

## SMART 1: Housing Transition

### Facilitator Manual for Module 1: Preparing for the Housing Interview

- This facilitator manual provides the narration text of each module along with facilitator notes indicating when discussions and activities should be carried out.
- **Facilitator notes are highlighted in red font.**
- Facilitators are encouraged to pause the module, especially where indicated (**PAUSE**) to facilitate discussion and/or activity.
- Ideas for activities and role play scenarios are included in the Appendix.

#### **Slide 1: Title Slide**

#### **Slide 2: Supporting Many to Achieve Residential Transition (SMART-1)**

- The Supporting Many to Achieve Residential Transition Program (SMART-1) has been designed to provide you with the skills needed to successfully achieve and maintain independent housing. This program consists of six 1-hour modules covering the following topics: Preparing for the Housing Interview, Apartment Living, Being a Good Tenant and Neighbor, Community Living, Managing Money, and Maintaining Health and Wellbeing. Each module has been designed to be interactive through the use of group discussions, role plays, and other exercises. Active participation in each module will better prepare you for transition to residential housing.

#### **Slide 3: Before the Interview**

- Welcome to module one of the SMART Program. In this module, you will learn about the skills needed to prepare for the housing interview. This module will cover what you should do before, during, and after the interview.
- Let's begin by discussing what to do before your housing interview.

#### **Slide 4: Group Discussion**

- How many people have been interviewed at some point in their life? (**PAUSE for group participation**) An interview serves several purposes that we will examine in more detail on the next slide.
- Let's brainstorm some views about the interviewing process. What are some words that come to mind when you hear the word "interview?" (**PAUSE to allow participants to name several words that come to mind when they hear the word "interview."**)
  - (**Possible answers: Nervous, anxious, pressure, impression, weaknesses, strengths, communication, success, past, future**)
- Those are great association words. Preparing for an interview can seem overwhelming at first. However, there are many things that you can do before an interview in order to feel better prepared. By the end of this module, you will have several tips on how to prepare for a successful housing interview.

### ***Slide 5: Goals of an Interview***

- There are many reasons why interviewing is important. An interview allows you to introduce yourself and make a positive first impression. It is your chance to show the interviewer that you have prepared in advance, and that you value the opportunity that has been presented to you. An interview is a good time to ask any questions that you have prepared in advance. Most importantly, interviews can help you plan for the future, and establish clear steps for moving forward.

### ***Slide 6: Anxiety Before an Interview***

- It is common to experience anxiety before an interview. Many people feel nervous before having an interview even when they have prepared beforehand. Like many other individuals, you may feel anxious in the hours leading up to your interview. It is important to recognize that feeling nervous is common, and it does not mean that you are unprepared for your interview.
- Instead, you can use feelings of anxiety to motivate you before an interview. On the day of the interview, reviewing tips for a successful experience is a great way to overcome anxiety. This can give you a boost of confidence and it can minimize any doubts that you have about your readiness. It can allow you to remember that you are prepared for the interview and remind you that you have the tools to succeed.
- Does anyone have any questions about interviewing? (*PAUSE to address any questions*)

### ***Slide 7: Appropriate Attire for an Interview***

- Let's discuss appropriate attire for an interview. In preparation for your interview, you should select attire that reflects a strong interest in becoming a candidate for housing. Remember, everything that you do and say during the initial interview makes an impression on the interviewer. You should decide on clothing to wear at least one to two weeks in advance to give you ample time to prepare.

### ***Slide 8: Appropriate Attire for an Interview (cont'd)***

- Casual, everyday attire should not be worn during your interview. Some examples of clothing not to wear to an interview include T-Shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, baggy pants, and sneakers.

### ***Slide 9: Appropriate Attire for an Interview (cont'd)***

- Instead, wear formal business attire. A collared shirt and tie and slacks are strongly recommended. Check with your case manager to see if suits are required. Otherwise, a dress shirt and nice pair of jeans can be worn during the interview. Stay away from any bright colors or patterns that would distract the interviewer. Instead, choose clothing that allows you to feel comfortable and present yourself in a professional manner.

