Community Building in and Around Supportive Residences

curriculum

supportive housing training series

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Curriculum

Developed by Center for Urban Community Services

Community Building in and Around Supportive Residences is part of the Supportive Housing Training Series. This training series currently includes eleven curricula providing best practices and guidance on supportive housing development, operation and services.

The full series is available for downloading from the Department of Housing and Urban Development website.

For more information:
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: www.hud.gov
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H U D C U R R I C U L U M
COMMUNITY BUILDING
IN AND AROUND SUPPORTIVE RESIDENCES

PURPOSE AND GOALS: The purpose of this six-hour training is to explore the topic of community building in and around the supportive housing setting. Our goal is that by the end of this training you will see community building as an integral part of all the services you offer your tenants and an important aspect of the success of your residence. This training aims to assist you in determining the steps required for your organization to implement a community building plan relevant to your setting and to assess the training needs of staff and tenants.

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTION (30–40 minutes)

II. OVERVIEW AND HISTORY
   A. History of Community Building in Supportive Housing (10–20 minutes)
   B. Community Building Activities & Terms Defined (10–20 minutes)

III. BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY BUILDING (30–60 min)

IV. STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY (10 min)
   A. Engaging and Fostering Relationships Within the Residence (30–40 min)
   B. Involving Tenants in the Decision-Making Process (50–60 minutes)
   C. Connecting Tenants to Neighborhood & Larger Community (30–40 min)
   D. Promoting Positive Norms of Behavior Within the Residence (30–40 min)

V. DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY BUILDING PLAN (30–40 minutes)

VI. CASE STUDIES: CHALLENGES IN ORGANIZING PROCESS (30–40 min)

VII. CONCLUSION (10–20 minutes)

HANDOUTS:

1. Agenda

2. Community Building Within A Supportive Residence: Benefits to Members of the Community

3. Building and Maintaining Relationships Within the Residence

4. Involving Tenants in the Decision-Making Process

5. Tips for Designing House Rules In Supportive Housing

6. Tips for Starting a House Rules Committee

7. Connecting Tenants to the Neighborhood and the Larger Environment

8. General Organizing Principles

9. Community Building Case Examples

10. Application of Concepts and Developing Next Steps: Social Norms and Organizing Issues Worksheet

11. Community Building In and Around Supportive Housing: Additional Readings

TRAINER'S PREFACE FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

I. Brief Summary of Curriculum Content

The curriculum contains <u>at least</u> six hours of verbal content. This does not mean the entire content must be covered. Depending on the intended focus of the training and the format (exercises and small group discussions vs. large group presentation), portions of this training can be elaborated, abridged and/or deleted.

II. Trainer Qualification

Key to the successful delivery of the curriculum and to participants learning is the qualifications of the trainer. What the trainer brings to the training session, including their knowledge about the subject being taught, their experience in supportive housing and their training or teaching skills, will impact the quality of the training and the outcomes. This curriculum is intended for use by individuals with the appropriate constellation of talent and ability to manage the learning of others in building community in and around supportive housing projects.

III. Good Training Practice

A. How People Learn
People learn through a combination of lecture, visual aids and participation. The more actively they are involved in the process, the more information they will retain. For this reason, eliciting answers from the group rather than presenting material is usually preferable. Additionally, it is important to include exercises that stimulate interaction and experiential learning and not spend all of the time lecturing. Be aware, however, that group participation and discussion takes more time than straightforward presentations and may cut down on the amount of content possible to cover. What is minimized or deleted from the curriculum should be based on the assessment of the group's learning needs and the goals initially contracted with the group.

B. Know Your Audience
The type of setting that the trainees work in and their roles will determine the areas of the curriculum that the trainer will focus on. Gathering as much information about the group beforehand is recommended. In order to create a safe and effective learning environment, it is recommended that the maximum number of participants not exceed thirty people.

C. Introductions and the Training Contract

Introductions should provide the trainer with more information as to who the audience is. The trainer will want to know the person's name, their program, their role and what they hope to get out of the training. The trainer should then clarify what will and will not be covered. This is the training contract.

D. Acknowledge and Use Expertise of the Participants

This is important as it allows people to learn from each other, builds group cohesion, keeps people involved and establishes an atmosphere of mutual respect.

E. Flexibility

Throughout the training the trainer should continually assess the needs of the group and revise the amount of time devoted to each specific topic. Responding to the needs and interests of the group must be balanced with the agreement to cover certain topics. It is the trainer's job to respond to the needs that arise and yet stay focused on the subject matter.

IV. Training Content

A. Sequence of Content

This training is designed to teach participants the benefits of developing community both in and around a supportive residence. The early part of the training discusses the "why's" of community building and the latter portion discusses the "hows." It is optimal to begin the training in the order that it is written. However, if a group is already familiar with the reasons for community building and desires, instead, to focus on strategies, the first three sections can be abridged or omitted.

B. Flexibility of Content

The amount of depth that this training allows for depends on the learning needs of the training group. If the trainees are new to the concept of building community within a supportive housing setting, then the trainer should expect to cover all of the material presented in the allotted six-hour time frame. If, however, the trainees are already familiar with the reasons for organizing and are more interested in applying organizing strategies in their settings, the trainer should expect to spend more time on sections IV through VII and allow for more discussion. If the trainees come from the same sites, then it is optimal to break them up according to their programs and have them apply the principles taught in the training directly to their setting.

C. Personalizing Content

In order to personalize the training, it is important for the trainer to offer case examples or anecdotes regarding the topic. This can also be achieved by eliciting personal stories from trainees. Using these relevant stories will make the training more interesting and personal.

