

Crowd-sourced Best Practices for Dealing with Violence in Residential Operations in PSH

Dealing with violence in residential operations is a serious matter that requires careful consideration and prompt action. Safety is paramount. What follows are some best practices that will help ensure the safety of all residents when dealing with violence in residential operations:

- 1. Establish a clear emergency response plan:** Develop and implement an emergency response plan that outlines the steps to be taken in the event of violence. Include evacuation procedures, communication protocols, and emergency contacts.
 - Staff and residents should be trained on the Emergency Response Plan, including the procedures to follow during an emergency. Ensure that all staff are familiar with the plan and know their roles and responsibilities in the case of violence or other emergencies.

- 2. Implement security measures:** Install security cameras and other security measures to prevent violence, review reported incidents, and identify perpetrators.
 - Cameras can be useful in identifying exactly what happened and who was involved in a violent incident. They can also help determine what did not occur, which may help in de-escalation in some situations.
 - Ensure that equipment is regularly maintained and monitored.

- 3. Mediation and Conflict Resolution:** prioritize training and conflict management: Staff and residents should be offered on-going opportunities to be trained in de-escalation and mediation
 - Staff should receive anti-bias training and be encouraged to ask for help and guidance with difficult residents and situations that might escalate into violence.
 - Mediation should be offered early on in any disputes before positions become entrenched and parties escalate.
 - Always seek to de-escalate conflict whenever possible and before it turns violent.
 - Conflict coaching can be made available to both staff and residents to help head off the escalation of disputes.
 - In nuisance cases that allege violence it is highly probable that at least one party will not want to engage in mediation.

- If the parties are willing, but do not want to be in the same physical space, consider using on-line dispute resolution services.
- Mediation may result in the creation of a plan with guidelines to ensure that similar actions do not occur in the future.
- In cases where violence would be the cause for an eviction, a mediation might be considered to help negotiate an acceptable move-out deal without extended litigation.

4. Foster a safe and inclusive community: Create a safe and inclusive community by promoting open communication, mutual respect, and non-violent conflict resolution.

- Create environments that promote a culture of psychological safety through trauma informed practices; including listening without judgment, being dependable, communicating clearly, remaining consistent, promoting respect, being considerate, and using supportive language.
- Every individual component of every system influences and is influenced by every other component. What happens at the systems level in a community affects relationships and individuals. Racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia/trans-phobia, classism, etc. are implicitly violent and increase the potential for overt physical violence in a community.
- These types of harms, at times perpetrated by both staff and residents in the form of bullying, abusive behavior and harassment, can permeate an organization and become part of the ecology of a community when not addressed. Conflicts can be seen to have three sides. In addition to two people in conflict, the environment, community, friends and on-lookers can constitute a third party. All parties in a conflict must be attended to when violence occurs.
- Encourage residents to report incidents of violence and provide them with resources and support.
- Respond promptly and appropriately to incidents of violence and take appropriate action to address the situation. This may include calling the police, providing medical attention, and providing support to victims (counseling services, legal assistance, etc.). Ensure that all residents are aware of these resources and know how to access them.

5. De-escalation

- Always seek to de-escalate conflict before it turns violent.
- See attached Verbal De-Escalation Techniques for Defusing or Talking Down an Explosive Situation by Eva Skolnik-Acker, LICSW; Committee for the Study

and Prevention of Violence Against Social Workers, National Association of Social Workers, Massachusetts Chapter

- 6. Document incidents:** Keep a record of all incidents of violence, including the date, time, location, and details of the incident. This documentation may be needed if legal action is necessary.
- 7. Include outside providers as needed:** Contact any outside case management or health providers the tenant knows and trusts.
 - Include them in strategizing and creating intervention plans.
 - Contact APS or other response teams (PHACS, Mobile Response Team, etc.).
- 8. Involve legal experts when necessary:** Ensure that you are following the law when dealing with incidents of violence.
 - Eviction or legal action may be necessary in some cases, and it is important to follow proper legal procedures. Eviction is always a last result but must be considered when serious acts of violence occur.
- 9. Ensure that Support Services and Property Management have the same information regarding any problematic behaviors:** If a tenant's behavior is creating a safety risk, develop a safety plan that can protect everyone.
 - Safety is paramount. Everyone should know to call 911 if a tenant's behavior escalates into violence.
 - Make sure all staff, including all desk clerks on all shifts, are aware of tenants with unstable and potentially violent behaviors. Instruct them to be alert, careful and avoid being alone with the tenant.
 - No clinical or other specific information should be shared. This is a safety heads up.
 - Violence can include, but is not limited to, self-harm, derogatory comments between individuals, yelling, bullying behaviors, continual aggressive behavior and harassment, general threats, direct threats and overt serious acts of violence. Intimate and domestic violence cannot be ignored. Staff should be knowledgeable about VAWA as well as Fair Housing and Reasonable Accommodations.

10. Refer to appropriate legal action when necessary: Any tenant who has been found to commit serious physical violence, including direct threats with a gun or other weapon, should be referred for appropriate legal action, (i.e. Termination of Tenancy Notice).

- Property Management and Support Services should consult on moving forward with eviction or other reasonable measures that may include a restorative justice process if there is no immediate danger posed to the perpetrator, staff, residents or the community.
- Implement and document a clear process of risk assessment, considering the nature and gravity of the violent act.
- Legal and business risks should be discussed and evaluated in detail to determine whether an eviction is warranted, or whether other actions might be taken to avoid eviction while ensuring safety. This can include providing adequate support to both perpetrators and victims, establishing safeguards to prevent additional incidents and determining whether a restorative justice practice might be sufficient and appropriate.
- Restorative Justice practices offer ways to address harm and express conflict in ways that are not destructive. They are ways to protect, restore and enhance the system on multiple levels.

11. Debrief significant incidents of violence, including those involving violence, harm and serious threats to staff, residents or the property:

- Direct Supervisors and appropriate building staff should be informed immediately of incident. Supervisors should inform Directors and HR immediately of the status of the incident and plans of action.
- All staff involved should meet to debrief as soon as possible, within 24 hours at the latest.
- Appropriate personnel should meet to discuss any continuing risks to property and persons, confirm next steps to ensure safety and review the appropriateness of the response to the incident.

By implementing these best practices in residential operations, landlords and property managers can create a safe and secure living environment for all residents. Prompt action, clear communication, and a focus on prevention can help prevent violence and ensure the safety of all residents.