

Section 4:
**HOUSING STABILITY
AND HOMELESSNESS
PREVENTION**



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES THROUGH RESIDENT SERVICES: A PRACTITIONER'S MANUAL

Volume One: Implementing a Basic Resident Services Program
Revised and Expanded Edition

Authors

Diana A. Meyer
Rich Petersen
Trevor Britt
Sabina Cardenas
Jennifer Covert
David Fromm
Ian Kennedy
Vikram Khanna
Patricia Magnuson
Alexandra Nassau-Brownstone
Janet E. Raffel

Edited by Catherine Hyde and Sherri Alms





HOUSING STABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

Basic resident services in affordable rental housing connect residents to available, quality services and benefits to help them maintain housing stability, obtain a new job if they are laid off and better manage their finances. Good communications and processes between resident services staff and property managers are necessary to prevent evictions.

INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING STABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

In 1994, the publication *Confronting the Management Challenge* stated that nonprofit boards and staffs must develop an attitude toward housing management that recognizes the double bottom line - the simultaneous need for financial accountability and attention to the nonprofit organization's social goals. (Bratt, Rachel G, et al., New School for Social Research). Today, some 15 years later, this recommendation still rings true, as a successful resident services program can not only assist residents in increasing their personal, educational and financial assets, it can also play an important positive role in the property's overall financial and physical well being. As such, it is critical that there be consistent and effective communication and coordination between the housing organization's resident services and property management staff, to ensure that the organization meets its social mission while maintaining the financial stability of its overall property operation and portfolio.

Resident services staff should familiarize themselves with such key property performance indicators as: occupancy rate, rent collection rate, the rate of eviction and the associated legal cost, turnover rate, maintenance costs, cash flow and net operating income, as each of these can be positively affected upon through an effective resident services program. For example:

- Higher occupancy rates and fewer, costly unit-turnovers may result from higher resident satisfaction with the property due to the availability of services. Services also enhance the marketing of units to new residents.
- Increased rent collection and, therefore, net organizational operating income may result from helping those residents in financial crises obtain emergency rental assistance, or from better money management resulting from financial literacy education, or as a result of helping residents obtain employment or higher paying employment.
- Lower eviction rates also may result from similar assistance with rent, financial management and employment. Fewer evictions translates into reduced legal costs for property managers.
- Reduced maintenance costs may result from reduced vandalism due to youth involvement in constructive after-school education, recreation and community activities.

NET OPERATING INCOME AND CASH FLOW

Any increase in revenues or decrease in expenses will have a positive impact on an organization's net operating income and ability to meet its debt obligations. It will also strengthen a property's cash flow. The increased cash flow can, in turn, be used to support resident services.

RENT COLLECTION RATE

Residents satisfied with quality services are more likely to pay their rent on time. Employment and educational assistance help to increase residents' income, making it easier to meet rent obligations. In addition, a property's resident services program can help financially struggling residents to obtain rent assistance when needed, thus avoiding delinquency and keeping rent collection rates high. Such a program can also offer residents financial counseling and classes to help them gain the financial discipline they need to pay rent regularly and on time.

OCCUPANCY RATE

Prospective tenants may view an effective resident services program as an additional amenity. This helps to give a property a competitive advantage in the local real estate market, attracting new residents and resulting in a strong waiting list. As a result, the amount of time that it takes to fill vacant units is reduced and the property's occupancy rate is increased. A high occupancy rate, in turn, impacts the income stream of a property and supports underwriting assumptions of a 90- to 92-percent occupancy rate.

TURNOVER RATE

When a resident moves out of a unit, that unit must be prepared for a new resident. Turnover expenses can be minimized if the previous residents took appropriate care of the unit. And, as mentioned earlier, the more satisfied the residents are, the less likely they are to leave. In transitional housing, the delivery of appropriate resident services can directly impact the residents' ability to move on to the next phase of the housing continuum.

EVICITION RATE

Evictions are very expensive for property managers, in some cases costing a property tens of thousands of dollars each year. The National Resident Services Collaborative estimates that the average cost of an eviction is \$3,700. A built-in resident services program can help avoid these costs and lower a property's eviction rate by supporting residents with rent payments and financial counseling. In addition, these programs can help provide information about evictions and lease violations and can foster communication between tenants and property managers.

MAINTENANCE COSTS

An effective resident services staff can help to reduce expenses for property maintenance by:

- Educating residents about the proper use of shared equipment.
- Providing after-school care and activities for resident children, thereby minimizing the amount of vandalism or damage that these children might otherwise cause to the property.
- Engaging residents in better stewardship and oversight of the property.

NET OPERATING INCOME AND CASH FLOW

Any increase in revenues or decrease in expenses will have a positive impact on an organization's net operating income and its ability to meet its debt obligations. It will also strengthen a property's cash flow. This increased cash flow can, in turn, be used to support resident services. That is why it is imperative for resident services staff to understand that the financial world of property management revolves heavily around the concept of net operating income (NOI). NOI is the amount of money available after operations that are available to pay debt. The ability of a property to take on debt is directly related to its ability to generate NOI. The NOI must be sufficient to adequately cover the debt service payments imposed by the property's financing structure. The stronger the NOI, the greater the ability exists for the property to acquire the necessary financing to be developed. NOI is also directly related to the value of a property based upon the income approach to value used by appraisers. Under this approach, a higher NOI would generally result in a higher property value, which allows a property to borrow more funds; however, this also places a potentially greater debt burden on the property's day-to-day operations by creating a larger monthly mortgage payment and requires the property to financially perform as projected to meet debt requirements.

NOI is typically derived from the following formula:

Calculating NOI

Gross Potential Rental Income – Vacancy - Collection Losses = Net Rental Income

Net Rental Income + Other Income = Effective Gross Income

Effective Gross Income - Total Operating Expenses = Net Operating Income (NOI)

It is important to understand how NOI not only reflects the strength of property operations but also the performance of the property manager. And it is important to understand how resident services and property management can work together to increase NOI and the overall financial worth of the property. An increase in cash flow can potentially be used to help support resident services programs. In many properties financed by the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), resident services fees are permitted as an expense below the line and can be paid only if the property has unencumbered cash flow after expenses.