**Slide 10: Questions to Prepare for an Interview**

- At the end of your interview, you will most likely be asked if you have any questions for the interviewer. This is the right time to ask questions that are related to housing policies and guidelines as a candidate for housing.
- Some questions that you can typically ask during your interview include the following:
  - What is the rent? What is the curfew? Does the unit come furnished? Are there any supportive services offered for residents?

**Slide 11: Questions to Prepare for an Interview (cont'd)**

- There are certain questions that you should avoid asking during the housing interview. One question that you should not ask is “Can my girlfriend or wife stay with me?” Instead, it is more appropriate to ask “Can I have guests?” or “What is the visitation policy?”
- Remember to speak with your case manager to decide on appropriate questions to ask at the end of your interview. It is considered a good practice to come with your questions prepared on paper to demonstrate your interest and preparation for the interview.

**Slide 12: Body Language and Non-Verbal Behavior**

- In preparation for your interview, it is important to consider your body language and non-verbal behavior.
- Your facial expression and gestures during the interview should reflect your interest in the interview process. During the interview, you should avoid raising your eyebrows, looking down, and appearing uninterested or bored.

**Slide 13: Body Language and Non-Verbal Behavior (cont'd)**

- Some things that you should do during the interview include making eye contact and relaxing your body. Making frequent eye contact with your interviewer demonstrates that you are confident and prepared. Fumbling with your hands and fidgeting in your seat can portray anxiety and distract the interviewer from your responses. Relaxing your body will allow you to clear your mind and communicate with your interviewer honestly.
- Be conscious of your posture and movement during your interview. Sit up straight and find a comfortable position that you can maintain during the interview. Once again, try to relax your body and limit distracting movements in order to communicate effectively with the interviewer.

**Slide 14: Personal Hygiene**

- Another important thing to remember before going on an interview is good personal hygiene. Making a good impression is important, and this includes taking care of your body. Some things that you should do before an interview include taking a shower, shaving, brushing your teeth, combing your hair, trimming your fingernails, and washing your hands. Start early to give yourself enough time to prepare for the interview. Make sure that your shoelaces are firmly tied and that your shirt is tucked in.

- Looking presentable is an easy way to make a good impression on the interviewer and it can boost your self-confidence before the interview.

**Slide 15: Avoid Using Drugs and Alcohol**

- You should avoid using drugs or alcohol before your housing interview. Can you think of any reasons why you should not use drugs or alcohol before an interview? *(PAUSE for participant responses)*
  - *(Possible responses: You could become disoriented, the interviewer could smell alcohol on your breath, you could lose your housing opportunity)*
- Some individuals think that taking drugs or drinking alcohol before an interview can help to calm nerves. However, using drugs or alcohol is one of the worst ways to prepare for an interview. It is one way that you can sabotage your own interview, which is something that we will discuss in more detail later. Taking even a small amount of drugs or alcohol can cause you to shift your focus from answering questions accurately to hiding the evidence. By engaging in this behavior before an interview, you are risking your opportunity of getting housing. Instead, review the ways that you have prepared for the housing interview and remain calm and positive about the experience.

**Slider 16: Work with Your Case Manager**

- It is recommended that you check with your case manager to make sure that all additional paperwork is complete. Let's move on to discuss the role of good speaking skills during an interview.

**Side 17: Role Playing Your Public Speaking Skills**

- We will now view a video clip with tips for preparing for a successful interview. Making a good first impression and the use of public speaking skills during an interview will be reviewed in this section.
- *(see video)*

**Slide 18: Group Activity 1: Role Playing Your Public Speaking Skills (cont'd)**

- These tips, which build upon things we have reviewed earlier, will prepare you well for the housing interview. Let us review the suggestions presented in the video regarding good public speaking skills. Before your interview, keep in mind that your choice of words, the tone of your voice, speaking clearly, not mumbling, and avoiding the use of whisker words can all have a positive impact on your communication with the interviewer.
- Remember to review your public speaking skills before the interview. Practicing good interviewing techniques will help you to feel more prepared for the experience.
- We will now practice these interviewing techniques with a friend, as suggested in the video. Turn to the person next to you and use the script provided to practice with a partner.
- *(see p. 10)*

**Slide 19: Preparing for the Housing Interview**

- Role playing the housing interview with your case manager or a friend can be a useful practice for preparing for the housing interview. Did you find this exercise helpful?  
*(PAUSE for participant responses)*
- If you found that you had difficulty preparing responses or keeping some of the interview skills in mind, try pausing before answering the question. It is ok to stop for a few seconds before you answer the interviewer. Collecting your thoughts after a question has been asked can eliminate the urge to answer right away and allow you to prepare an appropriate response.

