

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR HOUSING MANAGERS
PARTICIPANT'S WORKBOOK

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ORIGINAL

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Office of Policy Development and Research



Communication Skills for Housing Managers

Participant's Workbook



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February, 1979 |

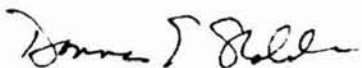
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FOREWORD

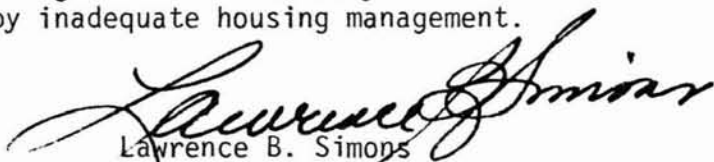
This workbook is one of eighteen in a housing-management curriculum developed by HUD in conjunction with Temple University. It is not easy. The workshops, for which this and the other workbooks are texts, will not be what we used to call Mickey Mouse sessions. And that, of course, is all to the good. Your time is valuable, and you are learning for a purpose. Any course you take should repay the efforts you must put in.

We believe that the workshops will do exactly that. At the end, after putting your new learning to practical use, you should feel not only a sense of satisfaction because of your enhanced competence, but you should also think of yourself as a housing-management professional, capable of dealing skillfully and humanely with anything the job throws at you.

Your instructor has a text similar to this one (with all the answers supplied) and a guide to conducting the workshops. The guide is a good one, stressing that the participants should be encouraged "to explore, risk, share, and feel." We hope you will. From there, and with your help, we can go on to reduce many of the serious problems brought about by inadequate housing management.



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PREFACE

Each workbook in this series presents a number of learning objectives targetted to a selected area of management. Successful completion of the learning objectives presented in each workbook provides a series of building blocks to buttress the spectrum of skills required of a housing manager.

In preparing these workbooks, an attempt has been made to incorporate the range of knowledge that housing managers might be required to draw upon. Likewise, an attempt has been made to reflect the present state-of-the-art of housing management. Inevitably, whatever is captured in print reflects a body of knowledge and practice up to the point of publication. Therefore, the students and instructors making use of these workbooks will want to keep alert to new developments that should be integrated into the workbook material. Furthermore, like any attempt to codify knowledge in a particular field, the material presented in these workbooks is open to differences of interpretation and emphasis. We are aware that there may be some techniques and procedures described in these workbooks with which some experts in the field might disagree. The best test of such procedures and techniques will come when they are applied in the field by housing management practitioners. Through this process, the state-of-the-art will continue to be improved. Instructors in the future will undoubtedly want to incorporate such acknowledged improvements into their delivery of the workbook material.

One final point is worth mentioning. An initial impetus for these workbooks was the need to upgrade management skills in HUD-related housing. However, many of the principles presented should be viewed by students and instructors as applicable to multifamily housing management practices in the private sector.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Managers spend a great deal of time interacting with other people - - residents, employees, and supervisors. The overall goal of this workshop is to enable you to communicate more effectively. Accordingly, it has four major learning objectives:

- (1) To enable you to name four (4) qualities of a good listener,
- (2) To enable you to define seven (7) elements of a communications model,
- (3) To enable you to identify five (5) principles of a good communication, and
- (4) To enable you to list two (2) responsibilities of managers with respect to feedback.

These learning objectives are, simply, measurable statements about the specific knowledge participants are expected to acquire in the workshop.

Each learning objective, in turn, has what is called an anticipated practice outcome. Anticipated practice outcomes are those practical skills you can be expected to implement on the job using the information acquired in the workshop.

In other words, anticipated practice outcomes refer to the ways knowledge acquired in the workshop can be applied to real problems and situations.

The workshop, organized around the learning objectives and anticipated practice outcomes, will probably require one half-day session.

WORKSHOP GOAL:
TO ENABLE YOU TO COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY

WORKSHOP GOAL: TO ENABLE YOU TO COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. You will name four (4) qualities of a good listener.
2. You will define seven (7) elements of a model of communication.
3. You will identify five (5) principles of good communication.
4. You will list two (2) responsibilities of managers with respect to feedback.

ANTICIPATED PRACTICE OUTCOMES

1. You will examine a case study and make three (3) suggestions for improving a manager's listening skills.
2. You will correctly assemble the elements of a model of communication.
3. You will examine a case study and make five (5) suggestions for improving a manager's communication skills.
4. You will examine a case study and make two (2) suggestions for improving a manager's handling of feedback.

CONTENT

The Importance of Listening

The sense of hearing has always played an important part in man's learning. Primitive man developed this sense extensively because his very existence depended upon accurate interpretation of nature's sounds. Man's own primitive sounds acquired meanings which his associates learned to listen for and to properly interpret. Man gradually developed a spoken language which was passed on to successive generations through the listening process.

Through thousands of years of the listening process, man advanced in his communicating techniques to the stage of symbolizing his sounds and their combinations as related to their meanings for him. Again, after long evolutionary periods of usage, permanently located people formed

written languages. The advent of the printing press multiplied a thousand-fold man's dependence upon the written word, and reading supplanted to a great measure his dependence on listening. In addition, the learning process became centered upon the use of the printed word and the required techniques to learn by reading.