D. Matching Content to a Target Audience

This training is geared towards directors and supervisory staff. It is important for the trainer to ensure that the trainees match the target audience for this training.

V. Time Management of Content

Each section of the agenda has time frames allotted. The trainer should be aware that if a great deal of time is devoted to one topic area, other content areas might be sacrificed. Group exercises can always be abridged, if necessary, for time's sake. For example, if the group exercise involves dividing into four groups to work on four separate cases, the trainer may consider having each group work on a smaller number of cases. This will shorten the report back time, but will not eliminate the group process. Elicitation and discussion takes more time than lecturing but less time than small group exercises. The trainer needs to balance this with the fact that lecturing is also the least effective way to learn.

The trainer will find that each time this curriculum is trained, it will vary. Being mindful of good training practice and making adjustments to the timing and sequence will allow for a tailored training that will be most beneficial to participants.

I. INTRODUCTION (30–40 minutes)

TRAINER NOTE: This section should include an introduction of the trainer, a review of training incidentals (hours, breaks, coffee, bathroom locations), a brief overview of the training goals and objectives. This is followed by a roundtable introduction of trainees and any areas related to tenants' special needs they hope will be addressed.

TRAINER STATES: The purpose of this six-hour training is to explore the topic of community building in and around the supportive housing setting. Our goal is that by the end of this training you will see community building as an integral part of all of the services you offer your tenants and an important aspect of the success of your residence. This training aims to assist you in determining the steps required for your organization to implement a community building plan relevant to your setting and to assess the training needs of staff and tenants.

At the end of the training, participants will:

- Be able to identify the benefits of building community in their residence
- Understand the challenges/obstacles of building community in their residence
- Identify four major strategies to build community
- Be able to develop a community building plan their residence
- Identify how the residence will apply this knowledge to building community

TRAINER NOTE: Trainer will introduce him/herself to trainees including experience in either supportive housing or service delivery. Each trainee is asked to introduce him/herself by stating name, agency, staff role and what s/he hopes to get out of the training. Trainer should write concerns of trainees on flipchart. The trainer will review agenda on flipchart and link trainee concerns to agenda items for the day. See **HANDOUT #1: AGENDA.**

TRAINER NOTE: Inform trainees they will now do an exercise to introduce themselves to one another and get to know members of their own community. Instruct group to find a person in the room whom s/he does not know and spend five minutes introducing him/herself. Tell them to talk about what they do, what they are interested in, what drew them to this work, then switch roles. After 10 minutes call "time" and ask each group to pair up with another pair (four persons to a group). Instruct each pair to introduce their partner to the group. Call time after another 10 minutes. Process with the large group how the exercise went. Was it intimidating? Comment that, for many people, the larger the group, the higher the anxiety level and intimidation. Ask them to remember that when thinking about organizing large groups with tenants.

LEARNING POINTS: Trainer is establishing the learning contract for the day with the trainees. It is important to indicate what will and what will not be covered in the training based on responses from the trainees and reviewing the agenda. Trainees will understand that everybody has a role in supportive housing.

II.A: HISTORY OF COMMUNITY BUILDING IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (10–20 minutes)

BRIEF LECTURE:

- The earliest supportive housing projects evolved out of efforts in the 1960s and 70s to provide social services to people living in Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs). In these SROs, single people with a variety of disabilities lived in extreme deprivation where crime and violence were a way of life. Despite the fact that many of these tenants were marginalized from their families and the rest of society, their relationships with others in the building were often remarkably stable. Social workers were surprised to discover relationships of mutual aid and protection, where people depended on one another for support and protection.

- Social workers in the first supportive SROs found that by helping people to form relationships in the buildings, their work was augmented. Fostering positive supportive relationships among tenants resulted in a greater sense of belonging, enhanced self-esteem, increased use of social services, decreased isolation, provided increased safety and for some, more confidence to engage in other relationships outside the residence.

- In many of these buildings, a variety of behavioral norms had been established — many of them often negative. In bringing tenants together, these norms were often the subject of discussion and something that people wanted to influence. The involvement of the tenancy in establishing and promoting behavioral norms around such things as respect for people and property, tolerable and intolerable behaviors and styles of interaction was key to successfully shifting these cultures.

- In these initial efforts, a tenant's decision to participate in services was voluntary. Meetings and group gatherings afforded opportunities for tenants to "check out" workers in a low demand setting and workers could establish relationships with tenants around less personal and sensitive topics, often opening the door for discussions on more complicated issues such as mental illness and substance use issues.

- As the communities in the SROs developed and identified goals that required more planning and organizing to accomplish, the workers helped tenants learn the skills to accomplish these tasks. Being able to impact their living environment empowered tenants to take action in other areas of their lives such as work, family and health. As the norms of the buildings more closely approximated those of the surrounding neighborhood, tenants found it easier to go outside of their homes and engage in other activities in the community.

LEARNING POINTS: Participants will have an understanding of the history and significance of community building in supportive housing.

II.B: COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES AND TERMS DEFINED (10–20 min)

> **TRAINER NOTE:** This section is largely elicited from trainees. The trainer may decide to have some of this information on a flipchart as a reference.

BRIEF LECTURE:

Although you may not be using these terms specifically, most supportive housing providers engage in some form of community building in their residences. For some, these efforts are integrated into supportive services planning from the outset. For others, community building initiatives are instituted later in the process. Single-site projects usually provide ample opportunities to foster community due to the frequency of interaction and close proximity of tenants and staff. Scattered-site projects pose particular challenges to the community building process but can still apply many of the concepts that follow.