COMPARING OUTCOMES

Understanding the effects on the property and the outcomes for residents of various resident services is essential to ensuring and supporting a successful, effective program. Resident services coordinators and property managers should work collectively to integrate—at least to some extent—data measures on property performance and resident services outcomes. Comparing these sets of data will provide a wealth of information on the effects of successful service programs on the property and indicate in what direction the trends are heading. Moreover, sharing this information will help staff from both programs develop

stronger lines of communication and a better sense of teamwork, two very important components of a well-run property.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THIS SECTION

The following resources are available in The Impact on Property Management section of this manual:

1. **The Functions of Property Management and Their Connection to Resident Services:** In order to support the long-term goals of both the property management team and the resident services staff, it is important that they mutually discuss, define and understand their roles and responsibilities. These discussions will help in building practices that result in improved property performance and resident outcomes. This section provides resources to aid property managers and resident services providers in discussing and defining their roles and responsibilities.
2. **The Roles and Responsibilities of Property Management and Resident Services: Areas of Cooperation and Overlap:** Property management staff and resident services staff need to clearly understand their respective responsibilities and where those responsibilities may overlap. This table describes the responsibilities of both and where they overlap.
3. **Knowing the Rules and Risks: An Introduction to Fair Housing Requirements:** Using a series of questions, this document will help property managers and other community staff members, including resident services personnel, understand Fair Housing regulations and the implications of not following these rules. As part of the housing package offered to residents, service programs fall under the umbrella of Fair Housing requirements, and therefore resident services coordinators need to understand the rules and ensure that programs, marketing and referrals are conducted without violating any stipulations.
4. **Recommendations and Tips for Resident Retention:** Resident services coordinators can play a vital role in ensuring positive relationships between managers and tenants. Indeed, by communicating regularly with both groups and establishing formal procedures, resident services coordinators are able to help prevent evictions, lease violations and other potential problems between tenants and managers. This document provides best practices that can be implemented to prevent evictions.
5. **Community Housing Partners Eviction Prevention Protocols:** Community Housing Partners, CHP, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, developed these protocols to help stabilize families in their affordable housing by proactively addressing the issues that are affecting residents' ability to pay rent in a timely manor and comply with other provisions of their leases. A 2009 NeighborWorks America study of the impact of resident services on CHP properties' selected financial performance

indicators found that resident services saved over \$200 per unit per year in fiscal years 2006 and 2007. Additional savings were experienced in properties where these eviction prevention protocols were employed by resident services and property management staff.

- 6. Introduction to Microsoft® Excel-based Tool for Eviction Prevention Tracking:** This resource describes a tool available in the online version of this manual that property managers and resident services coordinators can use to coordinate eviction intervention efforts. This document introduces the tool and describes its uses. Designed for access by multiple users, this tool can be used by property managers and resident services coordinators to coordinate eviction intervention efforts. In addition to offering a way to analyze intervention efforts, the tool provides a means to track the progress of referrals and other assistance measures. The Excel-based tool can be downloaded from <http://www.residentservices.org> and customized by users.

THE FUNCTIONS OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND THEIR CONNECTION TO RESIDENT SERVICES

The goal of good property management is to maximize the desired return (fiscal, social and physical) from an owner's real estate investment (portfolio) over the life of the property through the proper implementation of the basic functions of real estate management. This resource helps resident services providers and property managers to better understand, discuss and define their roles and responsibilities.

MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND REVIEW

The goal of the property manager is to carry out the day-to-day functions of management to meet owner's objectives. The non-profit ownership objectives are to:

1. Meet or exceed anticipated property financial performance.
2. Meet or exceed the desired social outcomes.

The property management plan is the document that delineates how the property manager plans to coordinate basic management functions to achieve these objectives. The management plan is often prepared for the owner by the management company, and it assures that the property is being managed in accordance with the good principles and practices of real estate management. The Consortium for Housing and Asset Management (CHAM) promotes the concept of "Plans within the Plan." The CHAM workbook highlights the need for several topics for which specific plans should be developed. These topics traditionally include safety, security, emergency, evacuation (for a property) and staffing. Information about CHAM and online resources can be found at <http://www.cham.org/>

Unfortunately, it is far too common for resident services staff to have never seen or read a property management plan and conversely for property managers to have never seen or read a resident services plan. A suggested practice would be to incorporate the resident services plan into the comprehensive management plan and to review this plan at least annually at the time the budget for the property is being prepared.

Another key document in property management operation is the policy and procedures manual or operating manual. This is the document that delineates the "how to" of the daily life of a property manager. It is a thorough document that reflects the organizational philosophies around the day-to-day activities of property management operations. A good policy and procedures manual is developed to capture the organizational philosophies around the functions of management. It is updated on a regular basis to reflect operational changes necessary to keep pace with changing regulatory or program requirements. A

best-practice suggestion is for the resident services policies and procedures document to be included in the policy and procedures manual for the property.

Last, in striving to fulfill the “double bottom line” organizational objective, it is suggested that resident services management and property management work together to develop, implement and retain:

1. A memorandum of understanding between resident services and property management. (See Sample 1 on page 116.)
2. An outline of the relationship between Property Management and Resident Services. (See Sample 2 on page 119.)
3. A formal referral form from property management to resident services. (See Sample 3 on page 121.)

MARKETING AND OCCUPANCY

The goal of the marketing function of property management is to attract, lease and retain the desired resident market group as outlined in the owner’s objectives for the property. This is one of the critical functions of management that certainly affects a property’s strength as measured by NOI. Property managers have to advertise and screen prospective applicants in accordance with the property’s resident selection criteria as well as all the applicable Fair Housing rules and regulations that apply to rental housing.

TURNAROUND TIME

This is a complex and time-consuming activity but crucial to property performance. Traditional for-profit performance standards delineate a turnaround for a vacancy to fall within three to five days. This requires that the unit be prepared for occupancy in one to two days and then re-occupied in the next three to five days. This timeframe can often be a bit unrealistic for some affordable/subsidized housing but still would require the turnaround time not to exceed 14 days.

OCCUPANCY RATE

The manager needs to continuously advertise and maintain an active waiting list of eligible applicants in order to maintain a high occupancy rate and maximize rental income. In many market areas, affordable rents under the LIHTC program are in tight competition with market rents. This increase in competition shrinks the available applicant pool and places more stress on a property’s marketing ability. To strengthen market position, many nonprofits market resident services as an amenity. Prospective tenants may view an effective resident services program as such an additional amenity. This helps to give a property a competitive advantage in the local real estate market, attracting new residents

and resulting in a strong waiting list. As a result, the number of vacancies and the amount of time that it takes to fill vacant units is reduced and the property's occupancy rate is increased. A high occupancy rate, in turn, has a positive impact on NOI and the value of the property.

MARKETING

Marketing is a constant activity of property management. For new properties, you should begin at least six months prior to the completion of construction. To attract eligible residents, market the property through service providers, neighborhood centers, stores, local organizations, churches and neighborhood papers. Where appropriate, proper site signage at the properties is a very effective way to attract new residents.

To improve property performance, maintain a waiting list with at least four eligible applicants for each unit type contained within the property. This will reduce the turnaround time for filling vacancies. It is also a good practice to develop and distribute descriptions of resident services with your marketing materials as well as have resident services staff help interested people complete the necessary housing application forms.

