



Involving Tenants in the Decision-Making Process

- **Involve Tenants in the Planning of Activities, Outings, Parties and Other Special Events:** There can be an ad hoc planning committee for specific events or an ongoing committee made up of staff and tenants.
- **Identify Natural Leaders and Develop Leadership Skills:** Are there particular tenants who are already known to have good skills in the areas of: diplomacy, communication, and problem solving abilities? Are there other people who might be interested in taking on a leadership role but lack the skills needed to do so? Are resources available to teach leadership skills?
- **Solicit Input about the Supportive Services that are Being Offered:** Providers can also use tenant surveys to gather opinions about the perceived usefulness, quality and relevance of the services being offered. Some programs have suggestion boxes available in public places.
- **Create Open Communication Forums Such as Community Meetings:** Bringing together the tenant community has intrinsic and practical value, as tenants and staff work together to solve problems. The meetings help to trouble-shoot issues, dispel rumors, sing praises, reduce the number of “public secrets”, and give community members the comfort of knowing there is a forum to express concerns. Agendas that include a time for announcements or open-microphone are popular. Community meetings tend to be chaired by the director of the residence or other staff.
- **Hire Tenants in Staff Positions:** Tenants who are also employees are able to alert staff to issues that might otherwise not come out as well as become more established in the decision-making process.
- **Involve Tenants in the Intake Process:** Tenants can participate in the final interview with prospective tenants to provide information, answer questions and participate in the decision making process.
- **Involve Tenants in the Development of House Rules and Other Building Policies:** Experience has shown that there are numerous advantages to having tenants develop the rules for their buildings. When tenants are supportive of the rules of the house, they are more likely to incorporate them into practice and to remind other to do the same. In this way, rules can help influence the culture and norms of the residence. In soliciting input in the rules, staff should be clear regarding the use of tenant input and how it will be factored into final decisions to avoid raising unrealistic expectations.

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.