Community building involves a range of activities, which include:

- connecting tenants to each other

- connecting tenants to the staff

- connecting tenants/the program to the neighborhood and the community at large

Let's take a minute to briefly illustrate what kinds of community building activities we are talking about. Later in the day, we will provide many more examples.

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN ACTIVITY THAT IS GEARED TOWARD CONNECTING TENANTS TO EACH OTHER AND/OR TO STAFF? [Expected responses include:]

- socialization groups

- regular meetings with tenants for input into the services program

- recreational groups

- clinical groups

- outings

- offering donuts and coffee in the lounge

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT KINDS OF PROGRAMS CONNECT TENANTS TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY? [Expected responses include:]

- open twelve step meetings

- voter registration drives

- community gardening

- local park clean-ups

- public speaking (speaker's bureau)

- community board meetings

TRAINER STATES: Let's define some terms that we will be using today when we talk about community building in supportive housing. The first and most essential term we should define is "community." Let's look at our own experience belonging to communities as a way to tune into tenants' experience.

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT COMMUNITIES DO YOU/HAVE YOU BELONGED TO?
[Expected responses include:]

- church

- temple

- mosque

- PTA

- community board

- twelve step

- professional organizations

- food co-ops

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT DEFINED THESE ORGANIZATIONS/GROUPS AS COMMUNITIES? [Expected responses include:]

- by how it felt (might feel good or not good — some communities are stigmatized, such as people with mental illness, others are the result of negative common interests such as drug use)

- by what we do

- by what we have in common with a group of people

- by how others perceive us (i.e., race, gender)

- generally a sense of belonging or connection

TRAINER ELICITS: HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE "COMMUNITY"?   WHAT IS "COMMUNITY"? [Expected responses include:]

> A community is a group having common interests, common goal(s) and/or common possession or participation. This may include living in the same building or neighborhood, sharing a profession, working for a particular cause or simply sharing a hobby.

> Characteristics of a healthy and "developed" residential community include: Mutual support, concern for each other's safety, respect for each other's property, sharing, mechanisms for promoting common interests and addressing problems; a friendly environment.

LEARNING POINTS: In supportive housing, the staff, tenants and immediate neighbors of the residence share a common living environment, an experience that profoundly affects one's quality of life. Community building within a residence usually means actively facilitating interaction among tenants and staff through informal gatherings as well as other more organized structures in order to create a safe, supportive and empowering environment. Developing community outside of the site includes making tenants aware of the various opportunities in the area to become part of the community and then supporting those efforts.

III.   BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY BUILDING (30–60 min)

> **TRAINER NOTE:** Large Group Eliciting Benefits and Challenges of Community Building — Post four sheets of newsprint with the following headings: BENEFITS FOR TENANTS; CHALLENGES FOR TENANTS; BENEFITS FOR STAFF; CHALLENGES FOR STAFF. Ask the trainees to brainstorm each category. Make sure you add what the trainees miss. See **HANDOUT #2 COMMUNITY BUIDING WITHIN A SUPPORTIVE RESIDENCE: BENEFITS TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.**

TRAINER STATES: While for many, the benefits for building community in a supportive housing project are clear, there is often a reluctance for both staff and tenants to get involved in the community building process. It is important that staff is aware of these obstacles in order to work them through, otherwise some of the best-made plans will not succeed. We will now look at the costs as well as the challenges (either real or perceived) of building community for both tenants and staff. Try to think about yourself and your own experiences in communities as you work on this exercise.

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR TENANTS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY? [Expected responses include:]

- Propagandizes a set of positive norms which counteracts the development of negative communities and illicit activities
- Combats isolation that can result in psychiatric deterioration and relapse
- Enhances pride in ownership; tenants are more likely to invite family or friends to visit if they feel proud of their home environment and feel they have ownership and control of their homes.
- Helps to create a culture of mutual understanding and tolerance
- Allows for the identification of problems in all areas of living, including services and management, and provides a route to address them
- Teaches tenants the skills needed to impact their environment
- Increases the likelihood that the building will be maintained
- Increases opportunities for communication (peers, tenant to staff, etc.)
- Improves social and psychological ties among community members
- Increases customer satisfaction by providing relevant activities and services
- Allows for increased opportunities for interaction in buildings with "mixed populations"
- Increases safety and security

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT ARE CHALLENGES FOR TENANTS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY? [Expected responses include:]

- Being part of a community means sharing some part of oneself (time, experience, etc.). For some, this may seem like an invasion of privacy.
- People who have been institutionalized may need to be educated about the benefits and skills needed to participate in a community — this may be a foreign concept or they may lack the confidence or interpersonal skills needed to participate in a community building process
- Some may fear disappointment, having participated in ineffectual groups in the past.
- Joining a group is risky business, because you put yourself and possibly your ideas out there and the group might reject them.
- Some tenants may fear staff/landlord retaliation, including eviction, for expressing negative opinions about the residence or another individual.
- A strong negative culture in the building may discourage participation in positive efforts.

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR STAFF IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY? [Expected response includes:]

- Allows a point-of-entry for engagement
- Makes their job easier by delegating tasks and responsibilities
- Allows for greater satisfaction by allowing for tenants' personal growth
- Opportunity to observe building dynamics on a new level
- Increases buildings' safety and security
- Increases positive activities and diminishes negative activities
- Greater consumer satisfaction with the services
- Helps identify natural leadership in the community of tenants
- Helps identify skills needed for others to take on more leadership roles

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR STAFF IN BUILDING COMMUNITY? [Expected responses include:]

- Skills may be outside of the area of expertise for many providers.
- Fear of creating a "grump wagon" or gripe session among tenants
- Staff have to be prepared to commit financial resources.
- Tenants who have the skills to organize, can organize against you.