Another key component of marketing requires knowledge of the target market as well as the existing composition of your properties. Managers need to track benchmarks that affect the income or program requirements for filling the next available vacant unit. For example, Sample 4, a document adapted from APAH/Paradigm Management in Arlington, Va. (on page 122), provides an example 'rent matrix' template that can help marketing efforts assure that program regulations are being met.

TENANT SCREENING AND RESIDENT SELECTION

It is the job of the property management staff to develop the application and the criteria that will be used to screen potential tenants. It is important for the manager to develop selection criteria that are applied to all applicants for a property on a uniform and consistent basis. These criteria are developed to mitigate rent delinquency as well as to maintain compliance with any funding program income and other requirements. Management agents will often use a third-party contractor to assist in conducting background checks on all applicants.

Many nonprofits implement a system in which both resident services and property management staff are engaged in the resident selection process. In this situation, the property manager and the resident services coordinator should work together to select tenants based on the agreed-upon resident selection criteria. Property management staff usually verifies the information contained in each tenant's application by checking eligibility documentation (concerning the tenant's income, date of birth or any special considerations for the specified housing) and credit history. Often nonprofits base their selection on a tenant's rent-payment history rather than credit obligations.

Final selection criteria must meet Fair Housing requirements.

Typical resident selection criteria require verification of the following:

1. Income
2. Family size
3. History of rent payment
4. Prior landlord reference
5. Criminal background
6. Housekeeping

These criteria are verified through credit and criminal background checks, prior landlord references and home visits.

It is the job of the property management staff to develop the application that will be used to screen potential tenants. Typically, organizations screen for a history of:

- Rent delinquency, by obtaining a credit report or landlord reference
- Poor housekeeping, by visiting prospective residents in their current homes
- Physical violence or threats of violence against neighbors or staff, by checking the landlord reference
- Disturbing other residents, by checking the landlord reference
- Criminal activity (such as drugs, theft, vandalism, assault or weapons), by checking the applicant's criminal report

FAIR HOUSING

Property management staff members are responsible for complying with fair housing laws by ensuring that residents are treated equally and fairly during both the housing application process and their time in the community.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

Property managers should communicate regularly with applicants and residents. They should establish procedures for responding in a timely manner to inquiries and complaints regarding building, maintenance and similar issues.

ORIENTATION

Both property management and resident services staff should jointly provide orientation sessions for new residents, each focusing on their particular area of expertise. (See Sample 5 on page 123 for an example of how property management and resident services can work together to orient residents to the property and connections to service resources in the community.)

Property management staff should provide new residents with information and assistance with:

- Reviewing the lease, house rules and lease addendum
- Understanding their right to reasonable accommodation
- Reviewing the property, its features and appliances, and its amenities
- Observing the rules for using property equipment
- Touring the building and on-site facilities
- Meeting the resident services coordinator and staff
- Using security fixtures and accessing police, fire and emergency services

Resident services staff should meet with new residents to identify their goals and barriers and to provide information about the resident service coordinator's schedule and the available services and resources, including:

- Employment
- Education
- Rental assistance
- Delinquent rent assistance
- After-school learning and recreation
- Child care
- Youth activities
- Safety
- English as a Second Language (ESL) courses

LEASE ENFORCEMENT

The lease is the legal contract between the resident and the landlord. The lease should be thoroughly reviewed with the resident prior to occupancy. All residents of the unit should be listed on the lease. A unit inspection should be conducted prior to move-in. All occupants should be present during the inspection and sign off on a checklist to document the condition of the unit at move-in.

Many nonprofit organizations are engaging resident services staff in the leasing process along with property management. This joint process sets the tone of cooperation between all parties around rent payment, behavior and occupancy restrictions. This process also shows the residents that property management and resident service staff are on the same team.

Property management staff should address lease violations immediately and formally according to state law but also offer support to residents to help them overcome obstacles. Lease violations include:

- Failing to pay rent
- Damaging the unit
- Disturbing the neighbors
- Using the premises illegally

A best practice for lease enforcement is for property management to immediately follow policies and procedures that apply to the incident (whether it is rent payment or behavior) and to send timely notice as appropriate while also implementing a system to help mobilize appropriate available services. This can be done by automatically notifying resident services staff of all resident lease violations, provided that the tenant has given written permission to do so. It can also be done by including appropriate service referral information along with any lease violation notices sent to a resident. (Sample 6 on page 124 provides a template for resident permission to release or obtain information on his or her behalf.)

These recommendations can help property managers deal with lease violations:

Failing to Pay Rent

- Send out a formal late notice the first day rent is late. This starts the legal process.
- Attach a list of services available to assist residents: emergency rental assistance, employment assistance, etc.
- Send the resident services coordinator a copy of the late notice so he or she can contact the resident.
- Meet with the resident services coordinator and the resident to discuss an action plan.

Damaging the Unit

- Maintenance staff reports the damage and issues a charge-back notice to the property manager.
- Send a notice to the resident requesting payment for damages.
- Send a copy of the damage report and repayment notice to the resident services coordinator. The coordinator should then meet with the resident and provide assistance as appropriate.
- Meet with the resident services coordinator and the resident to discuss remediation.

Disturbing Neighbors

- Investigate the complaint.
- Send a notice of the complaint to the resident and the resident services coordinator.
- Review the lease and violation with the resident and the resident services coordinator.
- Monitor the resident's behavior accordingly.

Using the Premises Illegally

- Investigate the complaint.
- Send a notice of the complaint to the resident and the resident services coordinator.
- Review the lease and violation with the resident and the resident services coordinator.
- Monitor the resident's behavior accordingly.

MOVING OUT

When residents are moving out (either voluntarily or due to eviction), the property management and resident services staff should work together to ensure that the process runs as smoothly as possible. In order to ensure that a resident makes a positive transition to his or her next home, conduct an exit survey and determine his or her plans and next steps. This would be a good time to learn about the resident's experience at your facility, including, among other things, the reasons why the resident chose to leave.

In cases of eviction due to failure to pay the rent, send the resident notices according to state and local landlord-tenant laws and keep the resident services coordinator up-to-date on the eviction status.

In cases of eviction for cause, document the tenant's behavior, send the resident notices according to state and local landlord-tenant laws and keep the resident services coordinator up-to-date on the eviction status.

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Sample 1

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between
REACH Property Management Department and
REACH Resident Services Department

REACH's Property Management and Resident Services are committed to working together to improve the housing success of REACH residents. This agreement is entered into to formalize our relationship and the services provided to residents.

Building: Laurelhurst Apartments

This Agreement shall be in effect from July 1, 2007 and shall continue on a month-to-month basis until termination by either party. Either party may terminate this Agreement by providing 30-days written notice.

The Laurelhurst Apartments, owned and managed by REACH, provides 23 one-bedroom apartments. The majority of the residents earn less than 30 percent of area median family income. Both Property Management staff and Resident Services staff will comply with all Fair Housing laws.