Neglect of listening techniques has been the concern of not only educators, but of leaders in the business and government world. In the normal course of business, the average manager spends approximately three-fourths of his time conferring, listening or talking. White collar workers receive a high percent of their salaries for listening and following through on instructions. The most persuasive salesmen do not rely upon writing; they talk and listen. Although we recognize its importance, many of us do not listen at a very high level of efficiency.

Listening is a skill. It can be improved through training and practice, just as reading, writing and speaking can. Managers should give serious thought to improving their listening ability, since the ability to communicate with employees and with residents is of critical importance. Studies of residents to determine the qualities of an ideal project manager have shown that the ability and willingness to listen ranked very high in importance. The following material is designed to improve the listening process, identify the values of good listening habits, and improve techniques of listening.

Readiness to listen

People listen best when they listen intentionally. There are several ways to improve listening techniques by increasing the readiness to listen.

1. Listening on request. On naval ships announcements over the public address system are always preceded by "Now Hear This." This command is difficult to resist. The short interval of time between the command and the actual announcement allows the listener to prepare himself for listening attentively. Housing managers do not get such advance announcements from residents and employees, but the manager can prepare himself to listen to their messages by observing them as they prepare to speak.
2. Listening as the result of instruction. Everyone can recall working with a teacher or instructor who in the middle of a lesson would pause and say, "Now pay particular attention to this." Such warnings help the listener to be alerted for a particular message.
3. Listening with a purpose. When someone asks or tells a person to listen, he generally furnishes the listener with a reason for listening. Other purposes for listening arise as a result of the listener's emotional orientation and intellectual interests. Managers listen best when they have a purpose for listening in mind. A good manager always seeks to discover what the person wants him to hear and why he should be sure to listen to that person.
4. Listen actively. The mind is not an absorbing sponge. It functions best when one is actively asking questions, evaluating information and thinking about what one is listening to. People may hear with their ears, but they listen by actively using their minds.

Attitudes in listening

How one feels about the person talking to him has a great influence on his ability to listen to what that person is saying. One's feelings about

the person, both positive and negative, can affect him so strongly that he may be unable to hear the actual words the person speaks. In other circumstances one's attitudes about a person may predispose him to accept or reject what the person is saying.

With a proper listening attitude the good listener should show the person talking to him that he accepts him as he is.

Listening for non-verbal signals

Good listening involves much more than just using one's ears. As one listens to a person, one looks at the speaker's face and body. The eyes, facial expressions, hand and arm movements, body movements, and posture all can tell important things about what the speaker is trying to say. For most people, the reception and interpretation of these non-verbal signals is unconscious; that is, they do it without thinking about it. For this reason people generally do not appreciate how much they listen with their eyes.

As an experiment, try closing your eyes the next time someone is talking to you or tune out the video portion of a TV show. This should help you appreciate how much meaning is lost from a message when the non-verbal portions of a communication are cut off. The whole subject of non-verbal communication is now considered so important that it has become the subject of serious scientific research.

For the manager who most often deal with people who are not adept at using words to express and communicate their feelings and desires, the ability to sense and interpret non-verbal communications can be very important. One can start to develop this ability to making himself consciously aware of the fact that there is more to a message than just words.

Listening for feelings as well as for information

The training that most managers receive places a high emphasis on the skills involved in gathering objective information with which to make decisions. In effect, this training teaches managers to ignore their own feelings and the feelings of others as being irrelevant and unobjective. Such training makes good listening difficult. Good listening requires that the listener become aware of feelings as well as facts. When "feeling" words are spoken, they indicate some inner conviction, disturbance, or excitement. The tone in which they are spoken conveys much more than the meaning of the words themselves. Managers should realize that how a person feels about something will affect that person's actions to a greater degree than the objective facts themselves.

Things to avoid when listening

1. Asking questions before the person is through.
2. Interpreting words or feelings without feedback.
3. Giving advice.
4. Indicating disapproval.
5. Belittling, ridiculing, or arguing.