- Staff must clarify negotiable and non-negotiable issues (what decisions can tenants make, etc.).

- Sometimes there is inequitable input (e.g., small group of involved tenants making decisions for larger group).

- Staff may disagree about the cultural norms desired (e.g., acting out tenant — what's the minimum standard).

- A more democratic and egalitarian model presents the risk that tenants who gain power through this process can operationalize an agenda that may differ from that of staff (e.g., may have different priorities — you may want to work on creating positive substance abuse norms, they may want to work on getting a new t.v.); tenants may make decisions that will make staff life/jobs more difficult or that may be counter to what is felt to be good practice (e.g., harsh House Rules, pressure to evict certain tenants)

- Staff may feel that community building efforts are in addition to their job/role as case manager and thus extra work.

TRAINER STATES: To review the community building model of service delivery:

- Initial community building efforts are often motivated by a desire to fix something that has gone wrong. In fact, establishing a positive community can actually avert some problems before they erupt. Problems often result from tenants not having a sense of ownership in the residence, or lacking the skills needed to meet the obligations of tenancy and live as a positive contributor to the community.

- We propose a "community building model" to conceptualize supportive housing. Under this model the community, made up of staff and tenants, work in partnership to inform the delivery of all services and to directly influence the cultural/social norms. This may involve a cultural shift for many staff who are used to "doing for" tenants and retaining primary control for decision-making, program planning and service delivery.

- Community building is integral to this model of housing. The rest of this training will focus on the "hows" of community building and what to do about addressing some of the obstacles named.

LEARNING POINTS: Clearly, community building efforts can be time-consuming, frustrating at times and consume a great deal of resources. The benefits, however, far outweigh the obstacles and buildings that focus on community building will be safer and cleaner and engender greater consumer satisfaction.

IV. STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY (10 minutes)

TRAINER STATES: Community development efforts can be wide-ranging, depending on the goals, purposes, and interests of the people involved. Activities can be basic and limited to giving tenants and staff opportunities to interact, and they can evolve into efforts that include tenants in decision-making processes in the residence. Assisting tenants to form new relationships is important from many perspectives. Helping tenants to participate in their environment and to identify and affiliate around areas of personal interest are also consistent within the goals of many supportive housing programs.

We have broken down community building activities into four major areas, each with its own specific strategies:

- ENGAGING AND FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE RESIDENCE
- INVOLVING TENANTS IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES
- CONNECTING TENANTS TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY
- PROMOTING POSITIVE NORMS OF BEHAVIOR WITHIN THE RESIDENCE

We are going to explore the first three strategies in group exercises and review the fourth category together.

TRAINER NOTE: Small Group Exercise on Community Building Strategies
Break the trainees into three groups and assign each group one of the 1st three categories above. Allow them 20 minutes to brainstorm all of the ways they would, could or might achieve their designated strategy. Instruct them to appoint a recorder, who should record every response on newsprint and a reporter, who will report back to the large group. After each group has finished the exercise, they will report back to the large group. Following each group's presentation the trainer, should review any points that have not been covered.

LEARNING POINTS: Trainees will share their expertise with one another in the three strategies assigned.

IV.A: ENGAGING AND FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE RESIDENCE
(30–40 minutes)

TRAINER NOTE: See *HANDOUT # 3: BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE RESIDENCE.*

BRIEF LECTURE:

- FORM A WELCOME COMMITTEE: Developing relationships with tenants that include some level of trust and rapport takes time, and efforts should begin shortly after a new tenant arrives. A traditional welcome committee can introduce new tenants to the neighborhood, the residence and some of their neighbors.

- CREATE A FORMAL ORIENTATION PROCESS: Orientation packets with information about the service program, building procedures, and neighborhood amenities are a help to new tenants and make them feel welcome and more at ease. Many supportive housing programs feature regularly scheduled orientations for new arrivals. Staff can also conduct outreach efforts to individual tenants to introduce the service program.

- PROVIDE ACTIVITIES THAT ALLOW FOR CASUAL INTERACTION: To bring together new and long-standing tenants with each other and with staff activities that allow for casual interaction — coffee hours, celebrations and parties, games and music are effective. Avoiding stale and uncreative formats is necessary to maintain the interest of long-time tenants and a diverse group of individuals. Guest speakers, fairs, groups and workshops that focus on topics of common interest, such as career advancement and employment, men's/women's issues, health and advocacy have been popular and helped to foster new relationships among tenants. One residence had great success with an "over-40" group that has lasted for years. Discussions have ranged from health issues to retirement planning to relationships with grandchildren and significant others. Staff should be encouraged to participate and share in these activities to the extent possible.

- CREATE WELCOMING COMMON SPACES: Community development efforts obviously require spaces for people to gather and to meet. Some sponsors that were not planning on substantial community development efforts neglected to include common spaces during the physical design stage of their projects. Regardless of the organization's goals in this area, space for meetings, celebrations and casual socializing are usually configured into most supportive housing projects.

- CREATE AND MAINTAIN FORUMS/SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNICATION: Systems can include: forums to announce events or news about building life, such as newsletters, public space announcement area (bulletin boards, glass cases), notices regarding meetings, etc. (can backfire due to institutional feel).

- ENHANCE NATURAL SUPPORTS: Encourage tenants to reach out to other tenants by home-visiting elderly, bringing meals to sick neighbors, celebrating holidays, celebrations, community dinners, etc. Pair up tenants who share things in common to maximize resources, for example: single mothers' babysitting club, homework club, etc.