**Slide 20: How to Reduce Anxiety before an Interview**

- In the beginning of the module, we discussed anxiety as a common feeling that many people share about the interview process. Now that you have received several tips about having a successful interview, let's explore some ways to lower your anxiety levels before your housing interview.

**Slide 21: Methods to Reduce Stress**

- There are many ways to reduce your anxiety and stress levels before an interview. Every individual experiences anxiety differently, and some techniques will be more effective than others. Some examples of stress reduction techniques are engaging in leisure activity, using positive self-talk, listening to soothing music, or talking with a friend.
- For some people, preparing for the stressful experience itself can also be an effective way to lower anxiety levels. In other words, coming prepared with interview questions and thinking positively can help to shape a good interviewing experience.

**Slide 22: Group Activity 2**

- We have discussed the idea of using relaxation of the body and mind as a helpful practice to prepare for your housing interview. Now, we invite you to participate in a brief meditation exercise.
- *(see p. 11)*

**Slide 23: During the Interview**

- Now that you know what to do before the housing interview, let's discuss what you should do during the interview.

**Slide 24: Group Discussion**

- Let's take a minute to brainstorm.
- What are some important things to do on the day of your housing interview?
  - *(PAUSE for participant responses)*
  - *(Possible answers: Eat a good breakfast/lunch, Wear appropriate attire, Stay relaxed, Leave early for your interview, Shower, Brush hair, Brush teeth, Shave)*

### **Slide 25: Four Things to Remember During Your Interview**

- There are four key things that you should remember during your interview. They are: Arrive ahead of time for your appointment; Overcome anxiety; Advocate for yourself; and Stay positive and calm.

### **Slide 26: Arrive Ahead of Time for Your Appointment**

- On the day of your interview you should arrive early for your scheduled appointment time.
- Why should you give yourself extra time to arrive for your appointment early?
  - *(PAUSE for participant responses)*
  - *(Possible answers: Delays in public transportation, Traffic Jams, Allows for extra time in case you get lost)*
- Being early for your appointment gives you time to collect your thoughts and calm your nerves before the start of your interview.
- Also, if you were to show up late, the interviewer might think that you are not truly interested in the housing opportunity.

### **Slide 27: Overcome Anxiety**

- On the day of your interview, you may have to overcome a sense of anxiety. It is important to realize that it is perfectly normal to feel anxious or nervous. These feelings are a natural part of life.
- What might be some things that you will be fearful about when you leave the shelter?
  - *(PAUSE for participant responses.)*
  - *(Possible answers: Living on your own, Having to pay bills, Being tempted to use drugs or alcohol, Handling symptoms on your own, Taking medications on your own Meeting strangers, Cleaning and cooking for yourself, Moving to an unfamiliar neighborhood)*
- The idea of leaving the shelter might bring about fears of living on your own, especially if it has been a while since you have lived independently. You might also be afraid of leaving a familiar place like the shelter and going someplace completely new to you.
- All of these feelings are normal; however, it is important to use this fear to your advantage. Embrace the unknown as a challenge and realize that by facing your fears you are moving towards success.