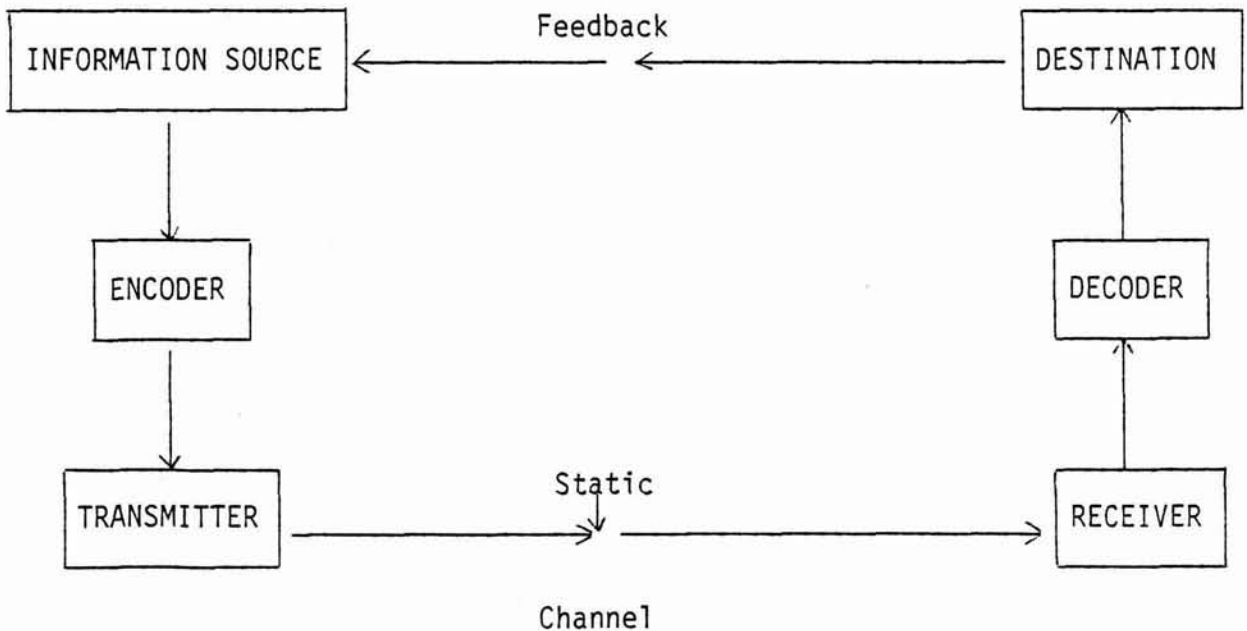
A. COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

Listening well in order to understand another's message is only one component of the process of communicating. Communication involves behavior that results in exchange of meaning. This definition does not attempt to define the quality of communication. For example, one could infer that perfect communications had taken place any time that one person had been able to do something that enabled one or more other persons to exactly share an idea with the original sender. At the same time, one would have

poor communications when no exchange took place or when the exchange did not result in the sharing of meaning.

Researchers doubt that two or more individuals can ever completely share an idea with all its many intellectual and emotional nuances. The capacity of one to pass on an idea in its totality is not thought to exist. However, although individuals may not be able to achieve perfection, they can share an amazing amount of understanding about ideas if they are skilled in the principles and techniques of communicating. As a preliminary to building communicating skills, one must understand the communications process. To help in achieving this understanding, a communications model has been developed. Note that this model applies both to human and technical forms of communication.

EXHIBIT A: COMMUNICATIONS MODEL



Definition of Terms

Information Source

The starting point of this model is the information source. The information source takes information and puts it into the form of a message. It must also decide what meaning is to be exchanged and what arrangements of information will most accurately convey this intended meaning.

Encoder

The message is fed to an encoder where it is transposed into signs and codes which are suitable for transmission. A sign is any physical event which is used to represent something else in the communication process. For example, human language (word symbols) is a set of signs. A code is an agreed upon transformation of one set of signs to another. For example, an alphabet, the morse code, and signal flag codes are all examples of codes.

Transmitter

A transmitter is any device that can project the encoded signals over a particular medium termed a channel. For example, a radio transmitter projects signals through the medium of radio waves of a particular frequency. A telephone projects electrical impulses over a particular wire.

In passing over a channel, signals may encounter interference or noise. Noise, such as static on a radio set, snow on a TV screen, or background noise on a telephone line, can weaken, distort, or completely block out signals. To compensate for the effects of noise, some systems make use of repetition (redundancy) and feedback procedures to assure that a complete message gets through.

Receiver

A receiver is a device that picks up and registers the encoded signal. To register a signal, the receiver must be in the proper state of readiness. It must be turned on and tuned to the same channel over which the signal is being transmitted, at the time the signal is being transmitted.

Decoder

The decoder takes the message passed on to it by the receiver and converts it from codes into signs. In order for the results to have any meaning the decoder must be matched to the encoder; in other words, it must have access to and utilize the same codes and signs as the encoder intended.

Destination

The destination is the device and location in which the decoded message is delivered. It implies a particular device at a specific location; for example, a radio message could be picked up and "read" by many destinations, yet not reach the intended destination.

Feedback

The information source has no way of determining whether its message reached the destination and was properly understood by the destination unless some provision is made for feedback. In some cases the information source gets feedback by observing the action of the destination. For example, two ships traveling together at sea can signal one another. One may signal the other to turn right and can get feedback by observing whether or not this action is taken. In most cases feedback occurs in the case of a return message. In effect, components of the models reverse roles. The destination becomes the information source and the information source becomes the destination. Feedback is achieved by comparing the message returned from the destination with the message that was sent by the information source.

Applications to Human Communications

What can be learned from this model about the problems involved in human and social communications?

Many problems start right at the information source. Everyone can think of occasions when he began to communicate before he had a clear idea what it was he was trying to convey. On other occasions, he may have known in a general way that he was ready to convey them. It should be easy to see that if senders are confused about what they want to say and how they want to say it, the resulting message will seem equally, if not more, confused, to the intended receiver. One business organization expressed its concern over this type of communications problem by asking its managers to post the following sign prominently over their desks - "Make sure brain is engaged before using mouth."

