

Overcoming Screening Barriers

Most properties use screening criteria as part of the application process. The screening criteria are part of a written document that lists the requirements each applicant must meet to be approved to live at the property. A landlord or property manager typically gathers information about prior housing history, evictions, credit, and criminal or legal history. If you have past experiences that might create a barrier to getting approved for housing, there are many ways to address potential barriers before you apply.

ADDRESS OPEN CASES

If you have an open warrant for any kind of offense, you will be automatically denied by properties that use screening criteria. It is best to wait to apply until after you have removed the warrant. For legal assistance, contact Legal Aid Services of Oregon at (503) 224-4086 Monday through Friday, 9 am – noon or 1 pm – 5 pm.

PAY OFF PROPERTY DEBT

Money you owe to a former landlord may cause your application to be denied. You can pay off your debt in full or set up a payment plan and begin making regular payments. Be sure to save proof of the payments you make such as receipts, or a written log of the date and amount of each payment.

COMPLETE A “RENT WELL” CLASS

Rent Well is a 15-hour tenant education class that usually takes 3-6 weeks to complete. It is designed to help people identify their specific housing barriers, learn tools to be good renters, and create connections with potential landlords once they complete the course. For more information, you can contact Transition Projects at 503-515-1328 or go to www.rentwell.org

GATHER LETTERS OF SUPPORT

If you have a good support system, you can gather letters of support from people who know you well and can vouch for you as a potential tenant. Letters from social workers, therapists, medical providers, counselors, parole officers, and pastors can be especially helpful.

DEVELOP A GOOD LANDLORD REFERENCE

If you have not rented for a while or you do not have a good reference from your last housing, you may need to develop a good reference in short-term or temporary housing that will help you get approved for permanent housing. You can develop a good reference in a shelter, in shared housing, or in low-barrier housing by following the rules or rental agreement and paying rent on time. It is helpful to get a written letter of reference whenever possible, and to have your reference include their phone number or other contact information.

For updates or changes to this information please contact Northwest Pilot Project at (503) 227-5605 or housing@nwpilotproject.org