

Texas Civil Commitment Office Housing Process and FAQ

Focus on Re-entry

The Texas Civil Commitment Office (TCCO) is committed to finding safe, affordable housing for clients entering Tier 5; however, this endeavor is not without significant challenges. TCCO has a staff person solely focused on re-entry planning and searching for housing. We have also applied for a grant to fund an additional staff person to focus full-time on re-entry planning.

Locating Willing Landlords

The difficulty in finding housing for TCCO's clients has increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic. While it has never been easy to locate housing, the number of locations willing to accept TCCO's clients has reduced greatly. Previously, we were able to locate privately owned apartment complexes that were willing to accept TCCO's clients; however, since 2020, many of those privately owned buildings have been sold to corporations or apartment companies. We have found that the majority of apartment complexes that are owned by corporations have policies that either expressly prohibit sex offenders from residing in the complex or have policies which would prohibit our clients. Additionally, privately owned rentals that are managed by a property management company will not accept registered sex offenders. In our experience, more privately-owned rentals are being managed by property management companies than there were previously.

The complexes that do allow some sex offenders, frequently prohibit high-risk sex offenders, sex offenders with more than one (1) conviction, or sex offenders who were convicted less than 99 years ago. Some complexes have offered to have their corporate offices review an application for a TCCO client, if the client is willing to pay a non-refundable high-risk fee, but ultimately still reject the client's application. When a TCCO client transitions to Tier 5 and completes his sex offender registration with local law enforcement, a postcard notification is sent out by the Department of Public Safety to all addresses in the surrounding area. For many corporate-owned and privately owned complexes, even if they are initially willing to consider renting to TCCO's clients, the postcard notification is a dealbreaker. Finally, even if a landlord is willing to rent to a TCCO client and understands the postcard notification process, we have had multiple experiences of landlords raising prices to unaffordable rates or changing their minds to rent to a different individual after TCCO has already vetted the property.

Other landlord requirements to consider are credit score thresholds, income requirements, rental history and eviction/broken lease prohibitions.

Other Housing Considerations

The primary concern when searching for housing is the safety and security of the client and the public. TCCO wants all clients to succeed while in Tier 5 and accordingly, selects housing locations that set the client up for the greatest chance of success. The residence cannot be in a child safety zone which is a 1,000-foot zone surrounding locations where children commonly gather which includes, but is not limited to: schools, playgrounds, daycares, youth centers, and public swimming pools. Some cities have ordinances with more strict child safety zone

requirements or that prohibit the number of sex offenders that can reside in a certain area. Additionally, a location that is not within a child safety zone but is otherwise high-risk, such as a high-crime area to include locations with known prostitution or drug trafficking, would not be an appropriate residence for a client due to the nature of the environment and risks posed by the surrounding activities.

Even if not in a child safety zone or other high-risk area, a residence may not be an appropriate location due to a lack of other resources in the area. The residence needs to be in a location where approved transportation is available and within a reasonable distance to employment opportunities, sex offender treatment, the local registration authority, medical services, and other necessary services such as mental health services. If the client is on parole or mandatory supervision, the client's parole officer will also need to approve the residence.

Process After Locating Housing

Upon location of an appropriate housing placement for a client, TCCO is required to submit a notification to the State Senator and State Representative for the area in which the residence is located. This notice must be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to the client moving.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can my loved one come live with me?
 - Whether a client can reside with a family member depends on a number of factors to include whether that family member is an approved chaperone, whether the client's victim resides in or visits the home, whether the home is an appropriate situation for the client, and the impact that residing with family will have on the client's treatment. All household members need to be prepared to hold the client accountable for maintaining compliance with all commitment requirements and must understand that the entire household would need to follow many of the client's commitment requirements such as no internet access, no streaming services/cable TV, no visitors without authorization, no alcohol or drugs in the home, and agree to unannounced daytime and nighttime home inspections by the case manager.
2. Can the client move out of state for Tier 5?
 - No, the client must remain in Texas while on civil commitment.
3. My loved one doesn't have child victims, does a child safety zone still apply?
 - Yes, a child safety zone applies to all clients.

If you have additional questions or suggestions for possible housing locations, please contact us by sending an email to: TCCO@tcco.texas.gov