

LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

PART VI COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

SECTION 3- PROGRAMMING **For** **PROJECT RESIDENTS**

**HOUSING AND HOME FINANCE AGENCY
PUBLIC HOUSING ADMINISTRATION**

An up-to-date list of all Local Housing Authority
Management Handbook Sections if provided in Low-
Rent Housing Manual Section 100.2, Supplement 1,
Exhibit 7.

PROGRAMMING FOR PROJECT RESIDENTS

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PROGRAMMING FOR PROJECT RESIDENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The transition to life in a low-rent housing project often is a difficult one for the residents, calling for patience and understanding on the part of Local Authority staffs who try to help the families in their adjustment.

The number of one-parent families has increased, and that parent is usually the mother. If she goes to work, her children need special care. Young people on the loose tend to cluster in gangs, often moving from boredom to idle mischief to violence.

Men who have had little formal education or who lack specialized training find jobs only in the lowest paid occupations. These are the ones first affected by changing economic conditions and periods of unemployment. In considering the social needs of the residents, it should be kept in mind that economic and social changes often bring conditions of acute anxiety for those in the low-income group.

A long-range program of rehabilitation requires the help of every member of the Local Authority staff, the skilled assistance of community agencies, and the active participation of the tenants themselves, to find leadership and build a friendly neighborhood.

2. CONSIDERATIONS FOR VARIOUS AGE GROUPS

Every age group among the residents presents special problems and opportunities. Regardless of the size of the community, these should be considered and every effort should be made to arrange for the provision of appropriate facilities and services.

a. Preschool Children

(1) Nursery Schools and Day Care Centers

With mothers at work, preschool children are often left to the casual care of neighbors or of older children after school hours. When this situation exists, a nursery school or day care center is needed, and project space may be provided if space is not otherwise available. The Local Authority should give this top priority in enlisting the help of community agencies.

Planning for the nursery school serves as a natural springboard to a discussion group on child care and training, with a leader provided by a responsible agency. In such an informal atmosphere, even a timid woman may venture

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to ask a question, and the answer may be helpful to others in the group who hesitate to inquire for themselves.

The provision of personnel for a nursery school or day care center, and their training and supervision, are the responsibility of the operating agency. When other help is needed, the Local Authority may be able to suggest women who are qualified by interest or experience for either paid or volunteer work. Sometimes a group of mothers takes the initiative in organizing a preschool center and can help with the children under the direction of a qualified teacher. The training of this group rests with the agency in charge. Other volunteers may collect furnishings and toys, make curtains, or serve a simple lunch.

Working mothers with preschool children should be given full information about the program to understand just what is involved: daily or weekly fees, transportation, health examinations, the clothing required, and the hours when children may be left and picked up.

(2) Tot Lots

Special play areas and equipment should be available for children who are too small to use the ordinary equipment, or too young to play with groups of older children. Even with safe equipment, such as climbers and slides, careful supervision is necessary to avoid accidents. Volunteers from among the mothers may be scheduled for definite hours as assistants, under the direction of a trained leader from a local agency.

b. School-Age Children

(1) School Programs

Homes and schools should be more closely linked together to benefit both the project families and the Local Authority. Fortunately, in recent years many schools have developed useful services designed to improve this connection.

A Local Authority in the South reports that the Visiting Teachers are management's best friends. They report the names of project children who need clothes and shoes and those who go to school with no lunches, and they work closely with the social agencies in meeting these needs.

(2) Health Services

In many of the larger communities, special health services are now available for school children. Blind, deaf, and crippled children are given opportunities to approximate normal living. If given early attention, mentally disturbed children may often be restored.

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Where community health services are lacking, the Local Authority can stimulate interest in organized planning for preventative and correctional services. Project nondwelling space, if needed for a health unit, may be leased to the agency providing the services.

(3) Activity Supervision

Adequate supervision of group and play activities of school-age children generally results in a reduction in vandalism and property damage and in improved safety to the children and others.

