

Crowd-sourced Best Practices for Handling Noise Complaints in Supportive Housing Buildings

Dealing with noise complaints in residential housing can be a sensitive issue. If not addressed appropriately, noise issues can escalate conflict, erode community bonds and lead to a deeper sense of dissatisfaction or despair. Having clear policies and procedures in place can help ensure that they are handled in a fair and effective manner. Here are some best practices to consider:

- 1. Develop clear policies:** It's important to have written policies that outline the types of noise that are acceptable and those that are not. These policies should also include information on how noise complaints are reported, how they are investigated, and what steps will be taken to resolve them.
- 2. Educate tenants:** Ensure that all tenants are aware of the noise policies and procedures. Provide them with a copy of the policy and make sure they understand what is expected of them.
- 3. Encourage communication:** Encourage tenants to communicate with each other about any noise issues before filing a formal complaint. This can help prevent unnecessary conflict and promote a more harmonious living environment.
 - Offering and encouraging tenants to use a mediator to help facilitate a resolution at the beginning of concerns about noise, before both sides become entrenched, can prevent escalation of conflicts between tenants and management.
 - A mediator can help facilitate communication between the parties involved and help them find common ground. This can be especially helpful if the parties have different cultural backgrounds or if there are language barriers. The mediator can also provide guidance on how to address the issue in a way that is respectful and constructive.
- 4. Keep a record:** Keep a record of all noise complaints, including the date, time, location, and nature of the complaint, as well as any actions taken to resolve the issue. Assist tenants in understanding how they can document noise that is causing them problems.

5. **Investigate complaints promptly:** Investigate noise complaints promptly and take appropriate action based on the severity of the issue. This may include contacting the tenant responsible for the noise, issuing a warning, or imposing fines if necessary.
 - A lack of awareness that perceptions of noise differ can lead to dismissing complaints as inconsequential and failing to investigate them, even when it is causing distress to a tenant, with potentially negative consequences.
 - It's crucial to give a timeline of any investigation and report back to the tenant, managing expectations and avoiding unintentional offense, such as describing noise as "low level" when it causes distress to the resident who complained.

6. **Maintain confidentiality:** Respect the privacy of the tenant making the complaint and the tenant responsible for the noise. Keep all information confidential and only share it with those who need to know.

7. **Explore all unit and building modifications that might be possible to resolve issues:**
 - Physical mitigations such as ant-vibration mats, white noise machines, increased insulation, carpeting, should be considered when possible.
 - Though noise complaints are generally looked as a tenant behavior issue, often they may also be viewed as a building issue.
 - Lack of financial resources to make significant modifications to units to mitigate noise can prevent a thorough exploration of all possible solutions.

8. **Follow up:** Follow up with the tenant who made the complaint to ensure that the issue has been resolved to their satisfaction. If the issue persists, take further action as necessary.

9. **Review policies regularly:** Review noise policies and procedures regularly to ensure they are still effective and up-to-date with any changes in laws or regulations.

By following these best practices, you can help to create a peaceful and harmonious living environment for all residents.