



Advocacy 101

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1

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2

MJ Housing & Services

MJ Housing & Services specializes in providing aging services, service coordination, supportive services and educational programming focused on empowering our senior and disabled residents to live independently and our families to be economically self-sufficient. Each community offers free, comprehensive services to all interested residents at our on-site community centers through our Service Coordinators.

Currently, MJ Housing & Services serves over 15,000 residents at more than 80 affordable housing communities in all regions of the U.S.



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Objectives

- **Define Advocacy for Property Management Staff**
- **Recognize the Importance of Advocacy to Property Management**
- **Basics of Acting as a Resident Advocate**
 - Increase Empowerment
 - Reduce Liability
 - Accommodations
 - Define/Refine Boundaries
- **Define Team Member Roles**
 - Communicating
 - Collaborating
- **Review Best Practices**



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Basic Definition:

- The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal
- The act or process of advocating

• Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

1. Express their views and concerns
2. Access information and services
3. Defend and promote their rights and responsibilities
4. Explore choices and options



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Benefits of Advocacy



- Advocacy in all its forms seeks to ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to:
 - Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them
 - Defend and safeguard their rights
 - Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives
- Why is it important?
 - Supports the protection of Human Rights
 - Educates a greater community
 - Helps non-governmental organizations to thrive
 - Fosters respect for a cause
 - Influences laws and policies
 - Highlights available resources and services
 - Promotes problem-solving and participation
 - Enables people to better understand each other



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What does it mean to be an advocate?



Verb - Action

- To support or argue for a cause, policy, etc.
- To plead in favor of
- To act as advocate for someone or something

Noun - Person

- One who pleads the cause of another
- One who defends or maintains a cause or proposal
- One who supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group

6 Key Steps for Effective Advocacy

1. Identify an issue
2. Do your research
3. Find your audience
4. Communicate successfully
5. Follow up
6. Thank all participants!



The Cost of Advocacy



- Definition – the real, intangible, and unintended ways that undertaking advocacy can deplete resources and potentially work against the cause.
 - Example – bad publicity, loss of social capital, and false hope can be just as detrimental as the loss of funds and other resources dedicated to the cause
- Includes determining the value of each person’s time to engage in research, analyze and draft policies, attend meetings, develop media strategies, lobby, organize communities, and campaign
 - Example - Communication itself requires a great deal of time
 - Telephone, print media, text messages, websites, emails, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites

The Cost of Advocacy



- Potential financial cost is not always an argument for abandoning or retreating from advocacy
 - The key is to be mindful, intentional, and informed about the types of costs associated
- When advocating, take into account the costs, the prospects of attaining the goal, and the extent of the good to be derived from advocacy



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Advocating to State, Government or Other Higher Agencies

- Use clear and simple messages
- Have evidence to demonstrate the difference the change will make in people's lives
- Hear from people who are affected
- Focus on issues rather than an organizational brand
- Work with others
- Concentrate on the issues that you are passionate and knowledgeable about



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Benefits of Resident Advocacy to the Property

- Improved business relationship with residents
- Decreased vacancy improves property stability
- Decreased eviction, vandalism and turn-over costs due to improved property stability



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12

4 Tips for Being an Effective Advocate



1. Preparation
 - Do your research
 - Know the topic before you advocate
2. Communication
 - Know your strengths and weaknesses, and try to communicate through your given strength (written, telephone, in person, etc.)
3. Documentation and Note Keeping
 - Write down who you contacted and when, topic, important pieces of the conversation
4. Follow Up
 - Check in to see what you advocated for is still happening (housekeeping, money management, pest control services, etc.)
 - Check that the advocacy helped the individual and is still helping, not hurting

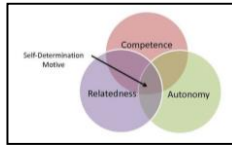


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Self-Determination

- Self-determination – the process by which a person controls their own life
- It is important for advocacy to occur in a fashion that **encourages** and does not distract from or violate the resident's right to self-determination



"I think the hardest part is knowing that I can help a resident with their rent, teach them how a rental assistance program works, but they don't follow through. It's frustrating sometimes, but it's their life, and they have the right to not follow through." –D.A. Service Coordinator MJ Housing & Services