At the encoding stage, a new set of problems is encountered. Signs and codes which accurately convey the intent of the message must be selected. For the most part, managers will be concerned with the effective use of words. The problems involved in selecting the right words to convey a particular meaning may appear simple, but are in fact extremely complex. The problem of encoding is frequently made difficult for the public housing project manager by the fact that residents may literally speak different languages from the one used by the project manager. The languages encountered will reflect the racial, ethnic, social, economic, and cultural differences of resident groups. Even within one family unit it is possible to find teenagers using words and phrases which have no meaning for the adult members of the family.

Other problems arise in transmitting a message. For example if transmitting by voice, speech may be unclear as a result of improper pronunciation or enunciation. If transmitting by writing, the writing may be illegible. Breakdowns in communications can occur because transmitting is not

loud enough for proper reception or because transmitting is too rapid to be properly understood.

In human communications, a special set of transmitting problems is encountered. Whereas mechanical systems are designed to send a particular type of message over a particular channel, humans are capable of sending many types of messages over several channels, all at the same time. Problems can be encountered when one unwittingly transmits conflicting messages. For example, a person may be sending one message with his words but conveying a contradictory message with his actions. Facial expressions, tone of voice, and other physical gestures frequently can convey a much louder message than the message a person is attempting to convey with his words.

Communications problems can also arise from failing to choose and utilize the proper channels for transmitting signals. An example of this would be sending a letter when a face to face conversation is required. Some messages may require more than one channel to be effectively transmitted. A message transmitted through both audio and visual channels is usually more effective than a message transmitted by one or the other by themselves.

Failure to account for possible problems in the receiver can also cause communications to break down. The sender must get the attention of the receiver and see to it that it is turned on and tuned in before transmitting. Unless the transmitter can get the intended receiver turned on and interested in the message, he has little hope of communicating. Some people may be turned off by the transmitter because of what he is as a person or because of some other factor such as the position he occupies,

a title he holds, a uniform he wears, or a group to which he belongs. In such cases it may be better to choose another means of transmitting the message, such as another person, in the hope that the intended receiver will be better tuned-in to and more receptive to this new source. A communicator must also note whether an intended receiver is properly placed to receive a message from a particular channel or medium. For example, a person must be placed close enough to hear and see an audio-visual message. The sender must also note whether the receiver is tired or alert, distracted or attentive.

The sender must also take into account the noise his signals will encounter on their way to the receiver. If the signal, for example a voice signal, must compete against other physical noises, then the volume of the transmission must be sufficiently loud to overcome the noise. If the noise consists of other competing messages, such as might be encountered by a printed advertisement or in a situation where the intended receiver is watching a television program, the sender must put his message into a form that is unique or unusual enough to attract and hold the attention of the intended receiver.

After the information source or sender is able to successfully overcome these problems, the biggest problem in communications still lies ahead: decoding the message by the receiver. Complete idea sharing is rarely approached and never achieved because the intended receivers are unable to give the exact same interpretation and understanding to a message as was intended by its sender. This can result because the intended receiver is not sufficiently motivated to make the effort to understand the sender. It can also occur because the sender was unwilling or unable

to understand the intended receiver and to put his message in terms that would be acceptable to the receiver and easy for the receiver to understand. Studies and material on persuasive communications and motivations all stress the importance of attempting as accurately as possible to communicate from the other person's point of view. This means that a sender must try to understand the manner in which a receiver will decode his message and try to anticipate the manner in which the message will be interpreted.

Finally, many communications problems occur because of the failure to look for and make use of feedback information. In some cases, breakdowns occur because the feedback information which was available was not observed or interpreted properly. In other cases failures occur because the sender did not take steps to generate feedback information.

For example, in public housing it is common practice for project managers to orient residents to the responsibilities they will be undertaking when they sign their lease. It is assumed that because residents sign the lease and indicate that they understand and agree to the rules and regulations involved, that accurate communication has taken place. In many cases subsequent feedback indicates that the resident would have agreed to anything in order to obtain the apartment and did not necessarily understand or agree to the provisions involved.

This model can be used as a guide to improve the ability to communicate. It can be used as a checklist to help prepare, encode, and transmit messages properly. When feedback indicates that communications have not been adequate, it can be used as a checklist to help pinpoint accurately the location of the problem. This model clearly illustrates the

complexities of the communications process and stresses the fact that idea sharing requires the cooperation of both the sender and the receiver.

Sending Communications

As the highest ranking housing authority official present in a project, the manager is responsible for effectively sending many items of important information to employees and residents. He is constantly required to communicate plans, ideas, and data which people living and working in the project must understand and act upon. Below are some principles of communication that apply to sending information about management activities.

General Principles of Communication

1. All people employed in the development particularly those in management positions, should know the value and importance of communications.
2. All people employed in the development must themselves be informed if they are to carry out their own responsibility for communication with residents.
3. Include planning for communications before actions are undertaken. For example, in changing a maintenance procedure it is not enough to write a new procedure to be followed by maintenance employees. The manager must plan to explain the change to affected employees and to explain the change to residents. Such planning should include what should be said, how it should be said, by whom it should be said, and when it should be said.
4. Determine who will be affected by an event and therefore who should be told about it. The manager should be able to put

himself in the shoes of others who are less informed and judge what each of these people will need and want to know.

