial status, or disability.
5. **Right to Safe and Decent Housing:** You have the right to safe, decent, accessible, and affordable housing that meets your needs.
6. **Right to Choose:** You have the right to make your own decisions about housing. This includes freedom to choose the housing unit and to decorate according to your preferences.
7. **Right to Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is strictly maintained in accordance with federal and state laws. Your personal information will never be released without your consent.
 - The housing team members are mandatory reporters. If there is a need to contact law enforcement, adult protective services, or child protective services, confidentiality could be broken.
8. **Right to Consumer Empowerment:**
 - You will be promptly informed of any changes in the assistance you receive.
 - You have the right to be informed of all available services and to refuse any or all services.
 - You have the right to be involved in all decisions regarding the assistance you receive.
 - You retain the autonomy to make decisions on your own behalf, unless legally delegated to someone else.
 - You can express dissatisfaction with the program and file a grievance in accordance with the grievance policy.
 - You have the right to be informed of the policy and procedures of Region 5 Systems.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO MAINTAIN YOUR RAP ASSISTANCE

Not following the responsibilities outlined by RAP may result in discharge from the program. It is important to adhere to all guidelines and requirements to maintain your assistance and continue benefiting from the program.

- 1. Respect and Dignity:** Treat Region 5 Systems employees and fellow participants with dignity and respect. Refrain from physical violence, verbal escalation, demeaning comments or actions based on various characteristics, or any form of harassment.
- 2. Compliance with Program Policies:** Work cooperatively with housing employees to adhere to the terms of the lease and program policies.
- 3. Engagement in Behavioral Health Services:**
 - Actively work with and follow through with your Case Manager.
 - Allow your Case Manager to enter your unit monthly.
 - Maintain an individual service plan with goals of independent living and, if applicable, a goal of securing income.
- 4. No Illegal Activities Within the Unit:**
 - You and your guests are strictly prohibited from engaging in any form of criminal/illegal activity within the unit.
 - The housing environment must remain free from drugs and drug-related activity, including the use, manufacturing, and/or production of drugs within the unit.
- 5. Provide Requested Information:** You must supply all requested information to Region 5 Systems in a timely manner. This includes:
 - Income documentation as requested and within 30 days of a change.
 - Annual eligibility documents, such as diagnosis, service plan, and income documentation.
 - Authorization for Release of Information, allowing Region 5 Systems to communicate with all relevant parties as needed.
- 6. Allow Housing Inspections:**
 - Permit Region 5 Systems employees to conduct inspections of the unit.
- 7. Use of Property as a Private Residence Only:** The property should solely be used as private residence by the lease holder only. It should not be used for commercial or other non-residential purposes, including subletting the unit as an Air BnB, VRBO, etc.
- 8. Limitation on Extended Guests:** Extended stays are not permitted in accordance with the lease. Region 5 Systems monitors all reports of extended stays by guests.
 - Proof of residency may be requested if there are reports of extended stays.
- 9. Maintenance of the Unit:** You are responsible for maintaining a clean, safe, and undamaged unit. This includes regular cleaning and upkeep to ensure the property is maintained in good condition.

- 10. Rental Contributions and Utilities:** Ensuring timely payments to your landlord and utility companies, as applicable.
- Participants with income are required to contribute 27% of their income toward their monthly rent and pay all utilities associated with their unit.
- 11. Actively Work Toward a Long-Term Housing Plan:** Work with your local housing authority to secure Section 8 or actively work toward self-sufficiency through employment, benefits, or other income sources.

NOTIFICATION RESPONSIBILITIES

There are situations which will require you to provide notification to RAP. Please provide notifications to RAP through your Case Manager.

- 1. Move or Lease Termination:** If you decide to move or terminate your lease, a request to move must be completed and approved by RAP prior to moving if you want continued RAP assistance.
- 2. Receiving Notices from Your Landlord:** Notify Region 5 Systems through your Case Manager if you receive any notices from your property owner or manager. Included but not limited to:
 - 14/30 notice
 - 5-Day notice
 - Notice to vacate
 - Utilities shut-off notice
 - Eviction notice
 - Notice of non-payment

Multiple notices from your property manager or utility companies could result in loss of RAP assistance.