### **Slide 28: Advocate for Yourself**

- The third thing to remember during your interview is that it is important to be your own advocate. You must be able to show the interviewer why you are deserving of the housing placement.
- How can you show the interviewer that you are the right person for the housing placement?
  - *(PAUSE for participant responses)*
  - *(Possible answers: Stay attentive, Don't be argumentative, Give positive answers, Don't interrupt the interviewer, Don't slouch in your seat)*

### **Slide 29: Advocate for Yourself (cont'd)**

- Promoting yourself as the right housing candidate first requires that you realize that some people might have prejudiced views towards people who are homeless. By being respectful and courteous you will be able to present yourself in a way that shows that you will be a good tenant.
- Also, it is important to maintain a positive attitude. If you come into the interview knowing that you are already a success, it will translate into your body language and facial expressions.
- Additionally, when describing your abilities it is important to focus on the things that you can do, rather than dwell on things that you can't do. When speaking with the interviewer, you should avoid using the word can't at all times

### **Slide 30: Stay Positive and Calm**

- No matter what happens during the interview process, it is important to try to stay positive and calm.
- Can anyone remember the stress management technique that we reviewed earlier?
  - *(PAUSE for participant responses)*
  - *(Possible answer: Progressive Muscle Relaxation)*
- If you should start to feel nervous or feel yourself dwelling on negative words, use those stress management techniques to calm yourself down.
- Another tip to remember during your interview is to use appropriate eye contact and body language when talking with the interviewer. Maintaining eye contact with your interviewer will help to show that you respect him or her. Sitting without slouching also shows that you are interested in the outcome of the interview.

### **Slide 31: Stay Positive and Calm (cont'd)**

- It is also important that you do not sabotage your interview. Sabotaging the interview involves purposefully doing things that will make the interviewer see you in a negative light. In what ways, can you sabotage the interview?
  - *(PAUSE for participant responses)*
  - *(Possible answers: Cursing during the interview, Fidgeting or appearing preoccupied, Arriving for the interview while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, Skipping your normal doses of medication, Arriving late, Walking out of the interview, Avoid asking questions about whether or not your significant other can stay with you)*
- At the end of your interview, be sure to thank the interviewer. This helps to show the interviewer that you will be a considerate tenant and will help to leave a lasting, positive impression.

### **Slide 32: Group Activity 3: Role Play Exercise**

- Now that you've learned what to do during the interview, let's practice those skills during a role play exercise. *(see p. 13)*

**Slide 33: After the Interview**

- Now that you know what to do before and during the housing interview, let's review how you should handle the period after the housing interview.
- The initial period after your interview will be spent on waiting for a decision.
- It might be a while before you hear about the outcome of the interview, so it is important for you to stay positive during this period. You can do this by practicing your stress management techniques.

**Slide 34: Group Exercise 4**

- Earlier we practiced progressive muscle relaxation and learned how that activity can help to relieve feelings of stress and anxiety prior to the day of your interview. Now, let's practice a different stress management technique called Controlled Breathing.
- *(see p. 14)*

**Slide 35: What to do if the Decision is Negative**

- Don't be discouraged if the decision is negative. Use the opportunity to problem solve with your case manager about other options and ways to improve for the next interview.

**Slide 36: What to do if the Decision is Positive**

- If the outcome of the housing interview is positive, then you can begin to prepare for your move to supported housing.
- Remember to thank your case manager and the other staff members before leaving the shelter. Say goodbye to everyone at the shelter who has provided support, including staff and clients alike.

**Slide 37: Returning to the Shelter for Refueling Visits**

- You can always re-visit the shelter in the future for refueling.

**Slide 38: Presentation Review: Before the Interview**

- Before we conclude with module one, let's review the topics that we covered.
- Before your housing interview, you should do the following things: Prepare ahead of time; Select appropriate attire; Engage in good personal hygiene; Avoid using drugs and alcohol; Meet with your case manager; Practice public speaking skills; and Use stress management techniques

**Slide 39: Presentation Review: During the Interview**

- During your housing interview, you should strive to accomplish the following items: Arrive ahead of time for your appointment; Overcome anxiety; Advocate for yourself; and Stay positive and calm.

***Slide 40: Presentation Review: After the Interview***

- Lastly, after you have completed the housing interview, you should stay positive and use stress management techniques while waiting for a decision. Meet with your case manager if the decision is negative. And if the decision is positive, prepare yourself to move into housing.

***Slide 41: Congratulations!***

- Congratulations! You've completed module 1 of the SMART program and now you have the basic skills needed for interviewing!

