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10.1. Overview: Developing Resident Relationships

OUR COMMITMENT: Since 1979 Royal American Management, Inc. has provided quality housing to residents throughout the southeastern United States. With thousands of residential rental units under our management, we have found that a significant number of residents are not aware of the various community resources available to them. In response, Resident Relations serves as an advocate bridging the gap between the residents' needs and the local social services available in their community. We accomplish this by providing a variety of on-site workshops and enriching activities that address the needs of today's **diverse** families.

EVERYONE BENEFITS: Our goal when implementing supportive services is to create opportunities for success and to foster a genuine sense of community for our residents by providing educational workshops and social activities. When resident services are implemented in a multi-family or senior-living community, everyone benefits; residents, property owners and management, as well as the surrounding community.

Our Residents

Residents' lives become more **enriched** when multi-family housing **provides meaningful services and programs**. Our Resident Services Programs provide direct access to a variety of services including adult education, after-school programs, information and referral for health and employment services and crisis intervention.

Property Owners / Management

- When economic needs and family emergencies are addressed in a timely manner, residents are less likely to fall behind with rent, vacate their apartment, or be evicted resulting in improved resident retention.
- Children and teens who participate in organized activities or an on-site after-school program are less likely to be **destructive to** the property.

The Surrounding Community

- A resident's stability and well-being means that they are more likely to contribute to local life—shop locally, participate in school and community activities, and interact positively with the rest of the neighborhood.
- A beautiful, well-run apartment community with a low number of incidents becomes an asset to a neighborhood.

Through our broad experience with developing and implementing resident-based programs, it is clear that supportive services do translate into positive results for the greater well-being of our residents, and for the community at large.

10.2. Program Development: Customized Supportive Services

With diverse resident populations, we know first-hand the importance of taking a

holistic approach when developing support programs. **The Resident Relations Department** works with each property to develop a customized plan that provides a variety of meaningful activities that address the physical, mental, and socioeconomic needs of residents on a continuous basis. Each plan incorporates resident input, utilizes community partnerships, and addresses staffing needs.

10.2.1. Resident Input

The most important element of the supportive services equation is the resident. Without their input and involvement, supportive services programs would be meaningless. Adult and youth residents assist with developing and implementing activities for their community by conveying their interests through suggestions and interest surveys and by serving as volunteers for various events.

10.2.2. Community Partnerships

Many of the services our residents require already exist in their local community. With this in mind, we continuously connect with the community and establish productive relationships with social services agencies, schools, clubs, churches and businesses to offer on-site assistance.

10.2.3. Staffing

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome when implementing a program is finding a **quality** candidate to assume the Activity Coordinator role. If funds are not available for a full or part-time Activities Coordinator, our Resident Relations **Department** assists with recruiting viable candidates for the position.

Staffing Options:

- A resident can serve as Activities Coordinator and receive a partial monthly rent concession as compensation;
- College interns requiring volunteer hours for school credit;
- Community volunteers can assist with portions of the program (literacy, after-school)
- **If budget allows, a PT/FT employee**

Training for Resident Activity Coordinators:

- **An online training presentation is available for Resident Activity Coordinators. Contact the Resident Relations Department at residentrelations@royalamerican.com if you have a new Activity Coordinator who needs training.**

10.3. Program Implementation: Resident Relations Plan

Our *Resident Relations Plan* is a step-by-step guide to developing supportive services activities and is distributed to the communities in our portfolio. This valuable self-help tool gives Coordinators the confidence and resources they need to implement any activity required by the Land-Use Restriction Agreement (LURA) **or other regulatory documents** if applicable. The plan details implementing various activities including:

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FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Community Cookouts & Potlucks
Pool Parties
Arts and Crafts
Rent Breakfasts

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Homework Club
Computer Classes
Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts
Movie Day / Game Day
Teen Club

