

ADVISORY SERVICES

Providing services may be the most important part of the Relocation Assistance Section's duties. In order to accomplish the purpose of the program, which is to minimize the displacees' hardships, the providing of services is critical to the success of the program.

We need to remember that we are in the "people business". We know this program better than others, especially our displacees and we are obligated to be an advocate for our client.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

1. Persons occupying real property to be acquired for the project.

Most of the people who are provided with advisory services will be in this category as they are the occupants of the project site. This group may include owners and tenants of the residences, owners and tenants of businesses, farms or non-profit organizations or people who own personal property located within the area to be acquired as part of the project.

2. Persons occupying real property adjacent to that being acquired who are caused substantial economic injury by the acquisition.

The acquisition of property adjacent to a business may reduce its clientele significantly, limit accessibility or affect it in other ways which cause it substantial harm. While such businesses are not displaced persons and therefore, not entitled to business relocation payments, the Iowa Department of Transportation must make available relocation assistance advisory services to them. Examples of such services might include: consultation with them on space needs; current market conditions; traffic patterns or transportation as they relate to relocating the business; information regarding the availability of relocation sites; or, information about and referral to the Small Business Administration.

3. Persons who, as a result of the project, move or move personal property from real property not being acquired for the project.

For example, the owner of a business lives across the street from his business location and the business is being acquired but the residence is not. When the business is relocated to another location some distance from his residence, he or she chooses to move from the residence also, in order to remain close to the business location.

4. Persons who move into a property after its acquisition by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

In these cases, the tenant moves in with the knowledge that he or she will have to move out when the project requires. Although no relocation assistance payments will be made to assist with the move, these “short-term occupants” are entitled to advisory services.

SERVICES PROVIDED

The relocation program will many times provide unusual types of assistance. There are basic services that must be made available to all displaced persons.

1. Explain the relocation assistance program and appropriate payments that may be available to them.
2. Explain and describe the eligibility requirements and type of documentation needed for each relevant type of relocation payment, and at an appropriate time, determine the eligibility for payments of each displaced person.
3. Determine the needs of persons to be displaced for advisory assistance. The advisor must become familiar with the many different, and sometimes special, needs of the displaced household or business.
4. Make every effort to help meet the needs identified, while recognizing the importance of the displaced person’s priorities and their desire, or lack of desire for assistance.
5. Provide the following specific types of services, as appropriate:
 - Current and continuing information on listings, including listing prices or rents, of comparable replacement properties either comparable to acquired dwellings or appropriate for displaced businesses and farms. This information can be provided by personal contact or by mail. Personal contact is preferred and should be documented in the file. This information is most important while the displaced person is actively looking for a replacement property.
 - Information concerning Federal and State housing and other programs offering relocation or related types of assistance.
 - Assistance in obtaining and completing application or claim forms for relocation payment or other related assistance, as needed.
 - Transportation for displaced persons to inspect potential relocation housing, when needed.
 - Minimize hardships on the displacees as much as possible, which may include advancing relocation payments.
 - Explain the various types of financing that is available.

Some displaced persons will require almost no advisory services while others will seem to need almost constant attention. A project in an area with a large concentration of the latter will require more of our resources than one without such problems. There is no substitute for knowing the area the project is impacting and for knowing the people who are to be displaced. Sometimes this knowledge must go beneath the surface to special problems or needs of the displacee and sometimes gaining such knowledge may require skilled interviewing and repeated contacts.

When working with the displacee, the relocation advisor should:

- Develop a rapport with them in order to gain their confidence. This will undoubtedly improve the chances for a successful relocation.
- Determine those special items that help the displacee in their daily routine. These may include ramps, wider doorways, main floor laundry, lifts, grab rails, special sanitary facilities, etc.
- Determine any family or friends who the displacee may want to be involved in the relocation activities.
- Determine if the displacee needs any special materials from the Iowa Department of Transportation or other agency. This may include braille, signing, translating, audio version of the brochure, etc.

The relocation process can be very stressful for everyone, but perhaps more so for the elderly and the relocation advisor needs to be emotionally prepared to work with them. The advisor must be willing and able to do whatever is necessary to assist in the relocation, but also recognize there are times that the answer must be “no” when the request is unreasonable. The relocation advisor needs to remain objective and empathetic, but not become sympathetic.

Doing what is necessary may include spending a great deal of time listening to the displacee and thus learning what their needs are. The advisor may spend a good amount of time coordinating with other agencies, family, friend or even medical specialists to ensure the displacee’s needs are met.

PREVENTING SUBSEQUENT OCCUPANCY

Many times the displaced tenant will have moved prior to the Iowa Department of Transportation receiving possession from the owner of the property. In these instances, it is desirable to acquire the owner’s right to rent the property in order to prevent having to relocate a subsequent tenant. This will ensure that the owner will not suffer a loss in rental income before giving up possession of the property.