Job Opening at Solid Ground

Job Title: Tenant Counselor ($1,000 Hiring Bonus)

Department: Stabilization Services

Status: Non-Exempt

Supervisor: Supportive Services Manager

Union Affiliation: OPEIU
(Associated dues will apply)

FTE: 1.0

Salary Grade: 25

Solid Ground believes poverty is solvable. Our communities are stronger when we support stability and break down the barriers to overcoming poverty. Solid Ground does both. We combine direct services with advocacy to meet basic needs, nurture success, and spread change. Through our programs, people gain stability and build skills that equip them to move forward in their lives. Through advocacy, we work toward ending racism and other oppressions embedded in our institutions, policies, and culture that hold people back from succeeding. We bring the voices of people experiencing poverty into the political process, furthering social justice and supporting our entire community to reach its potential.

- Demonstrate the initiative to learn and enhance skills that promote anti-racism, cultural competency and an understanding of oppression and its impact
- Participate in intentional learning efforts, including events relating to understanding and dismantling institutional racism and building cultural competency

Job Summary

The Tenant Counselor is a part of the Supportive Services team. This position is responsible for providing timely and accurate assistance to individuals facing the loss of their rental housing, providing accurate information on community resources via phone, workshops/webinars, and community events, leading community education and outreach activities, assisting tenants in organizing to address concerns with landlords, providing in agency landlord/tenant expertise, participating in relevant committees and organizations focusing on housing issues; tracking client trends and advocating for systems changes to address needed improvements in housing issues. This position also works in collaboration creating and facilitating Rent Smart power point presentations to agencies in the community sharing education with renters about their rights and responsibilities and those of the landlord.

Essential Responsibilities, Duties and Tasks

Tenant Counseling: Provide staff coverage during regularly scheduled shifts on the Tenant Counseling Services voice message line. Conduct thorough intake; inform households of their rights and responsibilities under applicable WA State rental housing laws, connect callers to community services, (including legal representation) for housing issues and other crisis related social services. Be highly knowledgeable about strategies to help households maintain housing stability. Provide customer-service oriented one-on-one tenant counseling to households who are at imminent risk of losing their housing or need assistance with asserting their rights as provided under WA State rental housing laws. Address circumstances that affect household's ability to stay housed and maintain rent payments including discussion of action plans to resolve housing issues and prepare tenants to negotiate with landlords to implement agreements to help households maintain housing. Provide in-house support in understanding Landlord/Tenant Laws and responsibilities. Track engagement with callers and workshop participants using agency Database. Provide templates and sample letters for tenants to assist in asserting their rights. De-escalate interactions with callers and webinar/workshop participants as necessary.

Tenant Law: Research tenant law and conduct outreach events sharing education to inform the community on housing stability issues such as tenant rights and responsibilities, fair housing laws, legislative advocacy, etc., via in person interactions, phone, blog posts and social media, and resource broadcasting; develop partner sites and opportunities for tenant educational workshops; develop, improve and maintain topical and cultural relevance of tenant education information and outreach materials. Update materials as laws change and as needed, partner with local legal providers to ensure successful referrals, work with internal partners to increase access to information and opportunities to advocate for tenant rights, coordinate with partner agencies in providing joint workshops and clinics, participate in resource fairs and community resource exchanges providing information on landlord/tenant laws.

Research: Collect and analyze client issues that are trending for the purpose of advocacy to inform reports for the board, etc., local and statewide organizations of issues that most negatively affect the long-term stability of tenants, especially for at-risk populations; represent tenant issues at community meetings. Participate in local and statewide advocacy by testifying at legislative hearings, assisting clients with getting involved, writing letters, etc. Assist with organizing tenants to address concerns with landlords that have not been resolved through other means.