The Timing of Communications

In some cases the effect of a message which has been skillfully phrased and skillfully delivered is lost because timing of the release of the information was unacceptable. Here are some elements of timing:

1. Timing should always be such that the person or persons affected hear the information before others who are not affected. For example, if management has taken an action with respect to a resident, the resident should always hear about that action from the manager before he hears about it from neighbors or project employees.
2. All persons on any level who receive information for transmittal must share responsibility for passing it on as uniformly as possible. For example, a project manager who is given the responsibility for informing his employees and residents about an action which will affect all employees and residents in the authority must attempt to coordinate his communications with those of other project managers. Failure to do so could result in employees and residents in his project receiving their information secondhand from employees or residents in other projects.
3. If it is decided to inform people about an event, the information should be sent as quickly as possible to avoid the effects of rumor, gossip and conjecture. For example, a decision to modernize a project which will result in the temporary or permanent relocation of residents should be communicated promptly before

residents have an opportunity to fill in the missing information by guessing and starting rumors about what is to happen.

Who Should Be Told?

If the information to be communicated affects more than one person, all who are equally in need of the information must be told. People who are forgotten are likely to be resentful.

Who Should Tell?

Telling or informing is accepted best at the project level from the project manager, provided the project manager is viewed as being in charge. The closer the sender is to the intended receiver both in a physical and psychological sense, the better the chances that the communication will be well received. Good communication practice should provide for using the same channels for all communications whenever possible. For example, it would be poor practice to have the executive director send communications which residents and employees would view as good news, while requiring project managers to send communications which would be viewed as bad or upsetting news.

Where choice is possible in who should tell, information should be sent by a person who is highly acceptable personally and who has a record for telling things clearly, interestingly and acceptably to the listener. At the same time, remember that residents and employees occasionally like to hear from top officials.

What Should Be Communicated?

Tell people those facts most calculated to make them feel that they belong, that they are informed, so that they can fully identify themselves with their jobs or with the project.

Tell those things that will make employees and residents have a feeling both of opportunity and security, that will remove wonderment, anxiety and aimless questions that make for confusion and indifference.

Select those things to tell that people will take pride in knowing, which will help satisfy their needs for attention, status, and feelings of importance.

It is good practice to let employees and residents know about those things which they will eventually learn for themselves. Do this to tell the facts constructively, truthfully and shaped to an intended purpose before they become distorted through lack of information.

How to Communicate

Success in communication depends upon gaining acceptance of what is said. Therefore, the manager as a sender must carefully plan not only what to tell but how to tell it so as to gain maximum acceptance. One of the best ways to gain acceptance is to give reasons - reasons that have meaning to those being informed.

When persuasion is needed, the spoken word can be more effective than the printed word. Speaking presents more opportunity to observe individual reactions and adapt a presentation to gain required ends.

If the details of the presentation are complex, or, if the facts are those which employees or residents may not wish to believe, the speaker will have to follow up by reviewing and retelling.

Keep channels of communication open both ways by inviting listener responses. Whenever possible, project managers should provide occasions for thorough discussions among residents and employees about important communications.

In planning to communicate, always try to use more than one medium. A meeting that is reinforced by a letter sent to a resident's home, or a poster placed on the project bulletin board, or some form of written notice is far more effective than an announcement that receives only one form of treatment.

Some Principles of Good Communication

In planning to send information to employees and residents, project managers should keep the following principles in mind:

1. Seek to clarify ideas before communication. The more systematically one analyzes the problem or idea to be communicated, the clearer it becomes. This is the first step toward effective communication. Many communications fail because of inadequate planning. Good planning must consider the goals and attitudes of those who will receive the communication and of those who will be affected by it.
2. Examine the true purpose of each communication. Identify the most important goal and then adapt language, tone, and total approach to serve that specific objective. Don't try to accomplish too much with one communication. The sharper the focus of the message, the greater its chances of success.
3. Consider the total physical and human setting whenever communicating. Meaning and intent are conveyed by more than words alone. Many other factors influence the overall impact of communications, and the manager must be sensitive to the total setting in which he communicates. Consider, for example, the sense of timing, the circumstances under which an announcement is made or a decision is rendered; the physical setting - - whether communication takes place in private, or otherwise; the social

climate that pervades the climate within the development or within the office and sets the tone of communications; custom and past practice - - the degree to which the communication conforms to, or departs from, the expectations of the listeners. Be constantly aware of the total setting in which communication takes place.

4. Consult with others, when appropriate, when planning communications. Frequently it is desirable or necessary to seek the participation of others in planning a communication or in developing the facts on which to base it. Consulting with key employees and key residents often helps to lend additional insight and objectivity to a message. More importantly, those who have helped plan a communication will be in a position to give it their active support.

5. Be mindful of the overtones as well as the basic content of the message. Tone of voice, expression, and apparent receptiveness to the responses of others all have tremendous impact on listeners. Frequently overlooked, these subtleties of communication often affect a listener's reaction to a message even more than its basic content. Similarly, choice of language - particularly fine shades of meaning and emotion in words used - predetermines in large part the reactions of listeners.

6. Take the opportunity, when it arises, to convey something of help or value to the receiver. Consideration of the other person's interests and needs, trying to look at the things from his point of view, will frequently point up opportunities to convey something of immediate benefit or of long range value to him. People are most responsive to the manager whose messages take their own interest into account.