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Empowerment

- Advocacy typically occurs *with* residents, not *for* them
 - Self-determination and the will of the resident should remain at the forefront of all forms of intervention and advocacy
- Advocacy should include teaching people about resources and how to develop particular skills such as self-advocacy, effective communication, etc.
 - The goal is to get resident's to be self-sustained, not rely on staff to solve/resolve all issues





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Developing a Resource Directory

- A list of common services
 - Should not be all resources available, but a place for residents to start their own search
- Does not have to be fancy or detailed
 - Simply the name, address, and phone number is sufficient
- Available 24/7 to individuals
 - Especially helpful when staff is away or busy

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| A Little Help | Primary Contact |
| 2755 S Lowell Street Suite 200 Denver, CO 80222 www.alittlehelp.org 720-252-9532 | N/A |
| Notes: Help with transportation, snow removal, companionship, check-in calls & visits, caregiver respite, household and yard help, social and educational activities, shopping | |
| A World of Excellent Home Care | Primary Contact |
| 1433 S Monaco St #236 Aurora, CO 80012 303-692-3572 | N/A |
| Adult | Primary Contact |
| www.adwp.org | N/A |
| Access A Ride | Primary Contact |
| rideaccess.com 303-299-6000 | N/A |
| Notes: Certain eligibility requirements must be met to qualify. Fee discounted for transportation rates. | |
| Adult Protective Services | Primary Contact |
| Denver Human Services - 1200 Federal Blvd Denver, CO denverapso.org 303-863-2508 | N/A |
| Advanced Choice Dental, Vision, Braces | Primary Contact |
| 3375 W. 36th Ave Wheat Ridge, CO 80222 www.advancedchoiceatdental@omniada.net 303.33.476-6297 | N/A |

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16



17

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Liability



Do Not Provide Legal Services

- We are not attorneys
- Provide information on legal services available in the area
 - Attorneys, court fee waivers, etc.

Do Not Provide Medical Services

- We are not doctors
- Do not diagnose or label a resident
- Provide resources for medical help
 - Doctor office numbers, hospital locations, etc.
- Call 9-1-1 for assistance



18

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Do Not Provide Legal Advice



Legal advice characteristics:

- Requires legal knowledge, skill, education and judgment
- Applies specific law to a particular set of circumstances
- Affects someone's legal rights or responsibilities
- Creates rights and responsibilities in the advice-giver

Examples of legal advice:

- Selecting, drafting, or completing legal documents or agreements that affect the legal rights of a person
- Representing a person before a court or other governing body
- Negotiating legal rights or responsibilities on behalf of a person
- Speculating an outcome
- Selecting or filling out specific forms on behalf of a resident



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Legal Issues – Reasonable Accommodation



- Providing more time for a person with needs to move out or resolve a problem
 - Example: A resident who identifies as a person who hoards asks for 3 months to get their apartment into compliance instead of the 30 days management offers. Since hoarding is considered a mental diagnosis according to the DSM-V, a reasonable accommodation of 90 days is approved by management.
- Allowing someone to make payments on a bill when cost is greater than income
 - Example: Resident floods their apartment and the apartment below them after leaving the bathtub running, causing \$3,000 in damages. To avoid moving out or an eviction, resident agrees to pay the full cost of repairs, but only makes \$750 per month in income. A reasonable accommodation is made and a payment plan of \$50 per month until full cost is paid is agreed upon.



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Boundaries



Personal

- The physical, emotional and mental limits we establish to protect ourselves from being manipulated, used, or violated by others

Professional

- Effective and appropriate interaction between professionals and the public they serve
- A sense of professional identity and self definition that has consistency and cohesion over time
- The framework within which the employee-client relationship occurs
- The line between the self of client and self of employee
- Prescribes a system of limits and expectations

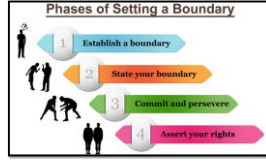


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How are professional boundaries established?