- REACH OUT TO ALL TENANTS: Supportive housing staff sometimes target activities largely to special needs individuals and tend to lose the interest of other tenants. This occurs because the service staff is usually hired (and has been trained) to focus on the needs and interests of tenants who have special needs and disabilities. However, the benefits of working to engage all tenants include an increase in the overall stability of the building and more interactions across tenants groups. Additionally, since many tenants who do not have identified special needs will require services at some point, involving them in community activities can provide opportunities to learn more about the services offered and how to access them. Staff will also have developed beginning relationships with some of these tenants, which can make it easier to seek help when needed.

LEARNING POINTS: Participants will understand the various strategies useful in engaging, developing and maintaining a sense of community within their supportive housing projects. No matter how creative or appealing, the community activities that the residence sponsors may not be of interest to some tenants. There are those who are simply not interested in participating in the tenant community. Some ebb and flow of participants is also natural. Nonetheless, the onus of keeping all tenants informed about building-wide issues and community events remains the on-going responsibility of program staff.

IV.B: INVOLVE TENANTS IN DECISION-MAKING (50–60 minutes)

TRAINER NOTE: See *HANDOUT #4: INVOLVING TENANTS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS*.

- INVOLVE TENANTS IN THE PLANNING OF ACTIVITIES, OUTINGS, PARTIES AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS: There can be an ad hoc planning committee for specific events or an ongoing committee made up of staff and tenants.

- IDENTIFY NATURAL LEADERS AND DEVELOP LEADERSHIP SKILLS: Are there particular tenants who are already known to have good skills in the areas of: Diplomacy, Communication, Problem Solving Abilities? Are there other people who might be interested in taking on a leadership role but lack the skills needed to do so? Are resources available to teach leadership skills?

- SOLICIT INPUT ABOUT THE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES THAT ARE BEING OFFERED: Providers can also use tenant surveys to gather opinions about the perceived usefulness, quality and relevance of the services being offered. Some programs have suggestion boxes available in public places.

- CREATE OPEN COMMUNICATION FORUMS SUCH AS COMMUNITY MEETINGS: Regularly scheduled "community meetings" that are open to all staff and tenants are a feature of many supportive housing programs. Bringing together members of the tenant community has intrinsic and practical value, as tenants and staff work together to solve problems. The meetings help to troubleshoot issues, dispel rumors, sing praises, reduce the number of "public secrets" and give community members the comfort of knowing there is a forum to express concerns. Residences manage community meetings in varying formats. Some create agendas on the spot and others do so beforehand. Agendas that include a time for announcements or an open-microphone are popular. Community meetings tend to be chaired by the director of the residence or other staff.

- ESTABLISH TENANT COUNCILS/TENANT ADVISORY COMMITTEES: Staff and tenants may also be interested in working toward the development of a formal tenants association or tenant advisory committee, although these structures can be more complicated to assemble and are not advisable until a building/program is well established.

- HIRE TENANTS IN STAFF POSITIONS: Tenants who are also employees are able to alert staff to issues that might otherwise not come out, as well as become more established in the decision-making process.

- INVOLVE TENANTS IN THE INTAKE PROCESS: Tenants can participate in the final interview with prospective tenants to provide information, answer questions and participate in the decision-making process.

- INVOLVE TENANTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSE RULES (HOUSE RULES COMMITTEES) AND OTHER BUILDING POLICIES: Experience has shown that there are numerous advantages to having tenants develop the rules for their buildings. When tenants are supportive of the rules of the house, they are more likely to incorporate them and to remind others to do the same. In this way, rules can help influence the culture and norms of the residence. The process of tenants meeting to discuss house rules can be beneficial for community building. In soliciting input, staff should be clear regarding the use of tenant input and how it will be factored into final decisions to avoid raising unrealistic expectations. Involving tenants can be an effective tool in developing trust and relationships and also provide tenants with opportunities to take genuine responsibility for the tenant community.

> **TRAINER NOTE:** Depending on the needs and interests of the group, the trainer can briefly review ***HANDOUT #5: TIPS FOR DESIGNING HOUSE RULES*** and ***HANDOUT #6: TIPS FOR STARTING A HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE.***

TRAINER STATES: House rules are vital in providing a safe environment and ensuring that tenants' rights are respected and maintained. In most cases, the house rules can be used as an annex to the lease. Tenants must comply with the house rules and with any changes adopted in the future as a condition of the lease agreement. Violations will be considered a breach of the lease. When designing house rules in your building, it is important to keep the following points in mind:

- PURPOSE OF THE HOUSE RULES: Consider the intent behind the rule. Rules should have a clear purpose that should be understood by the community. Divisions are created within the community when rules are perceived to be for the convenience or benefit of a few.

- ENFORCEABILITY: How the rules will be enforced and the process for enforcing them is key. Consistency is necessary when enforcing rules in a building. Rules that cannot be uniformly enforced should be excluded from the list. If it is discovered that a rule is not enforceable, consider other ways the same idea might be encouraged voluntarily.

- LESS IS MORE: Having a few enforceable rules is far more effective than pages of rules that cannot be enforced or even effectively communicated.

- DEVELOPMENT: Rules can and should be changed to meet the needs of the tenants living in the building. It is essential to create a structure and a process to review and revise rules. Having a process in place for residents to file grievances and appeal sanctions for rules violations ensures that the rights of residents are protected and that residents are confident that rules are fairly enforced.

BRIEF LECTURE:

The following are tips for starting a House Rules Committee in your residence.

- Define the purpose of the House Rules Committee in relation to your program mission.

- Discuss the process with staff and allow an opportunity to question things such as: the value of the process, the probable lack of staff expertise in this area and the significant time commitment required to create an effective process.

- Don't be too cautious, you will naturally have some loose ends prior to starting because you need your resident partners to help you to define the process.

