



Bergen County Homeless Family Services:
Housing, Emergency Shelter, Advocacy Resources,
and Tools for Self-Sufficiency

40 PASSAIC STREET, HACKENSACK NJ 07601

Main Line: (201)-488-2525



Effective Date: February 1, 2021

HEARTS Discharge Policy and Procedures

All notices of discharge will be in writing. The Social Work Supervisor is authorized to discharge families from HEARTS when they meet the discharge criteria listed below.

Families will not be discharged after office hours. However, in the event a family member is behaving in a dangerous and/or erratic manner after hours they will be evaluated psychiatrically and medically. Security will contact law enforcement and Psychiatric Emergency Screening Program (PESP aka 262-HELP) to initiate those after-hours evaluations. The Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) hotline will also be contacted if the situation results in the children in the family being at risk of abuse or neglect. HEARTS Case management will initiate those evaluations and calls during office hours.

Participants who are discharged for reasons other than obtaining housing will be provided with information for alternative shelter options prior to discharge. It will be the participant's responsibility to arrange for alternative shelter.

Discharge Criteria for Participants

1. Upon obtaining housing, a housing voucher (including but not limited to-TRA Section 8 Shelter+Care, HUD-VASH, Rapid Rehousing, Supportive Housing Placement) participants will be given 30 days to utilize the voucher and exit shelter.
2. Upon finding a suitable housing opportunity, with agreement from a credible, vetted Landlord or Owner, participants must vacate on the start date of their lease.
3. Participants who reject more than 1 suitable housing opportunity will be discharged and given a 30 day notice to locate alternative housing.
4. Family income is such that it can support permanent housing in the community that falls at or below the Fair Market Rent.
5. Failure to attend and actively participate in weekly housing permanency planning meetings as evidenced by missing more than 1 weekly meeting in a 4-week period and or failure to complete assigned activities without good cause.

6. Tampering with smoke detectors, building systems, security cameras and/or carbon monoxide detectors.
7. Possession of weapons.
8. Destruction of property.
9. Being under the influence of alcohol or other substances.
10. Selling or sharing of drugs with others, possession of alcohol or illegal drugs on the premises or use of alcohol, illegal drugs or misuse of medication.
11. Smoking or vaping on the premises.
12. Verbal or physical abuse of family members, other participant families or staff.
13. Theft.
14. Fighting.
15. Behavior that poses a risk of danger to self, others, or property.
16. Bringing visitors into the building.
17. Chronic violation of HEARTS rules.
18. Any criminal activity.
19. Loss of the physical custody of the minor children in the participant household.
20. Any other reasons deemed appropriate by HEARTS staff.

Discharge Notice and Appeals

Participants being discharged from HEARTS will receive a written notice. The notice shall include the date of discharge and the reason(s) for discharge.

For participants receiving TANF all eligibility requirements under the Work First New Jersey Manual will apply to eligibility for TANF cash and Emergency Assistance benefits. For TANF participant families the following discharge policies and procedures will apply to discharge from the HEARTS program and shelter unit. The following discharge policies and procedures will apply to all non-TANF eligible participants.

Participants being discharged due to the receipt of housing assistance shall receive a 30-day notice. This provides the participant 30 days to locate and sign a lease for permanent housing. Participants who fail to locate permanent housing within the 30 days may request a 30-day extension. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis considering the individual family circumstances. No more than 2 extensions will be considered. The Housing Navigator's recommendations for the approval or denial of an extension past the 30 days will carry substantial weight in making this decision.

Participants who, due to an increase in household income, no longer meet the financial eligibility threshold established for admission into the HEARTS program shall receive a 30 day discharge notice.

Participants who fail to locate housing within the 30 days may request one 30-day extension. No more than 2 extensions will be considered. The recommendations of the Housing Navigator will be the primary determinant in the approval or denial of the extension request.

Participants being discharged for failure to attend and actively participate in weekly housing permanency planning meetings or chronically violate HEARTS rules will be given a ten-day notice.

Participants being discharged for criminal activity, any acts of violence or aggression towards others or property, or behaviors that pose a risk of harm to self, others, or property will be discharged from HEARTS immediately.

Participants may request an appeal of any discharge decision in writing, within 10 days of the issuance of the notice. Appeals will be heard within 5 business days of their request. For participants who are being immediately discharged and have requested an appeal the appeal will be heard within 2 business days. The participant will then have the opportunity to meet with the Social Work Supervisor and present their reasons as to why there should not be a discharge from HEARTS. The Social Work Supervisor will render a decision on the appeal within 5 days. For those immediately discharged a decision will be rendered the following business day.

Participants who are not satisfied with the results of the appeal may request a review of the Social Work Supervisor's decision in writing within 5 days of the appeal decision. The BCBSS Assistant Administrative Supervisor of Social Work will then review the participants file, the reasons for discharge, the record of the appeal meeting, and the Social Work Supervisor's decision and render a decision within 5 business days of the request for the review. This is the final decision regarding discharge from the HEARTS program. Participants who are also TANF recipients retain the right to a Fair Hearing for EA eligibility issues. The time lines and process for Fair hearings is separate from the criteria for discharge and the appeals process for participation in HEARTS.

Consequences of a Failure to Abide by Final Discharge Decision

Participants who fail to relinquish their assigned unit on the date of discharge will be denied access to the unit and to the building. Their property will be packed and stored at HEARTS for no more than 30 days or until they have the ability to retrieve it, whichever comes first. If the property is not removed within 30 days, the property will be considered to be abandoned and may be disposed of by HEARTS. Participants remaining in the building after their discharge date shall be considered to be trespassing and appropriate legal action may be utilized.