- Professional code of conduct
- Code of ethics
- Local, state, and/or federal laws
- Company policies and procedures

"I will always follow company rules, but I will communicate with corporate if someone is going to be late [on rent] and it's up to them. I know their guidelines so I'm able to be flexible. I treat everyone equally." –E.B. PM Logan Property Management



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Consequences of Poor Professional Boundaries

- Leads to potentially unsafe practice
- Increases resident/employee stress
- Undermines the therapeutic relationship
- Can compound residents difficulties
- Service provider may act unethically
- Service provider and/or resident may be emotionally traumatized and/or put in physical danger
- Compassion fatigue – the service provider's role may not feel sustainable
- Potential for "splitting" on teams
- Resident may be given inappropriate information or services which could affect his/her willingness to accept future services
- Resident may feel betrayed, abandoned and/or poorly served
- The reputation of the service provider's agency and/or profession may be compromised

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Boundary Violations?



- Touching
- Receiving money or gifts from residents
- Loss of respect within the resident/employee relationship
- Having dual relationships with residents (i.e. friendship outside of work, romantic relationship, etc.)
- Resident confidentiality
- Self-disclosure

"The hardest part is practicing policy and procedure and trying to find out the needs of the resident and trying not to let confidential stuff get in the way of my boundaries." –D.B. PM VOA Colorado Branch

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Zone of Helpfulness





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8 Principles of Effective Boundaries



1. Empower, not rescue
2. Take care of yourself
3. Be a role model
4. Be accountable
5. Work time is not “me” time
6. Do not open your wallet or make promises
7. Do not employ residents
8. Be consistent



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26

Teamwork



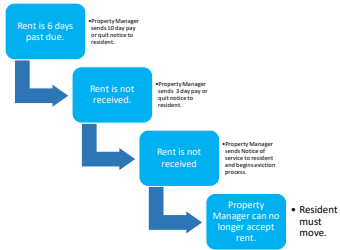
- “I will refer to the Service Coordinator when able to help for services and sometimes knowing that the Service Coordinator is on their side can help a resident change their behavior.” – E.B. PM Logan Property Management
- “[I talk] to the Service Coordinator and let them know who, what, why, and my concerns. Communication is key even if you both don’t agree.” –D.B. PM VOA Colorado Branch
- “Even when the Property Manager and I are on different sides of an issue, like she is going for eviction and I’m trying to keep the resident housed, we may argue, but we know we are never mad at the other person. We try to keep personal feelings out of resident issues when meeting.” – D.A. Service Coordinator MJ Housing & Services



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27

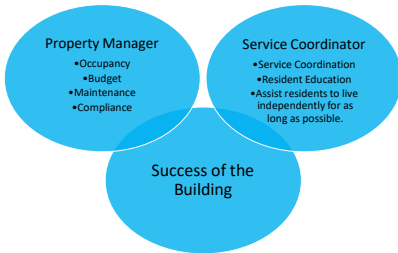
Management Process



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Priorities



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Response to Conflict or Resident Issues



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Different Roles



- The Property Manager is responsible for advising residents of lease violations.
- The Service Coordinator should never be expected to address a lease violation incident if the Property Manager has not notified the resident of the issues involved and suggested assistance by the Service Coordinator.
- The Service Coordinator may be asked to assist residents in addressing issues that threaten their tenancy, but only if the Service Coordinator referral is made with the resident's concurrence. The Service Coordinator can help prevent evictions from happening with early intervention.
- The same complementary role applies to the reasonable accommodation process in which the Property Manager advises residents that the Service Coordinator is an available resource for them to access or explore reasonable accommodation options.



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31

Confidentiality



- Management should not expect the Service Coordinator to divulge specific information about resident's problems or expect access to Service Coordinator files without the knowledge and informed consent of the resident.
- This is also true if and when the Service Coordinator requires information from the Property Manager's files.
- In situations where the Service Coordinator files are to be used in court for any reason, a subpoena is required.