7. Send follow-up messages to get feedback. The best efforts in

communication may be wasted and one may never know whether or not he succeeded in expressing his true meaning and intent, if he does not follow-up to see how well he has put the message across. This can be done by asking questions, by encouraging the receiver to express his reactions, by follow-up contacts, or by subsequent review of performance. Make certain that every important communication gets feedback so that complete understanding and appropriate action result.

8. Communicate for tomorrow as well as for today. Communications are aimed primarily at meeting the demands of an immediate situation. They must also be planned with the past in mind if they are to maintain consistency in the receiver's view. They must also be consistent with future interests and goals. For example, it is not always easy to communicate frankly with a resident on such matters as inappropriate behavior or the shortcomings of children. However, postponing disagreeable communications makes their transmission more difficult in the long run, and is actually unfair to the manager, to the residents, and to the authority.

9. Be sure actions support communications. In the final analysis, the most persuasive kind of communication is not what is said but what is done. When a manager's actions and attitudes contradict his words, people tend to discount what he has said. This means that managers must make sure that residents thoroughly understand their responsibilities and are able to carry them out and enforce policy fairly and impartially in practice as well as in words.

Feedback

Feedback is probably the least understood aspect of communications.

Part of the reason for this lies in the fact that we tend to think of communications in terms of the more common and formalized methods of communicating.

Feedback is communication to a group or person regarding the effect that group or that person's behavior has on another person. These effects may involve perceptions, feelings, or reactions. Feedback is not criticism. While criticism is evaluative, feedback is descriptive. Feedback provides the individual with information he can use in performing his own evaluation. If the individual is not being evaluated, he is not as likely to react defensively. Other characteristics of useful and helpful feedback are:

1. It is specific rather than general. To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told "just now, when we were deciding the issue, you did not listen to what others said, and I felt I had to agree with your arguments or face attack from you."
2. It is focused on behavior rather than on the person. It is important that we refer to what a person does rather than to what we think or imagine he is. Thus, we might say that "you sat in a chair and watched others work this morning," rather than say that "you are lazy."
3. It takes into account the needs of the receiver of the feedback. Feedback can be destructive when it serves only the provider's own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end. Telling a person, for example, that he is "good for nothing" may satisfy one's own need to express anger or

frustration or to hit back. Such information, however, is of no use to the other person and can be destructive.

4. It is directed towards behavior which the receiver can do something about. Frustration is only increased with the mention of some shortcoming over which he has no control or a physical characteristic about which he can do nothing.
5. It is solicited, rather than imposed. Feedback is most helpful when the receiver himself has asked the kind of question that those observing him can answer.
6. It involves sharing ideas and information rather than giving advice. By sharing ideas and information, one leaves a person free to decide for himself, in accordance with his own goals and needs. When one gives advice, he tells another what to do, and to some degree takes away the other's freedom to decide for himself. In giving advice, the provider runs the risk that in rejecting the advice, the receiver may also reject other useful parts of the feedback.
7. It is well timed. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, and the amount of support available from others). The reception and use of feedback involves many possible emotional reactions. Excellent feedback presented at an inappropriate time may do more harm than good.
8. It involves the amount of information the receiver can use rather than the amount one would like to give. To overload a person

with feedback is to reduce the possibility that he may use what he receives effectively. When one gives more than can be used by the person at a given time, he is probably satisfying some need of his own rather than trying to help the other person.

9. It concerns what is said or done or how it is said or done, not why. The why takes us from the observable to the inferred and involves assumptions regarding the person's motive or intent. Telling a person what his motivations or intentions are more often than not tends to anger the person and contributes to a climate of suspicion and distrust. It is always dangerous to assume that we know why a person says or does something or what he really means or what he is really trying to do. For example, if a person's behavior is hurting us, appropriate feedback would be to say "you are hurting me" rather than to say "you are trying to hurt me."
10. It is checked to insure clear communication. One way of doing this is to try to have the receiver rephrase the feedback he has received to see if it corresponds with what the sender has in mind.

Managers have two principal responsibilities with respect to feedback:

1. They must accept responsibility for providing prompt and helpful feedback to the people for whom they are responsible and to whom they are responsible. This includes recognizing that failure to give direct feedback is in itself a form of negative feedback. For example, if an employee or resident is doing something which is incorrect, without feedback he can assume that his behavior is appropriate.

2. They must assume responsibility for obtaining as much useful information about their own acts and behavior as is possible. Getting such information gives managers the opportunity to 1) increase their self-awareness, 2) determine the consequences of their behavior, and 3) change or modify their behavior if desired.

In order to get feedback a manager needs to encourage and support those who try to provide it. Good feedback requires frankness, which is often avoided because it is difficult and at times unpleasant. If a manager wants others to be frank with him, he has to make it safe and comfortable for them. Being a manager and holding the power to hire, fire and/or evict people makes frankness extremely risky for employees and residents. Managers should convince them that it is safe to be frank by accepting any feedback they offer gracefully, by not becoming defensive or hostile because of it, by showing acceptance and appreciation for feedback, and by attempting to make use of the feedback in some manner. In this way a climate of trust and confidence and of mutual acceptance and support can be built in which frankness will be an acceptable and valued behavior.