In addition, when an appropriate agency carries out a practical plan of group activities for children, tenant-management-community relations improve.

(4) An Actual Local Authority Program

A "Top Teen Award" is given each year by the Local Authority in a large Midwestern city, with T-shirts and insignia provided by the Community Chest. In the younger group, 300 boys under 12 years old were organized into lawn patrols and did a fine job. The Union of which the janitors of this Local Authority are members gave \$300 in cash prizes for the best-kept grounds and the best floral displays.

c. Youth

(1) Gangs and Their Psychology

In some localities, gangs of teenage boys have become a public menace. In these cities, housing projects have not escaped. Studies of gangs and gang psychology show that a sense of power and the prestige of aggressive leadership play a large part in keeping a gang together. Outbursts of violence are just below the surface.

The desires of unemployed, school dropout, and other youth for such power and prestige are often sparked into destructive, criminal acts. The Local Authority will benefit if this energy is directed into constructive channels.

(2) Community Agencies and Their Services

Before a local situation becomes serious, the Local Authority should enlist active help from those agencies whose main purpose is casework or group work with young people, such as the Boy Scouts, Big Brothers, Police Athletic League (PAL), Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, and Boys' and Girls' Clubs of America. Local Settlement Houses have had long experience in all kinds of

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group work and have given practical help in many low-rent housing areas. Other resources may be found through Vocational Schools, Youth Employment Counselors of the local Employment Service, YMCA, YWCA, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Junior League, American Legion, 4-H Clubs, trade unions, churches, and synagogues.

The Big Brothers and Big Sisters often do effective work with especially difficult individuals who ignore group activities or use them to stir up trouble. To have a friend whom a boy can trust and with whom he may enjoy an outing, a baseball game, or a trip to the circus may mean the difference between attempted crime and good citizenship. Girls, too, need the confidence a friend can inspire, and an appreciation of social standards which make them acceptable in their own group and in the community.

(3) Employment in the Project

Some managers have employed young people for specific jobs, with good results, in order to preserve property and beautify the grounds. Where State laws permit full or part-time jobs for teenagers and labor union cooperation can be obtained, if needed, this may be a temporary expedient during school holidays. If related to vocational counseling, the work may prove enjoyable and productive.

(4) Teenage Centers

Young people often express a wish for a "hangout" of their own, and project nondwelling space may be provided if space is not otherwise available. There is a fine line between helping boys and girls to organize and carry on their own activities, and interfering with them to the point where they become resentful. For this reason, management should emphasize the need for local agencies to furnish expert help.

A variety of group activities including workshops for arts and crafts, machine shops, carpentry, first-aid, orchestras, choruses, dramatics, and newspapers serve to attract young people and may give them a start in productive pursuits. Schools, churches, settlements, the Red Cross, trade unions, and recreation commissions are among the resources for these and many other activities. Unsuspected talent may often be discovered which later may be developed through professional training and employment.

It is encouraging that juvenile delinquency has been reduced in public housing neighborhoods where Local Authorities have made full use of community agencies.

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In a Southern city, the Judge of the Juvenile Court and his staff have agreed to confer with management when young people from the projects are apprehended. Off-the-record hearings, after court hours, are arranged in the project for difficult cases, so that no court record stands against the delinquent youths. The local Ministerial Association assigns one of its members to help at any time. At the same locality, the Director of the City Recreation Department was able to bring a gang under control by helping the members to start a social club, with headquarters in the project community building. A map showing delinquency cases in the city indicates a striking decline in delinquency in public housing neighborhoods.

d. Adults

(1) Counseling and Welfare Services

During rent collections or other management operations, many problems are brought to light: illness, debt, desertion by the breadwinner, children in trouble at school or with the police. Unresolved, these burdens often result in serious situations for the family and indirectly for management.

Whatever the situation, the person in trouble needs someone to listen to his problems. If he is willing to use the counseling service of some community agency, he will usually get help. Where the tenant cooperates, referral by the Local Authority to an agency, and followup by one of its trained workers, should be routine procedure. Acting through a team of trained workers, social agencies often are able to relieve immediate tensions and carry through a long-range plan of rehabilitation.

