



Benefits of Community Building in Supportive Housing

This tool may be used in staff trainings to help promote community building activities.

A community is a group having common interests, common goals and/or common possessions or participation. Characteristics of a healthy and "developed" residential community include:

- Mutual Support
- Concern for Each Other's Safety
- Respect for Each Other's Property
- Mechanisms for Promoting Common Interests
- Addressing Problems

Actively pursuing a positive sense of community within the residence and integrating the residence into the neighborhood can have powerful benefits both for the staff and the residents. Community building efforts can help:

- Empower residents by giving them real authority and input and teach them skills needed to impact their environment.
- Increase and improve social and psychological ties among community members.
- Foster stability and a sense of belonging.
- Increase opportunities for communication and socialization among peers and between staff and residents.
- Actively promote a set of positive norms that counteracts the development of negative communities.
- Combat isolation that can result in psychiatric deterioration and/or relapse.
- Decrease the likelihood that the residence will become an isolated source of social, vocational, and/or religious opportunities for residents.
- Appeal to applicants who may be considering tenancy and don't wish to live in a setting that feels institutional.
- Identify and address physical problems in the building and improve safety and security.
- Ensure a greater degree of customer satisfaction in service delivery.
- Promote the development of residents' advocacy and organizational skills.

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 the HUD-funded curriculum *Community Building in and around Supportive Housing*, which is available at www.csh.org/training.