RUMOR-CLINIC OBSERVATION FORM

Accident Report: "I cannot wait to report this accident to the police. I must get to the hospital as soon as possible."

"The delivery truck, heading south, was turning right at the intersection when the sports car, heading north, attempted to turn left. When they saw that they were turning into the same lane, they both honked their horns but continued to turn without slowing down. In fact, the sports car seemed to be accelerating just before the crash."

Volunteer	Additions	Deletions	Distortions
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6 (Policeman)			

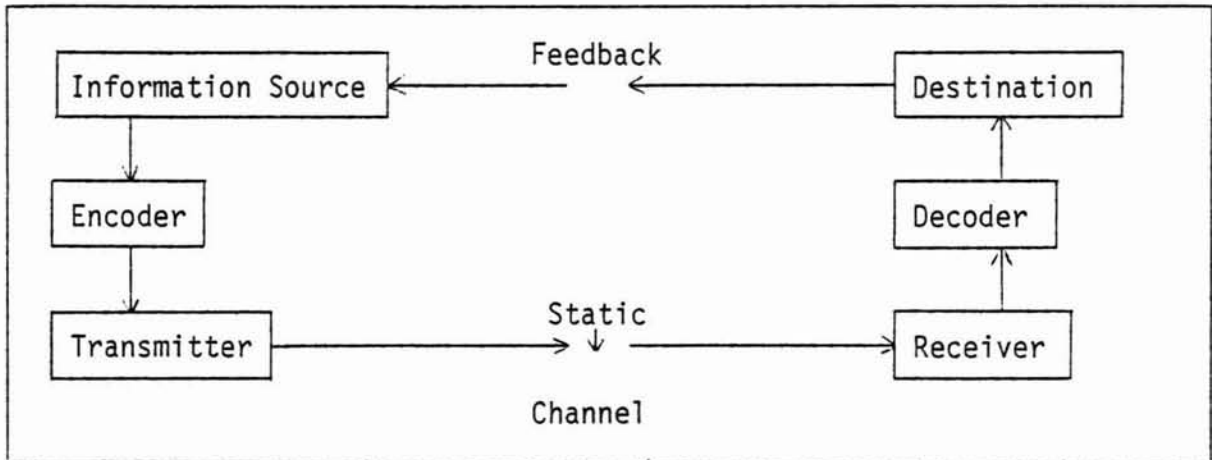
POST-TEST

POST TEST: WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. *Indicate whether the following items should or should not be done when listening.*

	Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
a. Listen on request b. Show the person he is accepted c. Ask questions as soon as they arise d. Give good advice e. Listen actively f. Interpret words for the person g. Disapprove honestly h. Listen for non-verbal signals i. Argue positions that are correct j. Joke about errors k. Listen according to instructions l. Listen when asked m. Listen for feelings n. Hold questions until the person is finished o. Give no advice		

2. Below is a model of the communications process. Match the items beneath it with their definitions:



- _____ Information Source
- _____ Decoder
- _____ Receiver
- _____ Feedback
- _____ Encoder
- _____ Transmitter
- _____ Destination

- a. Where information is transposed into signs and codes suitable for transmission.
- b. Decides on what meaning is to be exchanged and on what arrangements of information will most accurately convey the intended meaning.
- c. The device which projects the encoded signals over a medium or channel.
- d. Picks up and registers the encoded signal.
- e. Reconverts messages from codes back into signs.
- f. Where decoded information is delivered.
- g. Reversal of roles of the components.

3. Answer True (T) or False (F) to the following questions.

- _____ a. All people employed in a development must recognize the value and importance of communications.
- _____ b. Persons who are affected by information should hear it before others who are not affected.
- _____ c. Avoid telling bad news to residents; this is the basis for malicious rumors.
- _____ d. Even if residents or employees will eventually learn of unpleasant news, keep it from them as long as possible.
- _____ e. Success in communication depends on gaining acceptance of what is said.
- _____ f. The broader the focus of message, the greater chance it will have of being communicated to many different people.
- _____ g. Clarify ideas before communicating.
- _____ h. Communications need not necessarily be followed by supportive actions.
- _____ i. Communications must be planned with reference to the past to insure consistency in the receiver's view.

4. List the two responsibilities of managers with respect to feedback.

- (a) _____

- (b) _____

SKILL TEST

SKILL TEST: CAN YOU APPLY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TO WORK SITUATIONS?