A Local Authority on the West Coast tells of a family with nine children, where the mother did little to maintain the house as a home. The Board of Education provided a Home Management Counseling Service and succeeded in interesting the mother to take training. The Scouts drew in some of the boys, who were encouraged to do better in school and later were on the honor roll. The mother is regarded now as a neighborhood leader and the home, no longer in disorder, is attractive to the children, who like to bring in their friends.

Rent delinquencies and vacancies often can be reduced by prompt action to remove the probable causes.

Unemployed men in a Middle Western city are invited to attend meetings sponsored by the Mental Hygiene Council, where informal "group casework" is designed to help them to understand their own situation and to take steps toward employment. In these sessions, household management, parent-child relations, and alcoholism are also discussed.

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(2) Health Services

Large communities have a network of health and medical agencies. But it takes expert knowledge of these resources to advise on clinic hours and costs, specialized services for the handicapped, procedures for admission to hospitals, and home care for convalescents, to name only a few of the resources available.

When the Local Authority operates in a small town, health services may be available only at greater distances, involving more transportation. Often a public health unit in a project, with scheduled days and hours for a visiting physician and/or nurse, serves as a clearinghouse for health counseling and referrals. In addition, helpful suggestions may be given by means of pamphlets and other material, distributed from the health unit or posted in the management office or community rooms.

(3) Employment

Conferences with the local Employment Service will suggest regular procedures for referrals, as well as provide information on unemployment compensation and disability benefits. A list of immediate job openings and current requirements for positions in different trades and professions may be obtained and posted in conspicuous places. Sometimes a resident council will keep management informed when residents hear about jobs in their own places of employment or in others. A joint committee of management staff members and residents to discover such opportunities can often be helpful.

For those who need to develop new skills to get a job, vocational schools, evening classes for adults, or training by an industry or a commercial firm may be the road to employment. Local Authority staff members might well inquire into such resources to be prepared to make appropriate referrals.

(4) Adult Education

(a) Need to awaken interest

It is not easy to stimulate attendance in adult classes and to ensure follow-through, week after week. With only limited formal education as a child, a person is often afraid to venture into new fields of learning, fearing that he will be found wanting. Childhood memories of failures in school may also discourage plans for further education.

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Mature experience is in itself a preparation for adult education and can be used as the basis for many kinds of learning. When a man or woman finds enjoyment and satisfaction in classroom work, his happiness will be reflected in family life and community relations.

(b) Need for Skilled Teachers

For a successful adult education program, teachers are needed who understand and value the experience of the individuals and use it as a springboard to new learning. Fortunately, many teachers with this understanding and teaching skill are to be found in the Public School Adult Education programs.

(c) Programs Available

Usually, the Adult Education Division of the public schools has programs for men and women interested in learning. Throughout the school year, and often in summer, these classes are open to the public with moderate fees, if any. Classes are many and varied. The Director of Adult Education of the local Board of Education should be asked to supply full information on the opportunities: posters and flyers listing the classes for each term, their dates, the number of sessions, the location, cost for classes, etc. When posters are available, they should be placed in management offices and community rooms. Community agency representatives and management staff members who see the residents often can encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities.

A public library can supplement school classes with simple pamphlets and books so that an adult student may keep informed in the field of his interest.

(5) Homemaking

Other opportunities for improving family conditions are to be found in classes and demonstrations conducted in every branch of homemaking: cooking, canning, nutrition, cutting and sewing, furniture repair, rug weaving, basketry, home decoration, and many others. Women who previously have lived under substandard housing conditions may welcome such instruction and benefit from it. Some agencies conduct demonstrations in homes and apartments, before new residents move in, so that the families will become familiar with the equipment and utilities and know how to use them.

