



THE ROLE OF PROPERTY MANAGERS AND THEIR CONNECTIONS TO RESIDENT SERVICES

The provision of resident services can support the long-term goals of the property management team. This resource helps resident services providers and property managers discuss and define their roles and responsibilities.

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.

Marketing

Marketing 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. A resident services program is an asset when marketing a property. The program can attract families interested in services for themselves and their children.

Therefore, it is a good idea to:

- Develop and distribute descriptions of resident services to potential residents.
- Have resident services staff provide training to applicants covering such issues as credit counseling and housekeeping.
- Have resident services staff help people complete housing applications.

Tenant Screening

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

Resident Selection

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 should verify information contained in each chosen 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. Many nonprofits base their selection on a tenant's rent-payment history rather than credit obligations.

Orientation

Both property management and resident services staff should jointly provide orientation sessions for new residents, each focusing on their particular area of expertise.

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 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 services for:

- 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

Property management staff should address lease violations immediately and formally but also offer support to residents to help them overcome obstacles. Lease violations include: failing to pay rent, damaging the unit, disturbing the neighbors and using the premises illegally.

Here are some ideas for dealing with potential lease violations:

Failure 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.
- 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 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 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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