



Preparing a Plan for Community-Building Efforts

The quality and success of community-building initiatives frequently depend upon the leadership and commitment of the supportive housing sponsors. The long-term success of community-building efforts requires careful planning and ongoing evaluation. This document provides a checklist of basic considerations for developing a community-building action plan. The following series of questions was adapted from *Community Building: What Makes It Work*.¹ These questions are intended to guide planning, resource allocation, and evaluation during community-building efforts.

Organizational Sanction and Purpose

- What are the goals/purposes of community-building efforts?
- How does the proposed effort fit with the organizational mission?
- Are tenants, community members, staff, and project sponsors likely to agree on priorities?
- How relevant is community building from each perspective (i.e., tenants, community members, etc.)?
- What resources are available to bring to the effort in terms of staff time, funding, and training resources?
- What are the possible risks to the project sponsors?
- At what levels in the organization will the community-building plan require review?
- Who has responsibility for monitoring and supervising implementation?
- What were the results of any previous community-building efforts? Have there been failures and/or successes? What was learned?

Connections Among Community Members

- How well do tenants know one another?
- Do tenants and staff have experience working together in a group towards a common goal?
- Have past efforts caused damaged to any relationships? What was learned?

Awareness of Issues and Motivation

- Is there interest among staff and tenants to work together to address issues?
- How will issues be selected and prioritized?
- Are the goals of sufficient interest to a significant number of tenants?

¹ Mattessich P., B. Monsey, and C. Roy. *Community Building: What Makes It Work: A Review of Factors Influencing Successful Community Building*. St. Paul, Minn.: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1997.

Note: This document is included within the *Supportive Services* section of CSH's *Toolkit for Developing and Operating Supportive Housing*, which is available at www.csh.org/toolkit2. This document has been adapted from CSH's publication *Developing the "Support" in Supportive Housing*, which is available at www.csh.org/publications.

Participation

- Do mechanisms exist to help new staff and tenants feel accepted and part of the process?
- Is adequate effort going into outreach to those who are not involved?
- Do the tenants participating in the process truly represent the views of the larger community?
- Are there groups of tenants who are not represented? If so, is this acceptable?
- Are all participants clear about the purpose of the effort?
- Are there a substantial number of tenants who are not participating? If so, why?

Leadership

- How will the group make decisions? Is the process clear and acceptable to all?
- What type of leadership is needed to implement the community-building efforts being considered?
- Are tenants and/or staff assuming leadership positions? If so, is this viewed positively by everyone?
- Does the leadership reflect the diversity of participants in terms of gender, race, cultural backgrounds, and orientations?
- What would it take to involve and train people who have not taken on leadership positions in the past?

Training Requirements

- Are the community-building activities reasonable and matched to the skills and abilities of participants?
- What training is needed for participants?
- How can training promote and support the participation of people who haven't previously been involved?

Communication Systems

- Do all members of the community get the information they need to get or stay involved?
- Are there existing communication structures that can be used to support community-building efforts (e.g., staff or community meetings, new tenant/staff orientations, bulletin boards, e-mail, fax, and mailing lists)?
- Does the community-building effort employ a variety of techniques and strategies to reach as many people as possible?

External Relations

- Do tenants and staff have links to useful contacts in the larger community? If not, how can these be developed?
- Are the efforts having an impact on relationships with neighbors, neighborhood organizations, funders, and government?