## APPENDIX

### Role Play Activity

#### Directions:

Perform the following role play with a partner, with one partner as the interviewer and the other partner as the interviewee. After the role play exercise, share your experience with the group.

#### Group Exercise 1: Role Playing Before the Housing Interview

- Pair up with a partner.
  
- Turn towards your partner and sit up straight with your back to the chair. Try to maintain good posture without slouching.
  
- Practice greeting your partner with a firm handshake and good eye contact as if you are being interviewed, with your partner as the interviewer.
  
- Now, answer the following questions. Think carefully about your word choice, and remember to enunciate your words and avoid whicker words, as demonstrated in the video clip.
  - “Have you ever lived independently?”
  - “Do you get along well with others?”
  - “What would you do if you had a problem with one of your neighbors?”
  
- Now, switch roles and ask the following questions. Once again, think carefully about your word choice, and remember to enunciate your words and avoid whicker words, as demonstrated in the video clip.
  - “Do you have problems with money management? What are your strategies for saving money?”
  - “What are your methods for keeping your apartment clean?”
  - “Are you a smoker? What would you do if a neighbor complained about cigarette smoke?”
  
- Briefly discuss your partner’s performance after the exercise.

## Stress Management Techniques

**Directions:** Everyone is encouraged to participate in the following group exercises. By practicing the skills in these exercises, you will be better equipped to handle anxiety provoking situations during the housing interview process, as well as other situations in your daily life.

*Note: Eliminate all possible outside distractions (e.g., close the door, turn off cell phones) before beginning this exercise.*

### Group Exercise 2: Practicing a Stress Management Technique

- This stress management technique involves using a process called Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercises. This process allows you to relax by gradually releasing tension in your muscles. This technique can be used to reduce anxiety that may occur in a variety of stressful situations.
- To begin sit up straight in your chair. Place your feet flat on the floor and rest your arms on your thighs.
- Close your eyes. It is alright to keep your eyes open if closing them makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Take a deep breath and count to 3 in your head. Hold the breath momentarily. Now exhale while counting to 3 in your head.
- Take another deep breath and count to 3 in your head. Hold the breath momentarily. Now exhale again while counting to 3 in your head.
- Breathe in again while counting to 3. Feel your stomach rise. Exhale again while counting to 3.
- Feel the tension beginning to leave your body. Now breathe normally.
- Feel yourself sinking lower into your chair. Continue to breathe in and out.
- Focus on your breathing.
- Now notice your feet. Begin to rotate them clockwise. Now flex your feet up and down. Remember to continue to breathe.
- Release all of the tension in your feet.
- Now notice your thighs. Release all of the tension in your thighs. Breathe in to a count of 3 and exhale to a count of three.
- Now release the tension in your buttocks. Breathe in and breathe out.
- Relax your stomach muscles. Breathe in to a count of three and breathe out.
- Relax the muscles in your chest. Breathe in. Now breathe out.
- Relax your hands. Feel the tension leave your body with every exhalation. Breathe in to a count of three. Exhale to a count of three.
- Now relax your arms. Relax your shoulders. Breathe in. Exhale.
- Relax the muscles in your jaw. Feel your jaw begin to relax.
- Relax the muscles in your face. Relax the muscles in your forehead. Continue to breathe in and out to a count of 3.
- Now let's tense and relax individual muscle groups throughout your body, starting with your feet. For each muscle group, tense the muscle, hold the tension and then release

the tension quickly and completely. Do not release the tension gradually. Focus your attention on how the muscle feels when it is tensed and when it is relaxed.