SEASONAL & HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Spring Egg Hunt
Independence Day Celebration
Halloween Costume Contest
Mother's & Father's Day Activities
Tree trimming for Christmas
Breakfast w/ Santa

ACTIVITIES FOR SENIORS

On-Site Health Screenings
Exercise Classes
Game Day
Crafts

CRIME PREVENTION AND SAFETY

Neighborhood Crime Watch
Fire Safety & Prevention
Pool Safety
CPR Training

ADULT EDUCATION

Computer Learning Centers
English as a Second Language
First Time Homebuyer Workshops
GED Classes

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health and Fitness for Seniors
High Blood Pressure & Stroke Prevention
Breast Cancer Awareness
Healthy Diet/Weight Management
Dental Hygiene / Mobile Dental Unit

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

Job Search Assistance
Resume Writing & Interviewing Skills
Online Computer Classes

If you would like to receive a copy of the *Resident Relations Plan*, please email your request to residentrelations@royalamerican.com.

10.4. Monitoring: Program Documentation

Proper documentation is vital for many 'affordable' communities with specific resident services requirements. Documentation is maintained on-site in the Supportive Services Notebook and archived at our corporate office detailing the scope of activities each community offers and is readily available for review. If you are unsure of your properties documentation requirements check with your Regional Manager.

Detailed documentation includes:

SIGN-IN SHEETS

Sign-in sheets are used to document attendance and gauge resident participation. Original signatures are obtained from participating residents, volunteers, and community facilitators for all activities.

ACTIVITY FLYERS

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Eye-catching flyers designed by our Resident Relations **or on-site** staff are distributed door-to-door and posted in the common areas notifying residents of upcoming activities.

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTERS / EVENT CALENDARS

Properties are provided each month with a community newsletter containing articles on a variety of topics: health, finances, recipes, housekeeping, humor and self-help to name a few. Assistance is also provided with creating annual calendars for program development and monthly calendars for community distribution.

ANNUAL REPORTS

If applicable, activities are monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that all LURA **& regulatory** requirements are being met. The annual report gives property owners and audit reviewers a detailed snapshot of what activities have occurred during the past audit year.

EVENT PHOTOS

Events are also documented in the Supportive Services Notebook with photos. Archival photo disks are maintained at RAM Corporate as back-up.

10.4.1. Submitting Monthly Reports

If applicable, each site must submit the following Resident Services monthly reports:

- Activity flyers
- Sign-in sheets
- Monthly newsletter and calendar
- Coordinator timesheet
- Projected month's activity calendar
- Photo disks

Email reports to residentrelations@royalamerican.com by the 5th of **each** month.

10.5. **Examples of Resident Activities**

- **Assistance with Light Housekeeping, Grocery Shopping and/or Laundry**
Provide residents with a list of qualified service providers for (a) light housekeeping, and/or (b) grocery shopping, and/or (c) laundry and coordinate, at no cost to the resident, the scheduling and provision of services.

Note: Contact home health care agencies and keep their brochures on-site. Invite agencies to speak to the residents about their services.

- **Community Safety Activities**

Community Safety Meetings, Fire Safety, Neighborhood Crime Watch, Bike Safety, etc.

Note: Additional safety activities can include: McGruff the Crime Dog, Pool Safety, Hurricane Evacuation, Youth Fingerprinting, Car Seat Safety Checks, etc.

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- **Computer Resource Lab** - 1 computer per 50 units, Business and educational software, 1 printer

Note: If you have computers that are not working, it is important to contact RAM IT for assistance. All computers in the lab must be operational. If software is needed, contact RAM Resident Relations for suggestions and costs.

- **Daily Activities (Supervised, structured activities 5 days per week)**
Examples: Games, Exercise, Organized Outings, Cookouts, Movies, Computer Classes, Crafts, Art, Knitting, Informative Workshops, Holiday & Birthday Celebrations, Religious Studies.
- **Daily Resident Assurance Check-In System. Residents may opt out in writing.**

Note: **Participating residents must be contacted.** If you contact residents on a daily basis, it must be documented. RAM Resident Relations can provide a daily contact form template for your community. If residents do not wish to be contacted daily, a signed opt-out form is required for their file. RAM Resident Relations can also provide an opt-out form.