Property Management Obligations:

The Building Manager, Maintenance Tech and Building Monitor are responsible for overall property management and operations of the building:

- Maintain waiting list of applicants and fill vacancies from the waiting list.
- Coordinate move-ins and move-outs with resident. Notify Resident Services staff of move-ins and move-outs.
- Maintain the building in general good repair and keep common areas and exteriors clean and free of hazards.
- Provide and maintain essential services to residents per Oregon Residential Landlord Tenant Act.
- Respond in a timely manner to requests for repairs by residents.
- Notify Resident Services staff if a resident receives any lease violation notice.
- Cooperate with the Resident Services Coordinator in efforts to assist clients in maintaining lease compliance and in obtaining and coordinating services. Notify Resident Services of potential lease violations for preventive action.
- Assist in planning and participating in monthly Property Management-Resident Services meetings.

- Participate in collecting and compiling data for Resident Services database.
- When necessary to evict resident, communicate and work closely with Resident Services staff for smooth transition of resident from building.

Resident Services Obligations:

Resident Services will provide off-site information and service referral that will focus on:

Housing Success:

- Assist residents to maintain their housing.
- Cooperate with the Building Manager to assist the resident in maintaining lease compliance and in obtaining and coordinating services.
- Follow-up on all notices given to residents: contact Case Manager, make referrals as appropriate, assist with neighbor relations. Work closely with Building Manager to coordinate support services and/or assist with preparation for bug spraying, inspections, or other needs such as housecleaning.
- Give the client service referrals to meet basic needs of food, clothing, personal items, medical care, and other assistance, as needed. Refer residents to appropriate agencies for benefits (SSI, SSD, etc.)
- Provide access to emergency food supplies.
- When necessary to evict resident, communicate and work closely with Property Management staff for smooth transition of resident from building.

Residents of the Laurelhurst Apartments will have access to other REACH programs including:

Asset Development:

- Provide opportunities for residents to increase their economic stability;
- Residents eligible to participate in Budget, Buy and Save/STARTS, IDA program, and Youth\$ave;
- Refer residents to SE Works or other appropriate One-Stop Center for employment services.

Skill Development:

- Offer opportunities that help residents build skills and provide social opportunities
- Access to classes offered off-site as appropriate
- HomeFront newsletter

Other:

- Collect data and report on type and effectiveness of services.
- Assist in planning and participating in monthly Property Management-Resident Services meetings.
- Check in weekly with Property Management on-site staff.

Payment:

- Resident Services will be paid \$200 per unit per year for services provided to residents of the Laurelhurst apartments. There are 23 units at the Laurelhurst for an annual total of \$4600. Accounting will process \$383.33 monthly.

Signed:

DIRECTOR OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

DATE

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAMS

DATE

Sample 2

GENERAL UNDERSTANDING of RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENT CONNECTIONS and SERVICES (RCS) and PROPERTY/SITE MANAGEMENT

The mission of Resident Services is to enable our residents to retain their housing as long as they observe the three fundamental rules of residency: pay the rent; respect other people and respect the property.

The goal of Resident Connections and Services is to help integrate our properties and our residents into the broader community and to help our residents access resources in the community. To accomplish this task, Central Community Housing Trust (CCHT) produces a newsletter, coordinates workshops with community agencies, conducts door-to-door surveys, holds resident meetings and meets with referred residents as part of an eviction prevention component.

CCHT works collaboratively with property management in a number of areas. We ask that property management:

- Inform new residents of Resident Services (in those buildings with no RCS presence) by presenting the CCHT Welcome packet with a brief explanation of RCS.
- Refer any resident whose housing may be endangered to see if services could help them retain housing (non-payment of rent; employment issues; children's behavior; neighbor trouble, etc.).
- Participate in resident/building meetings as requested, especially annual building meetings.
- Collaborate with crime watch efforts.
- Provide overall input into planning for services.

In return, RCS commits to:

- Respond to every referral from property management and if it impacts their housing, share whether or not the resident has responded cooperatively.
- Share observations of possible drug or criminal activity.
- Listen to input on ideas and services and volunteer efforts.

Occasionally, Resident Services is approached by a resident about complaints with property management. It is the role of the Resident Services Coordinator (or any CCHT staff) to provide the resident with information on how to file a grievance, first with the property management firm and if not satisfied, then with Asset Management.

Archdale/Alliance/ Barnabas

These properties have extensive on-site supportive services. RCS does not provide any direct services to these properties.

Phillips Family Housing and Chicago Avenue Apartments

Youth Housing Project at PFH: There are currently four units at the Cedars which are part of a special Youth Housing Project. The staff at Archdale are responsible for providing intense case management services to help the youths' parents maintain housing. Special application criteria and rent subsidies apply to these units.

These properties are part of a long-term demonstration project with MHFA on the impact that Resident Services can have on stabilizing affordable housing properties. Over a ten-year period, MFHA is measuring if Resident Services can impact the bottom line—decrease tenant damages, increase rent payments, decrease evictions and reduce police calls.

Resident Services is required to submit an annual report to MHFA, so there is an additional reporting component on these properties which RCS produces.

OHP - Continental, Coyle, Heritage, Lamoreaux

CCHT has chosen to provide Resident Services to these buildings. The general guidelines outlined above apply to these properties.

Pine Cliff, 1822 Park, Paige Hall, Balmoral, Barrington

CCHT has chosen to provide Resident Services to these buildings. The general guidelines outlined above apply to these properties.

All Other CCHT Properties

Although direct services are not provided on-site, property management is encouraged to have any resident call a Resident Services Coordinator at 341-3148 for help in maintaining housing or needing referrals to service. All CCHT residents are eligible for Resident Services regardless of place of residency.

Sample 3

REFERRAL FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Interpretation Needed: _____ Yes No

Referred By: _____ Date of Referral: _____

Department: PM RS Self Other _____

Reason for Referral:

- Late Rent
- Lease Violation
- Compliance Issue
- Health Services
- Social Services
- Educational Resources
- Personal Goal
- Other

Notes: _____

Desired Outcome Measures:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Signature: _____

HH Coordinator Signature: _____

Date: _____

Resident Appointment Date: _____

Jubilee Housing Inc. _____

Sample 4

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENT CONNECTIONS AND SERVICES AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

The goal of Resident Connections and Services is to help integrate our properties and our residents into the broader community and to help our residents access resources in the community. To accomplish this task, CCHT produces a program bulletin, coordinates workshops with community agencies, conducts door-to-door surveys, holds resident meetings and meets with referred residents as part of an eviction prevention component.

CCHT works collaboratively with property management in a number of areas. We ask that property management:

- Inform new residents of Resident Services by presenting our introductory letter and current calendar/newsletter;
- Refer any resident whose housing may be endangered to see if services could help them retain housing (non-payment of rent, employment issues, children's behavior, etc);
- Participate in resident meetings as requested by the RCS;
- Collaborate on crime watch efforts;
- Provide overall input into planning for services; and
- Coordinate beautification or other volunteer efforts with RCS.