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32

Advocacy in Action



- Hoarding
- Late rent
- Smoking on oxygen
- Peaceful enjoyment of others

"The city turned the street in front of our building from a one way to a two way and took away our parking spots and loading zone. I called the city to ask where our residents were supposed to park and where our loading zone would be. It took several months, but we got a new loading zone on the side of our building and a bench for residents to wait at." – E.B. Logan Property Management



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33

Internship



- **Word of Warning** - What you are permitted to have unpaid interns do is different than paid positions. Please check the current labor regulations and interpretations carefully before hiring students to work for your company to make sure you are not violating the law.
1. **Get Organized**
 - Clear goals and timelines
 - Direct Supervisor
 - Know what projects they might do prior to hire
 2. **Set the Schedule**
 - Length is typically 100-150 hours over 10 weeks
 - Be flexible
 - Student schedules with classes are often previously set and strange
 - Work around exams
 3. **Define the Position(s)**
 - Break a traditional job into multiple positions, if needed
 - Include description of business, culture, and why working for you will be exciting and rewarding



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34

Internship



4. **Post, Post, Post**
 - Experience.com, Indeed.com, MediaBistro.com, InternJobs.com, Idealist.org, CollegeRecruiter.com, InternMatch, YouTerm
 - Google terms like "best places to post internships" for more information
5. **Go Directly to the Source**
 - High school, college, and graduate programs/universities
6. **Create a Seamless Experience**
 - Have the intern make notes or write a report on what they did
 - Can be done at the end of each day, week, whatever works for your company
 - Notes/report can be used to show what was accomplished as well as provide a starting point for the next intern who is brought in
7. **Write Great Letters**
 - Letters of Recommendation
 - Take notes or write up a detailed review when the intern leaves that you can refer to when contacted
 - Keep a copy in your files in case a future employer calls you



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Best Practices



- **Documentation/Note Taking**
 - Whenever possible, take notes or document what happened in a particular meeting
 - Does not need to be long sentences
 - Outline format will work
 - **Include:**
 - Date
 - Time (if applicable)
 - Name of anyone contacted on behalf of resident or self
 - What was discussed
 - What was accomplished
 - Follow up actions (if any)



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36

Best Practices

- LISTEN!
 - Not only to what is said, but be aware of body language
 - Listen to listen, do not listen to respond
- Communicate Effectively
 - Have patience
 - Talk slowly
 - Repeat what is said, if necessary
 - Work to your strengths
- Make Referrals
- Self Care



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37

Self-Check Questionnaire



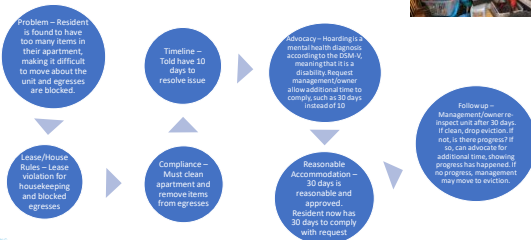
- Who is defining the need and for whose benefit?
 - What are the consequences for my resident with this definition of need?
- Is my resident being included or consulted when defining what is needed?
- Am I sensitive to my resident's right to think and act independently?
- Am I supporting equality of opportunity for my resident?
- Am I encouraging my resident's meaningful participation in decision making?
- Am I helping my resident secure needed resources?
- Am I ensuring all parties' rights are being respected?



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Example 1 - Hoarding



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Example 2 – Non-Payment of Rent



- Problem – Resident has not paid rent for April
- Lease/House Rules – Lease violation for non-payment of rent
- Compliance – Must pay rent and any late fees by specific date
- Advocacy – Resident is in the hospital and cannot leave to get a money order for rent. Advocate *with* resident to pay rent amount when return home.
- Reasonable Accommodation – Due to physically unable to leave hospital for money order, accommodation approved.
- Follow Up – Resident returns home from the hospital and pays rent. Eviction avoided.



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40

Contact Information

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41

SERVICES PROVIDED

- Aging Services
- Service Coordination/Coordinated Care
- Telehealth
- Emergency Alert Model with Integrated Coordinated Care
- Quality Assurance for HUD Service Coordinator Program
- Grant Administration
- Grant Writing and Fundraising
- Training and Education
- Strategic Partnership Development
- Resident Services support and training for Property Managers within affordable housing and wellness sector



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 currently serves over
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 more than 80
 affordable housing
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42