- 3. Extended Absence from the Unit:** Notify Region 5 Systems through your Case Manager if your absence will extend past 30 days. This includes:
 - Hospitalization for physical or mental health
 - Inpatient treatment
 - Incarceration

RAP cannot pay for a unit for an absence exceeding 90 days.

- 4. Change in Income:** Report any changes in income and submit source documentation (e.g., paycheck stubs) to your Housing Specialist within 30 days to redetermine eligibility and tenant rent/utility responsibilities.

Failing to supply needed documentation by the requested time could result in loss of RAP assistance.

If reported income is over the 30% area median income limits, you will be placed on a step-down until you are responsible for total rent.

- 5. Household Composition:** All changes in household/family composition must be reported to Region 5 Systems within 30 days of change.

Changes in household/family composition may result in a change in room limits.

A 30-day notice will be given to you and your landlord if your subsidy will be affected by any of these changes.

PREPARING FOR TRANSITION

RAP is designed as a transitional housing program with the aim of bridging individuals to permanent housing support or self-sufficiency. It is not meant as permanent housing or a long-term solution to housing. The average length of stay is 24 months. To ensure a successful bridge, the following steps must be taken.

- 1. Apply to your Local Housing Authority:**

- If deemed eligible, you must adhere to all program requirements and appointments to facilitate the bridge process.
- If approved for alternative housing, full compliance with the program requirements and appointments is necessary.
- Declining or failing to follow through with the bridging process after an offer or acceptance by another housing program will result in disqualification from RAP.
- Failure to maintain your waitlist spot with the housing authority will result in disqualification from RAP.
- Ensure that you are updating your address with your local housing authority after moving in.
- Failure to reapply after denial from housing authority will result in disqualification from RAP.

- 2. Actively Seek Income:** Pursue employment opportunities or benefits to establish and maintain stable income.

Not following through with your transition plan provided to Region 5 Systems could result in loss of rental assistance.

OCCUPANCY STANDARDS

- 1. Room Limits:** Generally, two people are expected to share a bedroom. RAP will assign unit sizes so as not to require use of the living room for sleeping purposes. RAP will assign unit sizes so that no more than two people are required to sleep in any bedroom.
- 2. Family Composition:** RAP will consider the number, relationship, age, gender, health, and disability of the members of the family when determining the appropriate unit size for which a family qualifies; however, it is the family's choice who shares rooms. RAP will determine appropriate unit sizes according to the following criteria:
 - Two children of the same sex and less than five years difference in age qualify for a single bedroom.

- Children with at least five years' difference in age may qualify for separate bedrooms.
 - Children of the opposite sex may qualify for separate bedrooms.
 - Spouses, co-heads, or two adults living in a consensual family relationship qualify for one bedroom. Other adults of the opposite sex may qualify for separate bedrooms.
 - Two adults of the same sex qualify for one bedroom, unless there is a generational difference between the adults (e.g., mother/daughter).
- 3. Determining Family Size:** RAP will consider every member of a family reasonably expected to live in the unit. If a family member is pregnant, the unborn child will be considered a member of the family for the purpose of determining the appropriate unit size. If the family has verified custody arrangements of at least 51%, then they can be considered a member of the family provided that the child is not already claimed as a family member in any other household receiving housing subsidy and another party does not have the right to claim subsidy via a court order. RAP will count children temporarily absent from the home due to foster care if reunification is verifiable. Students who live out of town but return home for 3 months per year will be considered a member of the family for household composition purposes.

REQUESTS TO MOVE

RAP supports your voice and choice in housing decisions while balancing program resources and external requirements. All move requests must be submitted through your Case Manager and will be reviewed using established internal criteria. RAP will consider your needs along with external factors such as lease obligations, property owner and manager requirements, and available funding. You will receive a written decision within 7 days of submitting your request. You may be approved to move; however, the costs associated with the move may be fully, partially, or not covered depending on available resources. RAP employees are trained to ensure consistent, participant-centered communication throughout this process.