RSC commits in return to:

- Respond to every referral from the site manager and if it impacts their housing, share whether or not the resident has responded cooperatively.
- Share observations of possible drug or criminal activity; and
- Listen to input on ideas for services and volunteer efforts.

Occasionally, Resident Services is approached by a resident about complaints with property management. It is the role of the Resident Services Coordinator (or any CCHT staff) to provide the resident with information on how to file a grievance, first with the property management firm and if not satisfied, then with CCHT Asset Management department. It is not the role of RSC to be an advocate. However, if requested, the RSC may assist the resident in writing the grievance.

Sample 5

CONSENT TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION

I understand that different agencies provide different services and benefits. Each agency must have specific information in order to provide services and benefits. By signing this form, I am allowing agencies to exchange certain information so it will be easier for them to work together effectively to provide or coordinate these services or benefits.

I, _____, am signing this form for

(Full Printed Name of Consenting Person)

(Full Printed Name of Client and Children)

(Client's Address)

(Client's Birth Date)

(Client's SSN-Optional)

My relationship to the client is:

- Self
 Parent
 Power of Attorney
 Guardian
 Other Legally Authorized Representative

I want the following confidential information about the client (except drug or alcohol abuse diagnosis or treatment information) to be exchanged:

- Yes No Assessment Information
 Yes No Medical Diagnosis
 Yes No Education Records
 Yes No Financial Information
 Yes No Mental Health Diagnosis
 Yes No Psychiatric Records
 Yes No Benefits/Services Needed
 Yes No Medical Records

- Yes No Criminal Justice Records Planned and/or Received
- Yes No Psychological Records
- Yes No Employment Records

Other Information (write in):

I want my case manager and other staff members involved in my case at Reston Interfaith, Inc., Embry Rucker Community Shelter, and the following agencies to be able to exchange this information:

- Adult Protective Services
- FACETS
- Local clothing/furniture donors
- Fairfax County Public Schools
- Homestretch Housing Program
- Local daycare providers/centers
- Housing and Community Development
- New Hope Housing
- Local food pantries
- Human Systems Management
- WFCM
- Local service providers
- All shelters
- Community Services Board
- FISH
- Local community and recreation services
- Health Department
- LINK
- Local financial institutions
- Human Services Administration
- Northern Virginia Family Services
- Local physicians and dentists
- Social Services Administration
- Family Members
- Juvenile and Domestic Relations, Probation & Parole
- Human Services Administration, including HMIS, Abt Associates
- All DFS agencies, including Family and Child Services, CPS, CSP, OFC, VIEW, etc.

Are other agencies listed on back? Yes No

I want this information to be exchanged ONLY for the following purpose(s):

- Service Coordination
- Eligibility Determination
- Other: _____

I want this information to be shared: (check all that apply)

- Written Information
- In Meetings or Phone
- Computerized Data

This consent is good for 90 days after discharge. I can withdraw this consent at any time by telling the referring agency. This will stop the listed agencies from sharing information after they know my consent has been withdrawn. I have the right to know what information has been shared, why, when, and with whom it was shared. If I ask, each agency will show me this information. I want all agencies to accept a copy of this form and as a valid consent to share information. If I do not sign this form, information will not be shared and I will have to contact each agency individually to give them the information about me they need.

Client Signature: _____ Date: _____

Person Explaining Form:

Name _____

Title _____ Phone Number _____

Program Supervisor:

Name _____

Title _____ Phone Number _____

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THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND RESIDENT SERVICES: AREAS OF COOPERATION AND OVERLAP

ESTABLISHING FRIENDLY LINES OF COMMUNICATION: KEYS TO SUCCESS

	RESIDENT SERVICES STAFF	PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STAFF
Intake: Tenant Selection and Interviewing	Focus on service history and current needs during service intake.	Focus on ability to pay rent and related background information during management interview.
	Both staff conduct the tenant interview, focusing on characteristics of a good neighbor. Common concerns during intake: Who makes the final decision? How much information can be shared from the service interview?	
Orientation of Incoming Tenants	Help tenants with concrete needs around moving in, such as unpacking, getting familiar with the building routine and the location of laundry facilities and other amenities, neighborhood resources, staff locations and responsibilities.	Orient tenants about building maintenance issues, fire drills and tenant meetings.
Rent Payment and Arrears	Provide tenants with assistance in paying their rent (e.g., vocational services, etc.).	Usually responsible for collecting rent and addressing issues of rental arrears.
Dealing with Nuisance and Disruptive Behaviors	House rules are generally developed jointly. Some basic rules may be developed by staff and then offered to tenants for input or revision. All staff can help promote healthy cultural norms for the building; it is frequently resident services staff who help to structure these efforts.	
Procedures in Crisis (e.g., psychiatric, medical, physical or fire)	Clear policies and procedures should be in place for dealing with disruptions. These should clearly spell out the chain of command in case of emergency, what information to provide to EMS, when to beep staff on call, etc.	
Tenant Grievance Procedures	Staff and tenants should be aware of systems for evaluating the program and the services given. Property management and resident services staff generally work together, with services staff alerting tenants to procedures through individual case management meetings or tenant meetings.	

	RESIDENT SERVICES STAFF	PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STAFF
Tenant Council	Facilitate initial tenant meetings with the goal being to eventually have tenant-run meetings.	Attend meeting when issues concern the building or maintenance, lease contract or rent.
Community-Building	Many issues mentioned above involve aspects of community-building. The tenants as well as both staffs are members of the building community and influence the culture of the community. Staff should be aware of trends in the community and plan strategies for positively influencing the culture.	

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KNOWING THE RULES AND RISKS: AN INTRODUCTION TO FAIR HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

This series of questions regarding Fair Housing regulations is designed to help property managers and other community staff members, including resident services personnel, understand the rules and the implications of not following these rules. As part of the housing package offered to residents, service programs fall under the umbrella of Fair Housing requirements, and therefore resident services coordinators need to understand the rules and ensure that programs, marketing and referrals are conducted without violating any stipulations.

What is Fair Housing?

Regulations under the Fair Housing Act provide that:

No person shall be subjected to discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin in the sale, rental, or advertising of dwellings, in the provision of brokerage services or in the availability of residential real estate-related transactions.

Who Must Obey the Fair Housing Act?

- People engaged in the real estate profession, which includes managers, sellers or financiers who have been involved in at least three or more sales or rentals in the past 12 months
- Owners of buildings that contain two or more dwelling units
- Resident services program staff

It is possible that there may be additional requirements for state and local laws.

Federal Laws and Regulations

The Civil Rights Act of 1968 provides protection from discriminatory housing practices based on race, color, religion and national origin.

