

What is the Linkages Program?

Helping People with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) Get “A Home of Their Own”

Linkages is a Permanent Supportive Housing Program that provides rent-assisted housing and support services to adults (and their families) who are homeless or precariously housed. The head of household may have a severe mental health diagnosis or a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance use disorders. The purpose of the program is to provide extra help with your housing and any health conditions you need assistance with.

What is Permanent Supportive Housing?

It is permanent housing with indefinite rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist people who are homeless with a disability achieve housing stability. That means:

- There is no time limit on your housing, but you do have to renew your lease agreement when it ends if you want to stay housed.
- In this program you are placed in an individual apartment—not group housing.
- Support services are not mandatory but monthly house checks are required to help prevent eviction.

What are Supportive Services?

Supportive Services mean you get a case worker (case manager) or sometimes a team of people to help you find, get, and keep housing. The support from your case worker can help you adjust to your new housing and can also help with any physical, mental, or substance use issues you might want to work on.

- A case manager will provide support in finding, obtaining, and keeping your housing.
- Support services help you live on your own, independently, as much as possible.
- Case managers will help you solve problems that arise with your health or housing.

Who Oversees the Linkages Program?

In New Mexico:

The Linkages Permanent Supportive Housing Program is directed by the Mortgage Finance Authority (they're responsible for providing support to the Housing Authority) and the Human Services Division/Behavioral Health Services Division which provides resources to your case workers / managers at the Supportive Service Agency.

In Las Cruces:

The Housing Authority (HA) is Mesilla Valley Community of Hope. They manage the housing vouchers. The two Supportive Service Agencies (SSA's) are La Clinica de Familia and Amador Health Center. They direct case managers to help you with your housing needs.

How Do I Qualify?

- Diagnosis of severe mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in functional impairment. May also have a dual diagnosis of substance use disorder

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- Proof of homelessness or precarious housing
- Proof of extremely low income (30% below Area Median Income)

What Keeps Me from Entering the Program?

- Registered on Sex Offender List
- Convicted of Methamphetamine production

What is the Process to Enter the Program?

Step 1: Register as a patient at Amador Health Center then proceed to **Step 2.**

Step 2: Fill out an intake packet with a case manager at Amador Health Center. The case worker will help you to complete the application, verify your homelessness, and verify your severe mental illness, or qualifying disability.

Step 3: Once you fill out your initial application, you go to the Community of Hope. There you will fill out your Certificate of Linkages Eligibility Form and Tenant responsibility Agreement. Your Community of Hope case manager will help you calculate your rent amount and tell you how much you pay for housing and how much the agency will pay for housing.

Step 4: Find your housing. Both case workers at either agency can help you find your housing unit. You can even recommend one you have in mind. Your housing must meet Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards. When you find a place, your HA case manager will inspect the property. If it qualifies, they will then help you sign the lease agreement.

Step 5: Move In! We understand that moving into a new place is a big adjustment. Both agencies are available to support you with the move in. Primarily, the Housing Agency has access to vehicles that can transport furniture or other valuable items.

Keeping Your Housing:

- If you make \$0 income, the housing agency pays your rent in full at fair market value.
- If you gain income through social security, disability, or employment, you may pay no more than 30% of your monthly income for housing assistance.
- Your Supportive Service Agency (SSA) and Housing Agency (HA) can help you make sure you pay rent and utilities on time.
 - If you're comfortable, ask about putting your bills on auto-pay each month.
 - You may also have a representative payee to assist with budgeting.
- Both agencies can help you communicate with your landlord if you have a problem or need something fixed.
- Your SSA case worker can make sure you have access to help if you are in crisis.
- Your SSA case worker conducts a monthly home visit with you. More often if needed

Expectations:

- You may pay no more than 30% of income to rent if you have money and qualify
- You are expected to apply to Sec. 8 through the Mesilla Valley Housing Authority during the open enrollment period. Your case manager can help you with this.
- Respect your neighbors and follow the landlord's property rules
- Communicate with your case manager at least once a month

Tips for Housing Success:

- Maintain a clean housing unit
- Communicate regularly with case workers
- Limit who can stay in your apartment and for how long
- Respectfully notify the landlord if you need something fixed
- Attend medical or mental health appointments regularly if needed

What Can My SSA Case Worker Help Me With?

Your Supportive Services case worker can help you with whatever goals you want to work on. You get to develop your own program! Some common areas to focus on may be:

Health Care

- **Physical Health:** Your case worker can help you register at a clinic, schedule appointments, access specialty care, set you up with home health through your insurance, and sign up for Medicaid Centennial Care if you need it
- **Mental Health:** Your case worker can help you find a counselor, set up therapy appointments, work on refilling or changing your psychiatric medications, etc.
- **Substance Use and Recovery Support:** Your case worker can help you enroll into a recovery program for substance use or find a rehab facility that fits your needs.
- **Crisis Planning:** You can come up with a crisis plan to avoid mental health crises or access support after regular business hours. If you are in crisis during the week you can contact your case manager or call 911 if you have a phone.

Income

- Your case manager can help you apply for Social Security or Disability. It is a long process that involves requesting past medical records. Making current doctor's appointments and attending them can help with your case. The Amador Health Center has a SOAR (SSI/SSD, Outreach, Access, & Recovery) Specialist to assist in applying for these federal income supports.
- Case managers can direct you to employment resources and help you build a resume or conduct job coaching.
- Case managers can help you apply for Cash Assistance or LIHEAP through the Human Services Department.

Education

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- Your case manager can help you get back into school or enroll for the first time
- Help you access high school transcripts
- Help you enroll in the Dept. of Vocational Rehabilitation Services or Workforce Solutions

Vital Documents

- Help you obtain your Birth Certificate
- Help you obtain State ID or Driver's License
- Help you replace your social security card

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Specialist Assistance

- If you have a mental illness and/or physical disability you may be eligible for SOAR specialist assistance
- The SOAR specialist will help you apply for disability
- If you qualify, it's faster than doing it on your own
- There is a higher success rate of your case getting accepted if you apply through a SOAR specialist
- SOAR specialist can also help you apply for Public Assistance such as Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Cash Assistance

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