Organization: Maintain accurate and confidential client files and documentation necessary for program administration and funding requirements using agency database. Submit client success stories quarterly to support reporting. Enter client information during voice message calls regularly into database, and/or within 48 hours after the call. Manage requests for information in an efficient manner while maintaining a high level of customer service appropriate to populations in crisis. Participate in case conferencing with other staff on the Tenant Counseling Services and other Solid

Ground teams. Provide coverage for peers during vacation or leaves of absence. Work with advocacy programs, legislative involvement and civic engagement in city and state initiatives that impact renters. Assist in continual program evaluation efforts, development of systems and procedures to enhance Tenant Counseling Services; participate in program, department, agency and outside organization meetings and committees as required and/or desired. Partner with homelessness prevention team to refer eligible tenants to potential rental assistance when funds are available.

The duties listed above are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position.

Education and Experience

Requires one of the following:

a) At least four years of experience in a social service or related setting; **OR**
b) Any combination of education, experience, and measurable performance which demonstrates the capability to perform the duties of this position.

Also requires:

- Experience in housing counseling, case management for households in crisis/at risk of homelessness or other relevant experience.
- Experience in landlord/tenant law, negotiation/mediation or other relevant counseling/customer service experience where negotiation/mediation were essential components of the work.

Minimum Qualifications

- Excellent organizational, verbal and written communication skills
- Experience serving low-income communities or demonstrated interest in housing issues affecting low-income communities; provide support services for clients in crisis/at risk of homelessness
- Self-motivated with an ability to prioritize and problem solve
- Ability to understand and communicate legal information as it relates to rental housing in Seattle and Washington State
- Willingness to research current landlord/tenant laws statewide and update materials accordingly
- Ability and willingness to participate in advocacy efforts with elected officials, stakeholders and community members
- Ability to build collaborations to access resources for clients
- Ability to work individually in a self-directed manner and as part of a team, as well as represent the agency in community partnerships and in advocacy efforts
- Willingness and demonstrated ability to work with people from a variety of racial, cultural, educational and economic backgrounds with various lifestyles and sexual orientations
- Access to reliable vehicle, valid driver's license, clean driving records and willingness to drive as needed throughout King County

- Demonstrated ability to use computer software (Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, Internet) to perform data entry, write correspondence, maintain statistics, use email and calendar, and other computer related tasks
- Ability and willingness to work evenings and weekends for the purposes of teaching housing-related workshops and/or meeting with clients who are unable to meet during business hours, as requested.

Desired Qualifications

- Experience or interest in the legislative process and advocating for changes to Landlord-Tenant Laws or issues that pertain to tenants.
- Bi-lingual

Physical Demands/Working Conditions: This position works in an office setting or remotely until it is safe to work in person, performing general office duties. Position requires employee to lift/carry up to 30 pounds rarely, 10-15 pounds occasionally and push/pull 10 pounds seldom, 5 pounds frequently. Employees spend 65% of their time in the office with 60% of this time on the computer and 30% of the time answering the phone and 35% of their time in the field (Except during the pandemic: 80-100% working remotely; up to 20% in the office until it is safe to return to the office). Work outside the office is 20% facilitating workshops, 10% meetings/trainings, and 5% organizing support and participating in advocacy. Position has the ability to sit/stand as needed. Stairs may be required depending on locations of meetings, workshops etc.

Hours and Compensation: This is a regular 40/week, union position starting at **$24.81-29.74 per hour plus $1,000 Hiring Bonus** paid 50% at three months and 50% at six months of continuous employment **plus benefits**. Benefits include medical, dental, short-term and long-term disability insurance, basic life insurance, 401(k) savings plan including agency contribution and match, holiday pay, generous paid personal leave package and tax-sheltered health care and dependent care accounts. Solid Ground employees may be eligible for a standard annual increase. The amount may be determined by an employee's union membership.

Until further notice, Solid Ground requires all employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Solid Ground is an equal opportunity employer committed to workplace diversity. We do not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, race and color, religion, marital status, national origin, disability or veteran status