- Let's begin with your feet. Tense the muscle in your feet by pointing your toes and curling them. Notice the tension in your feet. Keep the muscles tight and feel the tension. Hold it and relax. You should feel the tension leaving your feet.
- Now let's move up to your calves. You can increase the tension by pointing your toes up towards the ceiling. Notice the tension in your calves. Hold it. Keep the muscles tight and feel the tension. Now relax. Feel the tension leaving your calves.
- Let's move to your thighs. Stiffen the thighs and feel the tension in the muscles on the top of your thigh tighten. Keep the muscle tight. Now relax.
- The muscles in your entire leg are now relaxed. Your lower body should feel relaxed.
- Next, tighten your stomach muscles. Make them tighter. Notice the tension and hold it. Now relax. Remember to breathe in and out. Feel the tension leaving your stomach
- Let's move to the muscles in your chest, shoulders and upper back. We will tighten and relax several of these muscles together while holding your breath.
- Take a deep breath and hold it. Now pull your shoulder blades together by pulling your shoulders back, trying to make them touch. Hold it. Breathe out and relax.
- Breathe in to a count of three and out to a count of three.
- Now tense the muscles in your hands and forearms by making a fist. Make your fist tighter. Notice the tension. Hold it. Now relax. Feel the tension leaving your hands and arms.
- Now let's move to your biceps. Tense your biceps by bending your elbows toward you in a curling motion. Hold the tension. Now relax. Feel the tension flowing out of your biceps.
- Continue to breathe in and out.
- We are now going to relax the muscles in your face. Focus your attention to your forehead. Lift your eyebrows as high as they can go. Hold the tension. Relax. Feel the tension rushing out as you breathe.
- Focus your attention to your eyes and cheeks. Now squint your eyes tightly and at the same time wrinkle your nose. Hold the tension. Now relax.
- Next focus your attention on your jaw and mouth. Clench your teeth together and pull the corners of your mouth back. Hold the tension. Relax.
- Now we are going to move towards your neck muscles. Tense the muscles in your neck by pulling your chin down towards your chest. Hold it. And relax.
- Continue to relax.
- Breathe in and out. Focus on your breathing. Breathe in to a count of three. Exhale to a count of three.
- With each breath, feel your body becoming more and more relaxed.
- When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

## Role Play Activity

### Directions:

Two participants will enact one of the following role plays. In each scenario, one person will be the interviewer and the other person will be the interviewee. The remaining group members will observe the role play and provide feedback about the correct and incorrect ways to handle each situation.

After the completion of the role play, ask the following questions to the observers:

- 1) How do you think they did?
- 2) What went well in this scenario?
- 3) What would you have done differently?

If time permits, you may perform additional role plays.

### Group Exercise 3: Role Play: What should you do during the interview?

#### **Role Play Option A:**

The interviewer asks, "Tell me about your substance use history and your plans to remain abstinent." Practice answering the question.

#### **Role Play Option B:**

You have questions about the rent, cost of utilities, visitor policies, and furnishings in the apartment, but you are afraid to ask and your interviewer wants to move on to another topic. Practice asking these questions.

#### **Role Play Option C:**

The interviewer asks if you have any employment goals. In the past, you have had trouble maintaining a steady job for more than 3 months at a time. Practice speaking about your employment goals.

#### **Role Play Option D:**

The interviewer asks about your medical history and if you are capable of managing your symptoms and medications. You have a diagnosis of major depressive disorder. Practice speaking about the skills you have learned to understand your symptoms and regularly take your medication.

#### **Role Play Option E:**

Your interviewer asks if you have ever lost your housing because of drug and alcohol use. You don't want to answer the question because this has happened in the past. Practice speaking about the skills you have learned to avoid substance use to maintain your housing.

## Stress Management Exercise

**Directions:** Let's review stress management techniques by participating in a brief exercise on controlled breathing.

### Group Exercise 4: Practicing a Stress Management Technique

This activity will allow you to practice controlled breathing. Before we begin, try to find a comfortable sitting position. Take a few moments to relax your body and prepare for this breathing experience. If you feel comfortable enough, close your eyes now. Let's shift our attention from our thoughts and focus now on our breathing. Take a deep breath in – and release. Lean your head from side to side, lowering your left ear toward your left shoulder, and then your right ear toward your right shoulder. Lift your head into a neutral position and continue to breathe slowly in and slowly out. Try not to let your thoughts wander, and just control your breathing, feeling the air entering through your nose and exiting through your mouth. Put your hand over your chest, feeling it rise and fall as you take a few more deep breaths. Let's focus on our breathing for a few more seconds. Now that you are relaxed, keep your eyes closed for a few more seconds. Open your eyes when you are ready.