- **Decision Making Program** - (Quarterly) Suggested Workshop Topics Could Include: Financial Decisions, Choosing a Medicare Plan, Priority Budgeting, Problem Solving, Guardians and Guardianship, Wills, Trusts & Estates, Health Care Decisions, etc.
- **Employment Counseling** - Refer tenants to an area employment assistance program like a One-Stop Center or employment office. Market and promote program. Invite an employment agency representative to be a guest speaker at a Resident Meeting.
- **Eviction Prevention Documentation** - If your community has this requirement, contact RAM Resident Relations for assistance developing Eviction Prevention documentation specifically tailored for your community.
- **Family Budget Program** - Property staff provides budgeting strategies and monthly follow-up on an as-needed basis to residents that need assistance with developing a family budget.

Note: When residents are having financial difficulties (behind with rent, unemployed, utilities disconnected, etc.) refer them to your area Consumer Credit Counseling Services.

- Maintain a working relationship with agency.
 - Keep agency brochures and business cards on file to accompany referrals. Maintain a record of referrals.
 - Host an annual Budget Counseling Workshop and invite Consumer Credit Counseling or similar agency to facilitate.
- **Financial Counseling** - (Quarterly) Must include Tax Preparation Assistance and educational workshops with topics such as: Learning to Budget, Handling

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Personal Finances, Predatory Lending or Comparison shopping for the Consumer.

Note: If Tax Preparation is a mandatory workshop, Tax Preparation workshops take proper planning. It is important to offer this workshop before tax season or after tax season ends. (Feb, Mar, Apr). Tax professionals may be too busy to offer a workshop for your community during this time.

- **First Time Homebuyer Seminars - (Semi-Annual)** On-site seminars provided by area lending institution, realtors, etc. for residents interested in becoming homeowners. Electronic media, if used, must be used in conjunction with live instruction. A workshop should be offered during the first half of the year and the final workshop offered during the second half of the year.

Note: Habitat for Humanity and your city's Community Development office may also be able to assist with this workshop.

- **Game Night** - Residents gather to play popular board and card games on a monthly basis. Refreshments provided. Examples: Card games, board games, bingo, dominoes, etc.
- **Health and Nutrition Classes - (Quarterly, 8 hours)** General health related workshops.

Note: Your area Cooperative Extension provides great free nutrition workshops. Learn more at www.csrees.usda.gov/extension.

- **Health Screenings / On-Site Health Care - (Quarterly)** By health care professionals such as nurses, doctors, or other licensed care providers. Services may be provided at no cost to the tenant and may require health services such as flu shots, vision tests, and hearing tests.

Note: If your community has a health screenings requirement, it's important to offer your activities quarterly and to plan your events well in advance. Flu shots should be offered in October or November for greater participation.

- **Holiday Parties - For example:** Halloween, Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, Independence Day activities.
- **Home Ownership Opportunity Programs - a percentage** of the tenant's rent during entire occupancy, with 2 vesting periods, may be used to assist with purchasing a home.

Note: This program is discussed with residents at move-in. Be sure you have a signed form on file for each household.

- **Homework Club** - After School Tutoring is provided.
- **Job Training (Quarterly)** - Classes in keyboarding, computer literacy, secretarial skills and other useful job skills. Electronic media, if used, must be used in conjunction with live instruction.

Note: Online computer software and employability classes are available

through www.gcflearnfree.com.

■ **Library - 100 Books, 5 Magazine Subscriptions**

To acquire books conduct a book drive in your community, residents contribute a lot of books to their on-site library. Quality used books can be purchased for as little as \$1.50 each at Goodwill and the Salvation Army. Senior communities can partner with their city library to have books periodically delivered. (The site will be responsible if any books are not returned).