- Create a flyer, translated into all relevant languages spoken by residents, stating the purpose of the Committee.

- Talk it up! Make sure that each resident feels personally invited and that their input is welcome. Encourage people who have expressed dissatisfaction with house rules to attend.

- Invite the chairs of existing committees, groups or resident associations. Some examples may be a beautification committee, reading club or recovery group.

- Offer refreshments at all meetings.

- Monitor the demographic composition of the first meeting. Are all racial, ethnic, genders and age groups represented? If not, discuss outreach efforts to diversify the group.

- Keep meetings focused both on the product (reviewing house rules) and on the process (involving residents in making decisions about their homes).

- Identify which rules are non-negotiable and why.

LEARNING POINTS: Involving tenants in decision-making helps to cultivate investment in the project community. A variety of strategies may be employed to meet this end. Developing relevant house rules with tenant input can facilitate this process as well.

IV.C: CONNECTING TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD & THE LARGER ENVIRONMENT
(30–40 minutes)

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

TRAINER NOTE: See *HANDOUT #7: CONNECTING TENANTS TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE LARGER ENVIRONMENT.*

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- ALLOW NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO USE SPACE WITHIN THE RESIDENCE FOR MEETINGS AND EVENTS: Many supportive housing providers make space available to neighborhood groups on a regularly scheduled basis, as it fosters good will and also exposes staff and tenants to organizations, affiliations and issues of potential interest. By hosting the meetings of block associations and other civic associations, for example, housing sponsors can fill a neighborhood need while drawing tenants and staff to participate as well. It is frequently through local, grass roots organizations that community gardens, block fairs and special events originate. Providing larger, more established organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alliance for the Mentally Ill (AMI) with public meeting space can also be of mutual benefit to tenants and to individuals living and working in the community.

- THE RESIDENCE AS GALLERY: Using open spaces and larger "community" rooms, some residences have been adapted to serve as galleries for local artists (including tenants). Similar to most art galleries, sponsors host "openings" and post announcements of new shows and invite a select list of special guests to attend as well. Staff and tenants who have an interest or some experience in art may serve on a review and selection committee, and some sponsors have secured private funding to hire curators and to cover additional costs and expenses such as insurance. These galleries can gather a wide interest and following from both the artist and broader community.

- CREATE LINKAGES TO NETWORKS OF OTHER PROVIDER ORGANIZATIONS, SELF-HELP GROUPS, COALITIONS AND ADVOCACY GROUPS THAT WILL LIKELY BE OF INTEREST TO TENANTS AND STAFF: Regular posting of informational flyers and meeting notices of activities being sponsored by outside organizations and local religious institutions is a basic and effective tool for communication. Using tenant meetings and case management staff to discuss different opportunities and to encourage tenants to "get involved" can also be effective. In many programs, staff and tenants identify social issues and concerns that are of importance to them — such as AIDS, homelessness, crime, mental illness — and they work together (e.g., attending rallies, participating in letter-writing campaigns, hosting guest speakers) in the interest of promoting change or more progressive social policies. Communitybased organizations and coalitions help to supplement the support provided by the service program and help strengthen self-determination and awareness.

- ENCOURAGE INVOLVEMENT IN NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS: Supportive housing has support staff and resources (however limited), and these are assets that many neighborhoods and communities do not have. In many cases, the efforts of staff and some resources can be adapted to assist the neighborhood and broader community. Tenants clearly benefit from efforts to improve the quality of life in the broader community, and sponsors realize long-term benefits as well. The value of being able to garner community support when requesting new funding or attempting to site a new program, for instance, is not to be underestimated. From almost any angle, connecting with the neighborhood creates "win-win" scenarios.

  A short list of examples of these initiatives includes:

  - ✓ Sponsoring or supporting community gardens

  - ✓ Sponsoring or supporting local crime-watch groups

  - ✓ Sponsoring or supporting neighborhood clean-ups

  - ✓ Sponsoring a "Speakers Bureau" of formerly homeless individuals and others who provide educational and motivational lectures

  - ✓ Opening businesses/storefronts that serve the neighborhood and provide jobs (cafés, bookstores, ice cream shops, thrift stores, bakeries)

  - ✓ Providing information and referral information to local tenants

LEARNING POINTS: Effective integration into the community involves significant outreach to members of the community and offers resources to the neighborhood. Community involvement benefits tenants, the project and the community.

IV.D: PROMOTING POSITIVE NORMS OF BEHAVIOR (30–40 minutes)

TRAINER NOTE: SMALL GROUP OR DYADIC EXERCISE: INFLUENCING SOCIAL NORMS IN YOUR SETTING — Ask the trainees to pair up and discuss the following questions. When they are finished have them report back to the larger group.

➢ Make a list of the existing cultural norms in your building around *one* of the following areas: drug and alcohol use, noise levels, behavior in common areas, cleanliness, communication, etc.

➢ Are there any norms on this list that you think you would want to influence? If so, what would be the desired norms you would strive for?

➢ What strategies might you employ to influence these norms?

BRIEF LECTURE:

- In developing supportive housing, providers strive to create a safe and positive living environment. This is achieved in part through security procedures and house rules. The informal rules of behavior also have a substantial impact on the ambiance of the residence.

- Indeed, in the community meetings, one of the most common subjects of discussion involves norms around using and sharing common amenities, such as kitchens, recreation rooms and bathrooms. Other concerns of this nature include what happens to personal items when left in community spaces, littering and general cleanliness issues, and annoying, intimidating or criminal behavior by tenants.

- While some expectations of social norms may be communicated in the house rules, the lease and in a tenant manual describing rights and responsibilities, it is impossible to write down rules and procedures for all of these situations.