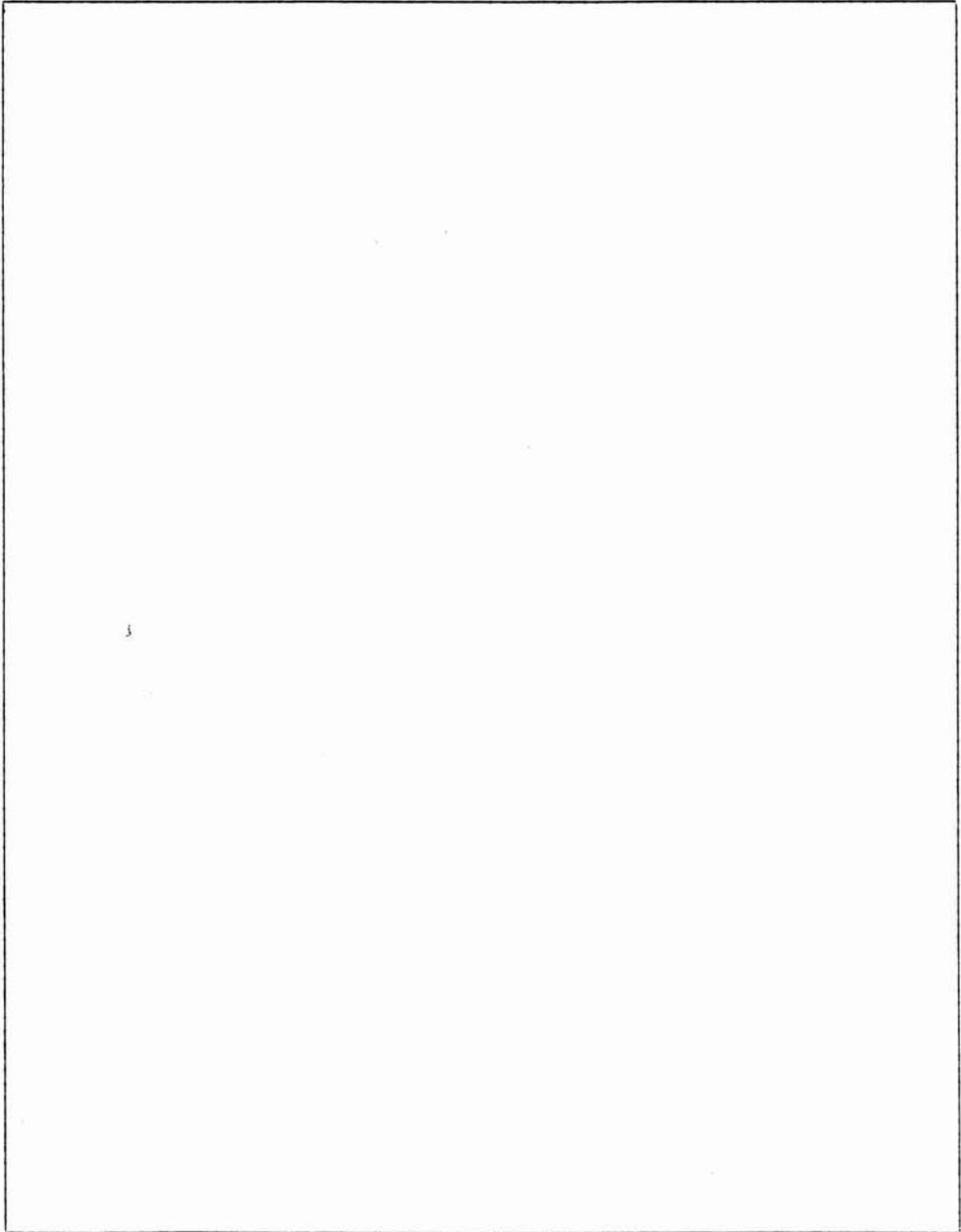
1. *Read the following case study:*

Mrs. Smith came to the management service office to see Mr. Jones, the housing manager. Mr. Jones was reading a maintenance report and asked Mrs. Smith to have a seat until he was through. After ten minutes, Mr. Jones asked Mrs. Smith if there was anything he could do to help her. He didn't seem to notice how tense she was. Mrs. Smith answered that she needed help managing her oldest daughter. Recently, the girl's grades in school had begun to fall and she was in trouble with the truant officer. Mr. Jones asked how old she was. Mrs. Smith paused a moment and answered "sixteen." She stated that the girl also had a steady boyfriend and that she was afraid she might get pregnant. She asked Mr. Jones for advice on what to do. She indicated that she was very upset and nervous lately.

Mr. Jones pointed out to Mrs. Smith that it was silly to get so upset over such a minor problem. He pointed out that many girls her daughter's age had "steady" boyfriends and that nothing came of such relationships. He reassured her that all she needed to do was put her daughter on the pill and make her stay in to study for two or three hours every evening. If her daughter's grades did not improve, then Mrs. Smith should cut her allowance.

Does Mr. Jones need to improve his listening skills? How?

2. *Develop a model of the communications process. Be sure it contains the following elements: ENCODER, STATIC, FEEDBACK, DESTINATION, CHANNEL, TRANSMITTER, INFORMATION SOURCE, DECODER, AND RECEIVER*



3-4. Read the following case study:

Mr. Jones scheduled a staff meeting for Friday afternoon at 4:45 to review personnel policies with the office staff. He had noticed that many workers were coming in late or overstaying their lunch breaks. Mr. Jones had intended to prepare his remarks beforehand; but having been called to a luncheon meeting, he didn't have time to do so. He arrived at the meeting a little late, and addressed the staff off-the-cuff.

He told the staff that he had noticed lately that attendance patterns were somewhat hit or miss. He reminded them that working hours were from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with forty-five minutes for lunch. He added that he was going to start asking staff to sign time sheets again, and that this time he was going to stick with such a policy.

Noting that the room was hot and crowded, and that it was 5:05, Mr. Jones ended the meeting, wishing everyone a good weekend.

How would you improve Mr. Jones communication (and feedback) skills?

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