Disability Services and Housing Services: A Powerful Team

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We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects…

Access and Inclusion
and
Civility and Respect

…this week and in all aspects of our organization.
Presentation Objectives

1. To reflect on the partnership of Disability Support Offices and Housing Offices

2. To identify prominent issues and concerns within this partnership

3. To ideate and discuss solutions to these issues for streamlined processes and improved productivity in partnership
Outline for Presentation

• Introduction

• Background

• Collaboration

• Issues

• Problem-Solving

• Discussion
If I ask you to think about the relationship between disability support offices and housing offices on college campuses, what comes to mind?
Introduction

SWDs face non-academic barriers in postsecondary settings

- Housing, Dining, Social

In 2019, prior to COVID19 pandemic, SWDs reported “limited housing options” that are “inaccessible” or “socially isolating” or both (Scott, 2019).

During and since the pandemic began, SWD are more likely than SWOD to face:

- Financial hardships
- Housing insecurity/fear of housing insecurity
- Decreased sense of belonging
- Decreased sense of support from university staff and faculty (Soria et al., 2020)
Background

Fair Housing Act (FHA Amendments 1988) and Section 504/ADA

• “The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers both public and private universities; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) covers federally funded programs and services; and the Fair Housing Act (FHA) covers student housing and dormitories.

• However, both the ADA and Section 504 cover most postsecondary institutions, and all three laws may apply to student housing” (NIDILRR, 2017).
DSS/Housing Collaboration

DSS and Housing interaction and collaboration varies across institutions

• Size of institution (impacts staffing; funding)
• Type of institutions
• Location
Collaboration (continued):

Both offices may have multi-step processes:

• Housing application and lottery process
• DSS housing accommodation process
• Where do the two processes meet?
Think/Share

What are some issues that you’ve experienced in the DSO/housing partnership?
Major Issues

We don’t know each other’s processes!
We don’t agree on processes and/or dates!
Other Major Issues

Availability of the housing accommodation
  • Space/units
  • Residency requirements and exemptions
  • Building and structural limitation
  • ESA conflict
Resulting Impact

• Confusion among SWD seeking housing accommodations, which creates a barrier.

• Confusion among department personnel
  • Leading to incorrect information being shared with students
  • Resulting in missed deadlines, additional confusion, not to mention frustration among DSS and Housing staff
Think/Share:
What are some ways that we can improve this situation and work better together?
How can we work better together?

• Learn about each other’s offices, policies, and processes
• Plan and develop major dates and deadlines together
• Clarify any issues with each other BEFORE involving student
Learn about each other’s offices, policies, & processes

• Who is on staff and what are their roles?
• How does the housing accommodation process work?
  • What should a housing staff member tell a student? What is the referral process?
• What are the ins and outs of the housing application process?
  • Where is it accessed? Is there an accommodation indicator/ question on it?
• Residency requirements and exemption info
  • Who is required to live on campus and for how long? Dining plan requirements?
  • Who can be exempt and why? What other options are there?
Website Information

Present clear information about housing accommodations on the DSO website AND the housing website if possible
Plan and develop major dates and deadlines together

• Approaching this together will minimize errors and lead to clarity for students
Clarify any issues BEFORE involving student

• Communication is key!
• Collaborate on the issue
• Avoid getting sucked into the email vortex—continuous replies in which nothing gets done, students are still confused, and you’re irritated!
Finally, and as always, ensure that...

- We are engaging students on an individualized basis relative to their disability/diagnosis, regardless of planned processes and DSO working relationship with Housing (or any other) office.

- Our collaboration and processes should never overtake the unique approach to each student experience and situation!
Thoughts, questions, comments?

Thank you for your time and participation!

Contact: Youngsar@trinitydc.edu
Session Evaluation

Please point your phone at this QR code, or go to: tinyurl.com/AHEADeval

Your feedback helps shape future programming.

Thank you for attending!
References