- Engaging tenants in a dialogue about the norms of the residence and how they can help promote them is an effective community development strategy. The first step in promoting positive norms is to identify:

  ✓ Existing norms

  ✓ Desired norms

  ✓ Undesirable but tolerable behaviors

  ✓ Intolerable behaviors

- Determining norms that are desirable and achievable can be difficult and a source of disagreement among community members. For example, residents with chronic mental illness who are decompensating may exhibit behaviors that are undesirable

yet must be tolerated to a certain point given the circumstances. This is a balancing act and weighing the needs of individuals against the rights of the community is a fundamental tension.

- The community should discuss how to reinforce desirable behavior and discourage undesirable behavior. Ideally, both tenants and staff will both be engaged in promoting positive norms and monitoring or challenging negative behaviors. Sometimes, especially in newer residences, the level of trust among tenants is low and staff will need to be more involved in addressing undesirable behaviors. Training for staff and tenants in communication, negotiation and conflict-resolution skills will usually be helpful. Some tenants will need extra coaching and support on an individual basis.

LEARNING POINTS: Above and beyond house rules, supportive housing projects should promote positive norms of behavior that supports the growth and health of its community. Desired, acceptable, undesired and intolerable behaviors should be clear to all staff and tenants.

V. DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY BUILDING PLAN (30–40 minutes)

TRAINER STATES: The following practical tips are geared toward staff who are interested in assisting a group of tenants to organize around specific issues and concerns. Initially, staff may have the role of consultant in such a group, with the eventual goal for the group to run autonomously. Another model would include staff and tenants continuously working together as partners.

- ASSIST TENANTS IN IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING COMMON INTERESTS OR CONCERNS.

- PROGRESS FROM SIMPLE, MORE ATTAINABLE TO MORE COMPLEX ACTIVITIES AND GOALS: Barring the need to attend to an issue that affects the health and safety of the community (such as drug dealing), staff should try to direct tenants to working on an issue which will have a successful outcome (e.g., planting trees in front of the building, neighborhood noise complaints, broken elevators). Efforts resulting in successful outcomes help tenants feel empowered and hopeful about the process of impacting change for themselves and their neighbors. If, however, the results of tenant efforts are not successful in making the desired change, all need not be lost. This can still be an opportunity for tenants to review and possibly improve upon the process of establishing change.

- IDENTIFY AT THE OUTSET WHICH ISSUES ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE AND WHY: Staff must be clear about which issues are negotiable and which are not as related to the funding and lease requirements (e.g., rent payment, certain house rules, certain case management practices charting, etc.)

- FOCUS ON PRODUCT AND THE PROCESS: Community building efforts are most effective when there is a concrete goal to organize around. Efforts to build relationships (the process focus) is as important as efforts to reach a goal or to accomplish a task (the product focus). Achieving a balance between product and process is important. In this case the end does not always justify the means.

- INVOLVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE ORGANIZING EFFORT WHO HAVE THE ABILITY TO MOBILIZE PEOPLE: Staff and tenants who are passionate about issues and enjoy group participation are most effective. If no volunteers come forth, staff can approach people with leadership capacity and solicit their input in an organizing group. Similarly, staff with good group work skills are usually effective organizers.

- EVALUATE WHO MEETS, HOW OFTEN AND HOW MEETINGS ARE STRUCTURED TO MAXIMIZE EFFECTIVENESS: This includes making meeting places available, alerting tenants to meeting places and times, initiating tenant meeting, bringing in outside speakers to discuss issues of interest.

- MODEL DECISION-MAKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, NEGOTIATING AND CONFLICT-RESOLUTION SKILLS

- TEACH SKILLS FOR ORGANIZING, LEADING AND DOCUMENTING RESULTS FROM MEETINGS: How to run a meeting, take and distribute minutes, create agendas, delegate tasks and generally conduct oneself in a group are not innate skills and therefore may need to be taught/and or modeled. To this end, dispute-resolution techniques may also be valuable.

> **LEARNING POINTS**: Practical tips for developing a community include a myriad of strategies, such as organizing tenants, imparting community building skills to tenants, modeling effective community developing behavior and involving tenants in a variety of organizing efforts.

VI. EXERCISE/CASE EXAMPLES CHALLENGES IN THE ORGANIZING PROCESS
(60–90 minutes)

TRAINER NOTE: SMALL GROUP CASE STUDIES
Break the trainees into small groups and have them each assigned to a certain number
of cases to work on, depending on the amount of time remaining. If time is limited,
assign each group one or two cases. Ask the groups to appoint a reporter/recorder and
timekeeper. Once each group is finished you can either ask them to present how they
resolved the case or ask them to briefly describe some of their dilemmas to the larger
group. See **HANDOUT #9: COMMUNITY BUILDING CASE STUDIES**.

CASE STUDIES

DIRECTIONS: In reviewing these cases, discuss the following: What are the goals in
this situation? What strategies might you use to build community & influence positive
norms?

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1.   You, a social service staff person, are facilitating a monthly tenant meeting.
Maintenance problems are the most frequently raised issues in this forum. At this
meeting, tenants discuss the lack of progress on the elevator repairs and are talking
about organizing a rent strike. They ask you for advice about tactics.

> **TRAINER KEY**: *Invite a management representative to the*
> *next meeting, ask for a schedule and expected date of*
> *completion of repairs, write up concerns and problems*
> *caused by lack of service, consider interim solutions such as*
> *using the freight elevator.*

2.   The policy about room changes has always been kept deliberately vague to allow
management some discretion with a sensitive issue. Over time, several different
individuals or groups of individuals have been responsible for making decisions
about room changes. Several tenants have approached social service staff to
complain about room changes. They feel that some tenants have been granted
room changes unfairly. They ask your assistance in addressing what they see as a
bias problem.