Magazine subscriptions can be ordered through www.amazon.com or www.magazines.com. Maintain a copy of purchase receipts for audits.

■ **Life Safety Training - (Twice Annually)** Courses like Fire Safety, First Aid, CPR, etc. Electronic media, if used, must be used in conjunction with live instruction. Additional Life Safety Courses Include: Pool Safety, Child Safety Seat Inspections, Youth Fingerprinting.

■ **Meal Program -** Provide residents with a list of congregate meal programs. Include location, service schedule and fees. Establish a partnership with Meals on Wheels for your community. Invite area Senior Centers to give a presentation about their congregate meals program.

■ **Mentoring -** Establish partnership with educational institution to encourage mentoring, tutoring and/or financial support. Electronic media, if used, must be used in conjunction with live instruction.

Note: Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts are excellent organizations that can assist with meeting this requirement.

■ **Movie Night - (Monthly)** Youth and family oriented movies are shown with refreshments provided.

Note: If possible, establish a Netflix or Blockbuster subscription for access to a greater variety of movies and no late fees.

■ **Newsletter -** Provide monthly or bi-monthly newsletter to residents which outlines community events, important dates, pertinent information, office hours, staffing information, etc.

■ **Personal Development Workshops - (3 Annually)** Finance, Parenting Skills, Health Workshops, Adult Education, etc.

■ **Potluck Dinners - (Twice Annually)** Host holiday potluck dinners for events such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Independence Day.

■ **Referral Agreement with Area Housing Authority**

Note: Document monthly or quarterly notices sent to your area housing authority informing the acceptance of Section 8.

■ **Resident Activities & Holiday Celebrations - (Quarterly) -** Advertise in monthly community newsletter and various activities including: Holiday parties, community picnics, children's functions.

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- **Resident Activities / Community Newsletter** - Provide community newsletter and various activities including: Holiday parties, community picnics, children's functions, etc.
- **Resident Assistance Referral Program** - Make available information regarding crisis intervention, individual and family needs assessments, problem solving and planning, and community resources to retain self sufficiency. This document should be part of your move-in packet. Additional copies should be available in the community room for residents to pick up.

Note: This handout lists agencies that provide self-sufficiency services: Rent and utility assistance, food pantries, affordable healthcare providers, food stamps, etc. Contact RAM Resident Relations for assistance with this document for your community.

- **Social Activities** – Regularly scheduled games, potlucks, movie nights, etc.
- **Speaker's Forum** - (*Quarterly – 8 hours*) - Speakers from the community will be invited to give lectures in the community room on the property. Sample topics include: Health, Safety, and Finance Workshops.
- **Tenant Council** - Organize a tenant council to discuss a variety of topics relevant to tenants including safety, maintenance, management, planning resident activities, etc. (*Suggested Time Frame: Monthly.*)
- **Tenant Counseling** - Discuss with tenants eviction prevention and Landlord Tenant Rights and Responsibilities.
- **Transportation Program** - Provide residents with a list of area agencies that assist your residents with transportation for shopping, doctor appointments, senior center visits, etc. Invite these agencies to give informational presentations about their services and how to enroll.
- **Weekly Literacy Training** - Tutors to provide weekly literacy lessons. Electronic media, if used, must be used in conjunction with live instruction.

Note: Any activity that involves reading education can be considered Literacy Training. Examples Include: Homework Club, ESL, GED Prep., and Book Clubs. Contact Resident Relations for additional activity ideas.

- **Welfare-to-Work or Self-Sufficiency Program** - Actively seek tenants participating in work ready / self-sufficiency programs.

Note: Quarterly notices are to be sent to your local Workforce Development Board and Housing Authority to notify Welfare-to-Work participants that a community accepts Section 8. Maintain a file of dated notices sent for audits.

Activities must be coordinated with the RAM Resident Relations Department and may require Regional approval if any cost is associated with activity or for activities not listed in Section 10.5.