The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 expanded the scope of protection under the Fair Housing Act to prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities and against families with children.

The Americans With Disabilities Act requires accessibility for persons with disabilities and prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, governmental activities and commercial activities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires accessibility to persons with disabilities, and prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities, in housing and other programs that receive federal financial assistance.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in all HUD-assisted programs.

What Categories are Protected by Federal Fair Housing Laws?

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Sex
- National origin
- Handicap or disability
- Familial status (generally, the presence of children under 18 in a household)

What are the Consequences to Owners and Managers Who Violate Fair Housing Laws?

Anyone engaging in activities related to the rental of dwelling units who is found to have engaged in a prohibited practice can be subject to serious penalties of law. Anyone in the chain of command can be sued. For example, if a property's managing agent violates the fair housing laws, both the managing agent and the property owner may be sued even though the property owner neither authorized nor knew of the agent's conduct.

What Is the Architectural Barriers Act?

Publicly owned residential properties, including properties that were financed wholly or partially with federal funds, are subject to the provisions of the Architectural Barriers Act and regulations made under that act. These regulations provide that residential structures shall be designed, constructed or altered to ensure that physically handicapped persons have access to and use of those structures. It is also provided that this requirement is satisfied by using the specifications contained in the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS).

How Do I Avoid Fair Housing Complaints?

- Avoiding fair housing complaints often means going beyond the level of technical compliance with fair-housing requirements.
- Signal that the property is fair-housing sensitive.
- Avoid words that may be misunderstood.
- Give consistent answers.
- Do consistent screening.
- Be inclusive of multiple ethnic groups in pictures and advertising.
- Have all organization staff take fair-housing training.
- Avoid steering potential residents to particular housing options.

There are two primary practices that should be followed to ensure compliance with the Fair Housing Act in your apartment leasing policies: consistency and accommodation.

Avoid “Red Flag” Words:

- “An exclusive community”
- “Close to churches”
- “Ideal for seniors”
- “A mutual community”
- “For the active lifestyle”
- “Families welcomed”
- “Quiet, peaceful, restful community”
- “Latino neighborhood”
- “Learning center for children”

Communicate “Equal Housing Opportunity”

HUD guidelines require that all advertising for the sale, rental or financing of housing contain an equal housing opportunity (EHO) logotype, statement or slogan.

- The EHO slogan reads: “Equal Housing Opportunity.”
- The EHO logo shows the graphic Fair Housing symbol.
- The EHO statement reads:

We are pledged to the letter and spirit of U.S. policy for the achievement of equal housing opportunity throughout the nation. We encourage and support an affirmative advertising and marketing program in which there are no barriers to obtaining housing because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin.

What Does “Familial Status” Mean and Whom Does It Protect?

The term “familial status” refers to the condition of being part of a household that includes a child or children, actual or anticipated. Discrimination on the basis of “familial status” means discriminating against applicants or residents on the ground that the household of which they are a part includes or will include a child or children.

Protected under this section are:

- Households including one or more persons under the age of 18 who live with a parent or other adult who has custody of them or has been designated by the parent to have custody of them
- Pregnant women
- Foster families
- Persons in the process of adopting an individual who is under the age of 18
- A household in the process of securing legal custody of an individual who is under the age of 18

What Is the Fair Housing Act Definition of Handicap or Disability?

Any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment.

How Do We Determine Whether a Request for Accommodation Is “Reasonable”?

In order to determine whether a requested accommodation should be given, the following must first be determined:

- That the tenant or applicant suffers from a disability as defined in the Fair Housing Act
- That the housing provider or manager knows of the handicap or should reasonably be expected to know of it
- That the accommodation of the handicap “may be necessary” to afford the tenant or applicant an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the dwelling

According to the Fair Housing Act, “An accommodation is considered appropriate when it enables the disabled tenant to enjoy the premises to the same degree as that of a similarly situated non-disabled tenant.”

For more information on fair housing, visit <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/index.cfm>.

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RECOMMENDATIONS AND TIPS FOR RESIDENT RETENTION

Although property managers oversee leases, policy violations and evictions, resident services coordinators can play a vital role in ensuring positive relationships between managers and tenants. Indeed, by communicating regularly with both groups and establishing formal procedures, resident services coordinators are able to help prevent evictions, lease violations and other potential problems between tenants and managers. The eviction process in many communities can cost property owners tens of thousands of dollars. Avoiding an eviction is a win-win situation for both tenants and managers.

AHC Inc., in Arlington, VA provided the following hypothetical example of a resident services plan created to address a continual problem with evictions at a property:

Eviction rate is high. Most common reason for resident evictions is fraud.

- Resident Newsletter will include a section called “What You Need to Know (and Do!) To Keep Your Home” with specific information about what fraud is, the forms it can take, its consequences, concrete prevention tips and the RSC number to call for more information.
- Eye-catching “Did You Know...?” fliers will be posted around the property with specific information about what fraud is, the forms it can take, its consequences, concrete prevention tips and the RSC number to call for more information.
- RSC and Management will develop a formal system for communicating about all 21/30 notices sent out. Through this system, the RSC will receive a copy of all notices. Within two business days of when the notice goes out, the RSC will make contact with the resident to explain what the notice means and offer help.
- RSC will track outcome of all resident contact regarding eviction notices in Excel spreadsheet.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT, RESIDENT SERVICES COORDINATORS AND TENANTS

Before a resident can be evicted from a community, the property manager must send the tenant a notice. Eviction notices are almost always the result of one of two things—nonpayment of rent or violation of lease policies. Often, resident services coordinators are unaware of residents facing potential eviction. By the time they are aware, the situation leaves too little time for effective intervention that could help prevent the eviction. Thus, it is important that resident services staff and property management staff strengthen communication with respect to evictions, nonpayment and policy violations. This communication should be part of a formal process and could take one of several forms.

- When a notice is sent to the resident, resident services staff receive a copy of the notice, allowing them to approach the resident to see what assistance or mitigation is needed to avoid eviction.
- The resident services coordinator could create a flyer of information describing what a resident can do when faced with eviction, such as where to find rental assistance and how to appeal property management decisions. This information could be included with the late payment and eviction notice sent out by property management.

The most important component of this strategy is communication between resident services coordinators, property managers and even maintenance staff, who can pinpoint a possible policy violation, allowing a resident services coordinator to intervene before it is too late. Another important component of this strategy is compiling data and tracking tenants with a history of problems. Included in the Housing Stability and Homelessness Prevention section is an explanation of a spreadsheet tool for eviction prevention, which shows when notices were sent to residents, why these notices were sent and what the outcomes of the notices were (e.g., eviction, intervention, resolution).