- If you were in a unit with more than one bedroom and lost custody or did not reunify with your children, RAP may request that you move at the end of your lease or ask that you pay the difference in rent depending on sustainability. RAP may assist with the costs related to that move.
- If your unit becomes structurally unsafe, through no fault of your own, and cannot be repaired by the landlord (for example, if the building burns down or is condemned), RAP will help cover moving costs. If the damage is caused by your own actions, RAP would not likely cover those costs.
- If you develop a significant physical disability after signing your lease (for example, if you lose mobility and can no longer access your upper-floor apartment), RAP will help pay for a move if the new unit is both accessible and sustainable.

Doctors Notes: *In alignment with HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Guidebook, if you request a move for medical reasons, you may be asked to provide verification from a licensed medical professional. The documentation must confirm that your current unit does not meet your disability-related needs and that a move is necessary for your health, safety, or accessibility. RAP employees will only request the minimum necessary documentation and will keep all medical information confidential.*

- If your rent increases beyond fair market rent and you are not expected to bridge soon (through LHA or self-sufficiency), RAP may ask that you move to a more affordable and sustainable unit. RAP will assist with the costs of that move.
- If you receive a 30-day notice from your landlord that is not due to any fault of your own (for example, a change in lease terms, sale of the unit, or the landlord choosing to use the unit for personal reasons), RAP may assist with relocation.
- If you are experiencing a domestic violence situation, you can follow the process outlined under VAWA. RAP would support costs associated with a move.
- RAP follows HUD requirements for reasonable accommodation requests related to disability. You may request additional bedrooms beyond standard occupancy guidelines if needed for medical, accessibility, or disability-related reasons. To do so, you must provide written verification from a licensed medical professional confirming that you have a disability-related need for an additional bedroom (for example, the need for a live-in aide, medical equipment, or a separate sleeping space due to medical conditions).

Requests will be reviewed as they are submitted, and decisions will be communicated to you in writing within 7 business days. While RAP strives to support your needs, the ability to approve and fund additional bedrooms depends on program resources and available funding.

HOW IS CONFIDENTIALITY MAINTAINED?

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance to us. We will take every reasonable precaution to safeguard your rights to confidentiality according to federal and state laws or regulations. This includes:

- Requiring all employees to sign a confidentiality agreement upon hire that prohibits them from discussing your information with non-employees.
- Requiring all employees to abide by our Code of Ethics policy; this includes signing an acknowledgement form that holds them accountable to ethical and professional standards of conduct concerning privacy, confidentiality, and other rights.
- Securing your information in a confidential manner, in compliance with HIPAA.
- Not releasing any of your information without first obtaining a signed release from you.
- Providing you and your Housing Specialist with a private conference area when meeting at our office.

WHAT POLICIES/PROCEDURES SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

Use of Tobacco Products: It is our policy to provide a smoke-free environment for our employees and the participants we serve. Region 5 Systems does not discriminate against individuals based on their use of legal products, such as tobacco; however, smoking is not allowed in our building, on our premises, or during transportation with your Housing Specialist. (Note: If smoking occurs when meeting in your home or off-site location, the Housing Specialist may ask that you refrain

from smoking during the meeting. If that is not acceptable, the meeting location may need to be changed to accommodate a smoke-free environment for the employee.)

Illegal Drugs: We do not permit illicit (illegal) drugs to be brought or stored on our premises, and your Housing Specialist will not conduct services in the presence of illegal drug possession or use. If your Housing Specialist finds him/herself in a situation where there is possession of illegal drugs by you or a family member, the following action will occur:

- The Housing Specialist will leave the environment. If services are being conducted in the office, you will be asked to leave the office.
- The Housing Specialist will be legally obligated to report the incident to the proper authorities.

Alcohol Use: We do not permit alcohol to be brought or stored on our premises, and your Housing Specialist will not conduct services in the presence of alcohol use. If your Housing Specialist finds him/herself in a situation where there is the presence of alcohol use by you or a family member, the following action will occur:

- The Housing Specialist will leave the environment. If services are being conducted in the office, you will be asked to leave the office.

Medications: We cannot prescribe, dispense, nor administer medication of any type (including over-the-counter medications). If you or a family member requires medication, those services will need to be obtained from sources outside of RAP (e.g., private physician, psychiatrist, hospital, parent/legal guardian, etc.).

Advance Directives: RAP does not address advance directives related to medical or psychiatric needs. (Advance directives are specific instructions given by a participant to his/her care provider about medical treatment and/or the use of artificial life support.)