> **TRAINER KEY**: *Management might write up criteria, such*
> *as special needs, used when considering room assignments.*
> *Most residences try to minimize walking for frail or elderly*
> *individuals or people with AIDS who may have periods*
> *where it is difficult to get around. People who utilize more*
> *services may benefit from being closer to the social services*
> *offices.*

3.   Only about 3% of the tenants in your building have been attending the tenants meeting. The current agenda involves additions to the core set of house rules staff established for the building. There is one outspoken tenant who attends every meeting (as well as every activity and group!) and many decisions end up being made by him. You do not feel his opinion represents the majority within the building and you suspect that he also turns off other tenants who might be interested in attending some meetings.

> **TRAINER KEY**: *Discuss importance and difficulty of getting representation. Decisions can be made, and tenants complaining about results can be invited to future meetings. A "go round" format can be set up to include all participants. Similarly, people can anonymously put suggestions in a box, which can be read aloud. The monopolizer can also be assigned the role of the timekeeper.*

4.   Staff has never discussed the desired building norms but you think everyone believes that part of the program mission is to help every tenant reach the expectations and criteria for tenancy. You are shocked when discussion in a staff meeting turns to the possible eviction of an elderly mentally ill woman, on psychotropic medications, who has been urinating in planters in the common spaces.

> **TRAINER KEY**: *Discuss importance of the community discussing desired norms and goals of services. Assuming we're all on the same page often results in communication problems.*

5.   Some tenants in your building have signed a petition stating, "Our home is being institutionalized by the posters which are placed in the lobby, elevators and hallways. These posters most often list activities and services offered in the building and some have even been warnings about practicing safe sex and using condoms. We find them offensive and embarrassing."

> **TRAINER KEY**: *Could use as an organizing issue. How can we communicate with the community in a way that is not offensive? A bulletin board might be posted in a more discreet location.*

6.   In an attempt to recognize the diversity within the community of a large residence, staff has been celebrating a wide range of religious, political and spiritual events. Staff and tenants feel it has gotten out of hand and too many celebrations are happening. Disagreements result when trying to decide which events to cut and which ones to continue.

TRAINER KEY: *Difficult to recognize every religious and cultural faction for every holiday. Discuss taking turns for events, having one generic celebration, asking for volunteers and letting those doing the work determine the focus, etc. Discuss the purpose of celebrations and how to best meet that goal.*

7.   The staff has planned a trip to a show. Many tenants singed up, but only 6 out of 25 show up the day of the show.

> **TRAINER KEY**: *Ask tenants to come up with solution. Often this means the residence doesn't get tickets the next time around. Could not allow those who don't show to attend next event, or three strikes you're out, or if you can't come you must find a replacement, or ask for volunteer to organize events and that person could be responsible to make sure all the tickets are used. Discuss larger issues: Are these events popular? Should we continue having such events? Other events?*

8. A group of outspoken tenants has formed and is aggressively pressing building management and social services for changes. Their top priorities include:

- Swift action against drug activity in the building, including sting operations and evictions;

- More intervention by social services to address "unacceptable behavior such as yelling and screaming, wandering the halls" and other "low-functioning" behavior;

- More services and attention for the higher-functioning tenants, such as "job training and education."

Management and social service staff are surprised by the aggressive style of the new leadership and divided about the way to respond to their requests.

> **TRAINER KEY**: *Discuss importance of being clear about how much authority you are giving tenants in decision-making process. Also discuss the role of staff in responding to ideas that they don't agree with — have a meeting with staff and tenants and work toward compromise.*

LEARNING POINTS: Participants will use a combination of personal experience and lessons learned from this training to respond to the case studies.

VII. CONCLUSION: APPLICATION OF CONCEPTS & NEXT STEPS (10–20 min)

TRAINER NOTE: Bring closure to the training by reviewing the highlights of the day. Ask for questions and comments about the content.

TRAINER STATES: Let's review some of what we learned today.

- The staff in permanent supportive housing should promote community building activities within the building to create a positive living environment.

- Community building, although beneficial, can be challenging and often involves creative thinking and roundtable input.

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A POSITIVE COMMUNITY? [Expected responses include:]

- Engage and foster relationships within the supportive housing project

- Involve tenants in decision-making

- Connect community to the neighborhood

- Promote positive norms of behavior

TRAINER ELICITS: WHAT ARE WAYS STAFF CAN ASSIST TENANTS TO ORGANIZE AROUND SPECIFIC ISSUES AND CONCERNS? [Expected responses include:]

- Assisting tenants identify and prioritize common interests or concerns

- Start with simple and attainable goals before expanding to larger ones

- Include tenants who have the ability to mobilize persons in the organizing efforts

- Develop structure to the meetings

- Model effective problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills

- Teach skills for organizing, leading and documenting results from meetings

TRAINER NOTES: **NEXT STEPS WRAP UP**
Distribute index cards and ask the trainees to write down one way that they might apply a concept or a strategy that they learned in this training in their setting. When they are finished ask them to hand them in and read aloud some of the responses. After a brief discussion tell them that there is a worksheet on organizing issues and influencing social norms in their packets, which they might want to bring back to do with their colleagues in the residence. **(REFER TO HANDOUT # 10: APPLICATION OF CONCEPTS AND DEVELOPING NEXT STEPS: SOCIAL NORMS AND ORGANIZING ISSUES WORKSHEET).**

LEARNING POINT: Trainer will review significant points of the training and clarify any remaining questions.