INTERVENING TO AVOID EVICTIONS

Whenever a potential problem that could result in eviction is spotted by staff from any department on the property, it is the job of a resident services coordinator to work with the tenant to ensure s/he can maintain residency and participation in the services program. Depending on the nature of the problem, this will involve helping locate financial assistance for rental payments or remedying a behavior that violates property rules.

NONPAYMENT

Whether a resident cannot pay rent because of a job loss, medical emergency, family tragedy or something else, the resident services coordinator's knowledge of benefit and subsidy programs will be crucial in the eviction prevention process. In many localities, public and private agencies provide temporary rental assistance until the resident is again able to pay rent, either through returning to work or through receiving a permanent subsidy.

To help mitigate the risk of evictions due to temporary financial crises, resident services coordinators should:

1. Research all temporary assistance agencies in the area.
2. Make a list of these agencies that includes and fully describes the type of assistance available.
3. Maintain a contact list of all government-benefit and subsidy agencies with names of individuals within each agency.
4. Establish partnerships with agencies with the most potential to assist tenants with emergency financial assistance.

5. Regularly verify the information on the contact lists to ensure available assistance in the event of a crisis situation.

Many agencies offer different types of assistance for different populations (e.g., individuals, families with children, single-parent households, etc.). As a result, it is important that your list of programs detail the target population and other restrictions or details for the assistance offered by each agency.

LEASE VIOLATIONS

Leases provide detailed information on resident responsibilities with regard to disturbances, property liability and proper use of the property. Although a lease is a contract between the resident and the property management staff, residents rarely give the fine print the careful attention it deserves. In other words, tenants do not take the time to become acquainted with the information until they have been notified that they are in violation of a previously unknown policy. Thus, the first step in preventing lease violations is a review of the various stipulations as part of the orientation process with new residents.

Depending upon the severity of the infraction, the resident may be able to resolve the issue with property management. The more severe the violation, however, the less forgiving the property management staff will be in negotiating with the tenant. In such cases, resident services coordinators can be of significant help to residents.

Working with residents on policy violations requires resident services coordinators to know and understand the lease agreement. To acquaint themselves with the specific policies of their property, resident services coordinators should obtain a copy of the standard lease and familiarize themselves with the provisions. A training of all resident services coordinators by the property management staff could help as well. Once the resident services coordinators understand what is expected of residents, they can develop tools to ensure that residents also understand property management's expectations.

To facilitate this effort, resident services coordinators should:

- Obtain a list of common violations from the property management staff.
- Develop “Did you know...” documents. Develop a document that explains a particular violation, the consequence for committing the violation and possible prevention tips. Place copies of the document in mailboxes and common areas around the property. Be certain to include contact information should residents have a question.
- Convene community meetings. Resident meetings are a good mechanism for communicating important issues. Organized and concerned residents are less likely to commit violations.

- Include violation prevention tips with tenant communications. If property management staff provides regular communication to tenants either through rent statements or newsletters, develop violation prevention tips to be included.

These are just a few recommendations to get the process started. Resident services coordinators should keep in mind that a partnership and strong communication policies with the property management staff is crucial to the success of eviction prevention efforts. Be certain to keep property management staff well informed and invite their feedback when developing a program.

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COMMUNITY HOUSING PARTNERS EVICTION PREVENTION PROTOCOLS

Community Housing Partners (CHP), headquartered in Richmond, Va., developed these protocols to help stabilize families in their affordable housing by proactively addressing the issues that affect residents' ability to pay rent in a timely manner and comply with other provisions of their leases. A 2009 NeighborWorks America study of the impact of resident services on CHP properties' selected financial performance indicators found that resident services saved over \$200 per unit per year in fiscal years 2006 and 2007. Additional savings were experienced in properties where these eviction prevention protocols were employed by resident services and property management staff.

Property Management Issue — Change in Income Due to Unemployment

Action	RS/PM ¹ Responsibility	Time Period
Inform the resident that they are being referred to Resident Services to assist them with their job search.	PM	
Send a referral form to Resident Services for follow up assistance.	PM	Within 24 hours of completion of referral form
Follow up and work with the resident to develop a plan of action to resolve employment and/or zero-income issues.	RS	Within 72 hours of receipt of referral form
Follow up with the resident to ensure completion of the plan of action and to notify them that they will be placed on the Watch List.	RS	Weekly
Update PM staff on the status of the resident during weekly staff meetings.	RS	Weekly
If a resident has not followed through with his/her agreed upon plan of action at the end of a month, refer back to PM for further action.	RS	30 days after initial contact with resident by the resident services coordinator
If, after three attempts, the resident refuses to meet, or does not show up for scheduled meetings, with the Resident Services staff to develop a plan, refer back to PM as uninterested in complying the occupancy criteria.	RS	
Provide PM with a follow-up report detailing each attempt and outcome.	RS	

Property Management Issue -- History of Late Rent Payments and No Rent Payment

Residents who are not meeting the lease criteria of on-time rent payment will be identified by Property Management according to the following steps:

Action	RS/PM Responsibility	Time Period
LATE PAYMENT OF RENT		
Residents who are late with rent payments will be referred to Resident Services for follow up.	PM	6 th day of the month
Provide copies of any contacts with the resident with regard to the late payment issues.	PM	
Assess the cause of the issue with the resident within one week of receipt of referral (financial management, loss of income, disorganized household) and assist the resident in developing an action plan to meet the payment plan as developed by PM.	RS	
If, after three attempts, the resident refuses to meet with the Resident Services staff to develop a plan, refer back to PM as uninterested in complying with the lease criteria.	RS	
Provide PM with a follow-up report detailing each attempt and outcome.	RS	
Inform Resident Services of the status of late rent payers.	PM	6 th day of each month
NON-PAYMENT OF RENT		
Refer a resident behind in his/her rent, while following through with the initial court action.	PM	6 th day of each month
Assess the cause of the issue and assist the resident with a plan of action, including a recommendation for a payment agreement (that is pre-approved by RPM), if there is good cause.	RS	Within 24 hours of referral from PM
If, after three attempts, the resident refuses to meet with the Resident Services staff to develop a plan, refer back to PM as uninterested in complying with the lease criteria.	RS	
Provide PM with a follow-up report detailing each attempt and outcome.	RS	
Inform Resident Services of the further actions taken with these residents during the staff meeting.	PM	Weekly

Property Management Issue — Housekeeping Issues

Residents who are in danger of violating their lease agreements due to poor housekeeping will be identified in the following ways:

- During the annual household inspection done by PM
- During a routine maintenance request

