



Navigating Housing Screening Criteria for Newcomers

During the process when landlords and housing providers screen rental applicants, they often require documentation that newcomers typically do not have upon arrival in the United States. To decrease this barrier to entry, this resource, created by Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) in partnership with Switchboard, outlines alternative documentation that landlords and housing providers should expect (and accept) during the screening process. Resettlement practitioners can refer to this section and share it with landlords and property managers as they submit rental applications. This resource also provides a sample Letter of Support for Rental Agreement, which can be tailored to explain your organization's capacity to financially support the newcomer applicant.

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Alternative Documentation that Meets Screening Criteria

The following table outlines types of documentation that newcomers may use in place of the typical documentation rental applicants provide to satisfy landlords' screening criteria.

Comparable Documentation		
Screening Criteria	Typical Documentation	Comparable Newcomer Documentation
Proof of identity	Driver's license or state ID	I-94 card
Ability to pay	Credit report	Letter of Support from resettlement agency
Ability to pay	Income verification	Letter of Support from resettlement agency
Criminal history	Background check	I-94 card
Rental history	References	Letter of Support from resettlement agency

Details on Alternative Documentation

- An **I-94 card** is the Department of Homeland Security arrival/departure record issued to newcomers admitted to the U.S. who are adjusting their status while stateside or extending their stay. Because many newcomers do not have a passport due to fleeing their home country, the I-94 and a travel document with their photo may be their only form of ID upon arrival. An I-94 can be printed online.
- A **Letter of Support** is a **non-legally binding document** that outlines the financial support the refugee or other newcomer will receive from a resettlement agency and state or federal agencies. This letter shows the ability to pay and also serves as a reference check. The next page of this resource contains a Letter of Support template. As noted above, if necessary, resettlement practitioners should provide landlords with a Letter of Support during the rental screening process.

If you or a landlord/property manager you're working with have further questions about screening criteria for newcomers, you can refer to [HUD's FAQ for Housing Providers](#) or schedule a [Technical Assistance session](#) with [Refugee Housing Solutions](#).

Sample Letter of Support for Rental Agreement

Disclaimer: The following template is a sample. It can be used as a starting point in developing your own template that explains your organization's capacity to financially support newcomers in rental agreements. This Letter of Support is not legally binding and is not legal advice.

Subject: Letter of Support for Rental Agreement

Dear [Landlord's Name],

I am writing this letter to provide assurance on behalf of [Newcomer's Name] regarding their rental application for [Property Address]. [Newcomer's Name] is a refugee and is currently seeking a safe and secure place to call home.

I understand that, as a landlord, you may have concerns regarding the ability of a refugee to meet their rental obligations. I would like to assure you that [Newcomer's Name] is a responsible individual who is committed to fulfilling their rental responsibilities in a timely manner. Further, [Newcomer's Name] is coming to this lease with the support of [Your Organization], which will assist them throughout their tenancy.

Terms of Support:

The following are the terms of support that [Your Organization] will provide [Newcomer's Name] during their tenancy:

[In this section, outline your agency's capacity to support the newcomer family, financially or otherwise. Possible examples of support:

- 1. I, [Your Name], will aid and support [Newcomer's Name] with respect to their rental obligations for the property located at [Property Address], during the entire term of their tenancy.*
- 2. If [Newcomer's Name] is unable to fulfill their rental obligations due to unforeseen circumstances, I agree to assume responsibility for any unpaid rent with our organization's rental guarantee fund.*
- 3. To prepare [Newcomer's Name] for tenancy in the United States, [Organization] will provide [relevant training on tenancy, job readiness, house maintenance, and English classes].*

Please note that this Letter of Support is intended to provide reassurance to you as the landlord and does not relieve [Newcomer's Name] from their obligations under the lease agreement. [Newcomer's Name] will still be held responsible for fulfilling all the terms and conditions specified in the lease agreement.

I kindly request that you consider [Newcomer's Name]'s application favorably, taking into account this additional commitment of support. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the provided contact details. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Email]

[Your Phone Number]

[Your Organization]