In a Western city, homemaker services are carried on successfully. A university set up a class with full credits to train young women to teach homemaking in a housing project. Class instructions covered cooking, sewing, budgeting,
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child welfare, etc. A nursery for children from one to six years of age was organized to care for the children of the project occupants who attended the classes.

Churches, synagogues, settlements, family service agencies, and utility companies, as well as the Vocational and Home Economics Departments of public schools and of colleges and universities, and the Agricultural Extension Service, are among the resources for this type of instruction.

(6) Recreation

There is a fine distinction between adult education and recreation. The best kind of adult class is truly "re-creational," giving the adult student a new horizon of understanding enjoyment. In many kinds of recreation, those taking part learn new skills and educate themselves in new techniques--in sports and games, handicrafts, art, or music.

Many community rooms are planned for multiple use, lending themselves to small or large groups, classes, clubs, parties, or festivals. Simple refreshments add a pleasant touch to any occasion. It has been said, "The breaking of bread together has had great socializing effects in many cultures, down through the ages."

(a) Relation to Adult Education

In this environment, education and recreation find a natural partnership. A Home Economics class may end with a sampling of cocoa and cookies, prepared by the members and shared by their friends. A serious talk on civic affairs may be followed by a gay square dance. In a business meeting of a resident association, community singing may be a pleasant interlude.

(b) Outdoor Activities

Play areas in the projects can be widely utilized by adults as well as children for games and sports, block dances, songfests, informal plays, or movies. Interesting trips may be planned to historic sites, museums, public buildings, or government departments when transportation can be provided by the residents themselves or by cooperating groups. The agency making these arrangements usually will find a ready response, especially from the elderly who are often home-bound or have few opportunities to travel.

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(c) Coordinated Leadership Required

One agency, perhaps a community center or a settlement, may be designated for the coordination of leadership. Whoever is in charge of this activity should confer with other appropriate agencies in planning, finding leadership, and operating the programs. Assistance from the families themselves should be enlisted and certain definite responsibilities assigned to these volunteers.

The story of how this was done successfully comes from another city. Residents who volunteered to help with clubs for children and youth were given 6-weeks training by the City Recreation Department. The 23 "graduates" have given valuable help leading games and sports, arranging trips, and teaching handicrafts and simple mechanics.

e. Older Men and Women

While many of the services to meet the needs of the elderly are the same as for other adults in the housing developments, special services for this group often are needed.

Experiments in several cities with "Meals on Wheels" have brought good results. This is a service which provides at cost one or two meals a day for elderly people who cannot get out, and who find it hard to cook. The friendly visits from the "Platter Angels"--as the volunteers who deliver the meals are called--mean almost as much as the good food to friendless people with lonely hours to face each day. Friendly visitors are always needed for home-bound persons. One elderly woman said of her visitor, "She doesn't need to bring me something. She brings the best gift of all, herself."

Exercises in movement and relaxation with trained teachers often have proved useful in keeping aging joints and muscles limbered up and in contributing to a sense of health and well-being. Red Cross classes in firstaid and home nursing and in the prevention of accidents are other channels in useful health services for the elderly.

(1) Adding Life to the Years

The medical profession and modern health resources have prolonged life for the aging; but this has created many problems for them and for the community. The need is "not only to add years to our life, but to add life to our years."

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(2) Counseling

The outlook is often dreary for an older person who has lost his family, is retired from normal work, anxious about his means of support, or in failing health. In this difficult period he needs counseling to obtain the information necessary to resolve his problems. Privacy is necessary for all interviews, which should be confidential in nature, with a friendly person who is ready to listen and advise.

(a) Health

In the health counseling services needed for the elderly, special requirements will have to be recognized. Many older men and women have limited or no resources to pay for drugs and doctors' fees. Hospital bills, whether immediate or indicated for the future, create a feeling of panic. Information about clinics and their hours, admission to hospitals or nursing homes, and help for those with defects or in need of physical therapy will clear up confusion and bring a sense of reassurance. This in itself is therapeutic. Also, a class in nutrition will suggest proper diet for those who often live on little more than snacks.