Management of Personal Funds: We do not provide management of personal funds for you or your family. If you need assistance with this, your Housing Specialist can help you with locating an agency that specializes in money management.

Seclusion & Restraint: We do not use seclusion or restraint under any circumstances, including emergency intervention in response to assault or aggression. Housing Specialists are trained in de-escalation techniques and will use these means as an alternative way to diffuse a potentially dangerous situation. If the situation cannot be resolved with verbal attempts to de-escalate, your Housing Specialist may find it necessary to call for outside assistance from law enforcement.

Program Restrictions: We will not use special treatment or intrusive procedures of any kind as a means of restricting your care while in RAP. We will inform participants and their families, as applicable, of program rules and expectations including any restrictions the program may place on the participant, events, behaviors, or attitudes, and their likely consequences that may lead to the loss of rights or privileges for the participant and means by which the participant may regain rights or privileges that have been restricted.

Legal Rights: You have the right to be considered competent to make decisions on your own behalf unless someone other than yourself has been legally authorized to do so and shall be provided with the information necessary to facilitate this decision making. RAP does not mandate or enforce legal requirements imposed on participants.

If you are 18 years of age or older, you may consent to mental health services for yourself without the consent of your parent or guardian (Nebraska Revised Statute 43- 2101, effective 7/19/18).

This means that you may legally sign required documentation for RAP with or without your parent/legal guardian's consent.

Building Safety: Region 5 Systems' building has many safety features to ensure reasonable precautions are taken should you be in our building during an event such as a fire or tornado. Each office and conference room have a map to indicate exit routes and procedures in case of such emergencies. There are also first aid kits, fire extinguishers, and emergency lighting. Should it be necessary to evacuate the meeting area you are in when visiting our building, your Housing Specialist, or another employee will assist you with finding the appropriate area to go to.

Participant Photographs: As a general practice, we do not take photographs of participants and their families; however, there are some situations when it is legally mandated (abuse/neglect circumstances) and/or when it would be helpful as a part of the individual's plan.

In situations when a participant's photograph is taken, the photograph(s) will be added to the participant's health record and becomes protected under HIPAA. All photographs taken will be deleted from the device on which the photo was taken.

DOES HOUSING ABIDE BY A CODE OF ETHICS?

Yes. Region 5 Systems seeks to ensure that the highest ethical standards are followed by employees, interns, and volunteers. Region 5 Systems believes that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, all people should have access to needed services that achieve optimum outcomes, and all people should be empowered to exercise an informed choice.

Region 5 Systems' Code of Ethics Policy is accessible as follows:

- Provided to you with your orientation enrollment packet information (also provided to you again if this handbook is revised during your service period).
- Viewable and printable directly from Region 5 Systems' website at:

<https://region5systems.net/who-we-are/>

CAN I REPORT A GRIEVANCE OR FILE A COMPLAINT?

Yes. Region 5 Systems has established procedures by which you may confidentially report a grievance, file a complaint, or appeal a decision of an employee or a member of your team.

It is important to note that you will NOT be retaliated against for doing this. This means you cannot be discharged from RAP or be subjected to any other consequences because you reported a grievance, filed a complaint, or appealed a decision.

If you are not satisfied with a decision made by your Housing Specialist or the service that is received, please refer to Region 5 Systems' "Grievances, Complaints, and Appeals Procedures."

These procedures and the form to complete are accessible as follows:

- Provided to you with your orientation enrollment packet information (also provided to you again if this handbook is revised during your service period).
- Viewable and printable directly from Region 5 Systems' website at:

<https://region5systems.net/contact-us/grievances/>

ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE

If you find it necessary to seek advocacy assistance from someone outside of RAP, we suggest the following contact who is not a part of our program and who may be able to offer neutral assistance:

Office of the Public Counsel

(also known as the State Ombudsman's Office)

402-471-2035 or toll free 1-800-742-7690

E-mail: ombud@leg.ne.gov

Community Action Tenant Support

(402) 875-9353

TenantServices@communityactionatwork.org

Fair Housing of Nebraska and Iowa

2401 Lake Street

Omaha, NE 68111

Office: (402) 934-7921

Fax: (402) 934-7928