Action	RS/PM Responsibility	Time Period
Report to PM any resident identified as having housekeeping issues during a Maintenance or Resident Services home visit.	Maintenance; RS, PM	
Schedule a routine house inspection. PM will provide a report to the resident identifying the housekeeping issues that need to be resolved prior to a follow up inspection.	PM	Within one week of the report from Maintenance or Community Initiatives
Refer to Resident Services.	PM	
Make a home visit to offer education and assistance in resolving the housekeeping issue.	RS	
Work with the resident to develop a plan for both the initial issues and ongoing housekeeping concerns. First contact will be made with the resident.	RS	Within 48 hours of Watch List referral
If, after three attempts, the resident refuses to meet, or does not show up for scheduled meetings, with the Resident Services staff to develop a plan, refer back to PM as uninterested in complying with the Admissions & Occupancy criteria.	RS	
Provide PM with a follow-up report detailing each attempt and outcome.	RS	
PM will schedule a follow-up inspection.	PM	Within two weeks of initial inspection
If the resident fails the second follow-up inspection, PM will send a 21-Day Notice to Vacate. Property Management will also send a second referral to Resident Services for follow-up.	PM	
If the housekeeping issue is resolved after the 21-Day Notice is sent, schedule a follow-up inspection and notify Resident Services of the date of inspection and the results.	PM	
Inform Resident Services of further actions taken with these residents.	PM	Weekly staff meetings

Property Management Issue — Other Lease Violations Such as Noise Complaints, Excessive Visitors, Loitering, Youth Behavioral Issues, Youth Violence and Vandalism

Action	RS/PM Responsibility	Time Period
Follow complaints through PM channels with an Incident Report, place on the Watch List and refer to Resident Services.	PM	
Work with the family to develop a written plan for resolution and follow up to ensure that issues are resolved. Keep records detailing the specific interventions, referrals and results.	RS	Within one week of the report from Maintenance or Community Initiatives
Inform Resident Services of any new complaints that may occur.	PM	
Update PM on the progress of the family at the weekly staff meetings.	RS	
If, after three attempts, the resident refuses to meet, or does not show up for scheduled meetings, with the Resident Services staff to develop a plan, refer back to PM as uninterested in complying with the lease criteria.	RS	Within 48 hours of Watch List referral
Refer back to PM for eviction proceedings residents who do not choose to follow the plan of action steps or correct the problem during the designated time period.	RS	
Inform Resident Services of further actions taken with these residents.	PM	Weekly staff/watch list meetings

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(Footnotes)

1. RS = Resident services staff; PM = Property management staff

INTRODUCTION TO THE MICROSOFT® EXCEL-BASED TOOL FOR EVICTION PREVENTION TRACKING

When property managers send notices to tenants regarding potential evictions and policy violations, it is important that resident services coordinators—those who work most closely with residents—are aware of these letters and the infractions that prompted them. Resident services coordinators play a vital role in helping residents find the assistance they need, financial or otherwise, to ensure they can be tenants in good standing.

However, it can be difficult to develop a communication and tracking system that ensures both property managers and resident services coordinators are aware of potential problems, the actions taken to remedy these problems and the outcomes of any interventions. As mentioned in the “Tips for Resident Retention” document in this section, communication is very important, and before any tracking system for eviction or policy violation notices can be established, clear lines of communication between property management and resident services staff must be established. Once the communication pathways are opened, both groups can work collectively to track notices, interventions and outcomes to bring about the most positive results for staff and tenants.

Enterprise has created a tool, available for downloading and customizing in the online version of this manual, that property managers and resident services coordinators can use to coordinate eviction intervention efforts. The Microsoft Excel-based tool is designed for access by multiple users, but it can be converted into a single-user application that would require more off-line communication. You can find the tool online at <http://www.enterprisecommunity.org/resources>.

Included in the tool are drop-down menus that enable multiple users to enter data that are uniform, allowing for easier comparison and analysis; these drop-down menus can be changed to suit the needs of any organization by selecting the “Validation” feature under Excel’s “Data” menu (when attempting to do this, highlight all of the column’s empty cells to ensure the drop-down menu appears regardless of how many times you enter new data). In addition to the drop-down menus, there are columns designed to capture more details about a particular case, and these columns allow users to enter any pertinent information. To further aid in the analysis of notice type and intervention efficacy, the Excel workbook includes a “Roll Up” sheet where information tables and graphs can be created for inclusion in internal or external program reports.

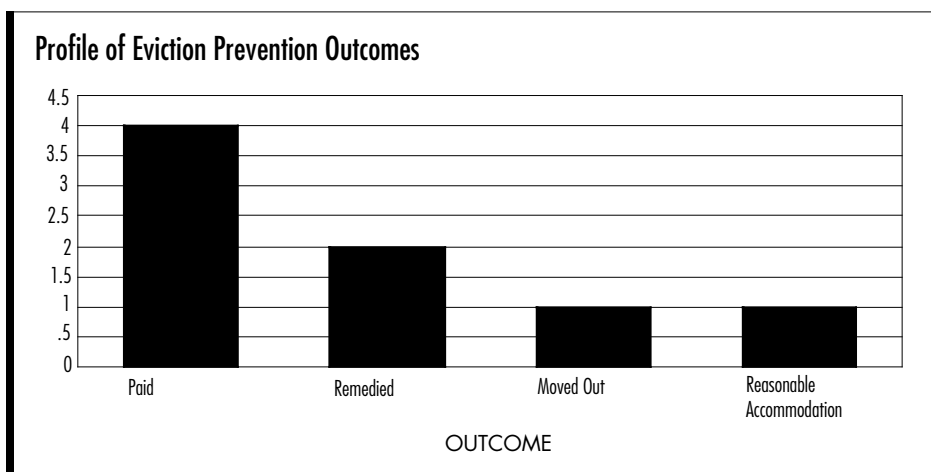
The following is the list of column headings included in the tool:

- Date
- Unit #
- Building
- *Notice Type—can be customized to match the types of notices sent in a particular community
- *Issue—provides a more specific description of why the notice was sent
- If Other, please specify
- RSC (Resident Services Coordinator) Action*—what intervention steps were taken
- *Referral 1—what was the subject of the first referral
- *Referral 2—what was the subject of the second referral (if needed)
- *Referral 3—what was the subject of the third referral (if needed)
- RSC Notes —an open column for relevant referral and intervention details
- *Outcome—how was the situation resolved
- Outcome Date
- Follow-up Notes—an open column for relevant details about the resolution

** These columns include drop-down menus that restrict what information can be entered. You can customize these restrictions to fit your program.*

More important than the tool's ability to analyze programs, however, is its ability to actually track in real time the progress of referrals and other assistance measures. Following the initial notice being sent, a row is created in the spreadsheet that allows both property managers and resident services staff to see what is being done to resolve the problem and whether a final resolution has been achieved or if there are still outstanding issues.

The following chart is an example of the type of program analysis that can be conducted using the eviction prevention tool.



To be sure, some organizations will find that this template does not fit their programs. In such cases, the easy-to-use format of Excel makes it possible to customize the spreadsheet to your needs. If any errors occur, you can return to the “clean slate” of the online original.

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