(b) Employment and Income

Other kinds of counseling are of interest to the elderly group, especially advice on stretching income and finding part-time employment. Information may be requested on all phases of financial questions: social security, old age assistance, disability benefits, and income tax. Retraining in old skills or opportunities to learn new ones are of interest to many. "Sheltered workshops," where part-time light work is provided, have proved their usefulness to older men and women in many communities.

(3) Day Centers for the Elderly

As a group, the elderly have too much time on their hands, too little money, and too few friends. Unless they are physically vigorous and have some means of transportation, they cannot have much part in community affairs, take trips, attend adult classes, or even go any distance to get groceries or other supplies. Public housing has an opportunity to meet their need for friendly contacts, something to do, somewhere to go with the assurance of being welcome. A place open once a month, or even once a week, is not enough to fill the emptiness of too much lonely leisure. Aged people often are lonely every day of the week.

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(a) Facilities

When a day center for the elderly is opened in a housing project or nearby under the direction of trained leadership, it becomes a "lifesaver," as one elderly woman called it. She added, "I used to have a dog and a parakeet and I talked to them. But now I can talk to people."

Community rooms with a kitchen may be adapted to many uses for elderly people: parties, travel talks, home demonstrations, movies, a chorus or an orchestra, classes in handicrafts or painting. Here too the interest group may set up a clearinghouse for community services and find channels for giving practical help.

(b) Community Services by the Elderly

A great resource of wasted talent and experience may be found in any elderly group. As in other age groups, older people like to feel useful and to be called on for services that are actually needed. The opportunities are many and varied. At the suggestion of the Local Authority, community agencies may find, train, place, and supervise volunteers from this group. Transportation will often be needed.

In some localities, elderly men are doing a paint-up and patch-up service in old public buildings, restoring toys for children's hospitals, and taking care of shrubs and plants on the project site under the direction of the maintenance staff. Elderly women are sewing, knitting, or crocheting for children's institutions; acting as information clerks on two-hour shifts in a public park, near sites of historic interest; distributing folders on health services; welcoming foreign visitors; tutoring boys and girls in school subjects; planting bulbs in school and courthouse yards and on the project grounds; and helping in public libraries. Even bedridden women are addressing envelopes for the Community Chest.

3. RESIDENT COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

In the effort to create good will toward public housing in the larger community, the attitude of the residents has proved to be a most convincing factor in public relations. Every phase of management is involved in the tenant-management relationship.

a. Resident Activities

Residents, of course, should be permitted to form their own organizations, elect their own officers, and be free to carry on a program of activities. As a routine matter, an up-to-date listing of the names of management staff and the clearly

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stated plan agreed on for conferences and referrals should be made available to the residents' organization.

In order to have a functioning group to plan and carry on activities, assistance by an expert adviser is needed. Many residents have had little or no experience in group organization, and often become confused in meetings where decisions must be reached despite conflicting opinions. Helping them to learn and use simple parliamentary law is really a teaching service, requiring skill, patience, and experience. The effective adviser will never dominate the group or force decisions, but should be able to explain procedures, analyze problems for discussion, and create an atmosphere where independent thinking and harmonious relations can take root and grow.

b. Enlisting Resident Participation

Recent reports from some Local Authorities tell of a lack of interest in residents' organizations, and the difficulty of finding leadership. Experience shows, however, that where the plan for an organization is based on common problems and interests there is usually no lack of participation. The start of any activity (child care center, baseball team or league, employment service) which is close to the minds, hearts, and experiences of the residents is likely to form a nucleus for a healthy organization when all other attempts have failed.

Leadership is discovered when there is good cooperation between the residents and management. A knowledge of group work, together with an understanding of the techniques of adult education, will be very helpful in finding and developing this leadership. One of the adult education techniques is to change the usual question, "What do you want to learn?" to "What do you want to do, and how can this organization help you do it?" In a group of people who may have limited formal education, but rich practical experience, this change of emphasis rarely fails to stimulate interest.