

Resident Assistant Role

Dealing with Confrontation & Documentation

ENFORCEMENT of University Policies

The enforcement of university policies is generally the most difficult aspect of the residence hall staff role. Although every case is dealt with according to the circumstances surrounding it, there are certain expectations and guidelines you must follow. They are:

- 1) Infractions of University policy **must NOT** be ignored. The manner in which you deal with them may vary from talking to a student to writing an incident report with many options in between.
- 2) The action or lack of action YOU take sets the standard of behavior for your area and the hall. It also affects the credibility of other staff members.
- 3) Once a pattern of total leniency has been established, it is impossible to change without intense conflict. Many staffs have sadly found themselves overcome by infractions and complaints toward the middle of second semester because they failed to acknowledge infractions earlier in the year.
- 4) Deal with all infractions. It is impossible to take action with unreported or undocumented cases.
- 5) The Coordinators and Assistant Director want to be able to support and assist you in any way possible. If you need some help or aren't sure how to handle a certain case, don't hesitate to contact either of them.

You are NOT to keep information from the professional staff (Area Coordinators and Hall Coordinators) in order to "protect" residents or "keeping things in the hall."

- 6) Be thoroughly familiar with the rules and regulations set forth in the Guidebook and the policies in this manual. You should also be thoroughly familiar with the Policies & Regulations Affecting Students.

GUIDELINES for Dealing with Discipline in the Residence Halls

University Housing recognizes that the enforcement of rules and regulations can be one of the most difficult and unpleasant aspects of the residence hall staff's job. An understanding of the philosophy behind the disciplinary process is essential if one is to work effectively with the system. The discipline system has three major purposes:

- 1) To provide for the safety of persons and property.
- 2) To maintain an atmosphere conducive to community living in an academic environment.
- 3) To provide "due process" – Fairness in the adjudication of cases by the Area Coordinator/Hall Coordinator.

Through this system unacceptable behavior can be controlled and the rights of alleged violators can be protected. Specific guidelines:

- 1) Familiarize yourself with the University Housing guidebook and Student Code of Conduct-Ask questions if you're not sure!
- 2) Clearly explain the standards to students at the FIRST floor meeting.
- 3) Try to establish the concept of self-discipline and respect for others in an academic living situation--don't use this to escape your own disciplinary responsibilities!
- 4) Enforce the standards in a FIRM, yet FAIR manner. Start the year off on the right foot! If you establish the limits of acceptable behavior right away, the rest of the year will be much smoother.

- 5) Follow Through! If you give a "final warning" and the behavior recurs, officially write it up.
- 6) Clearly identify yourself as a residence hall staff member acting in an official capacity when dealing with an incident.
- 7) Never strike a student.
- 8) Whenever possible, if confronting an individual about a serious violation, have another staff member or reliable individual as a witness to events.
- 9) WITHIN 24 HOURS following an incident, TYPE IT UP on an Incident Report Form (<http://housing.uiowa.edu/~rain>). Include:
 - Time and date of the incident
 - Location
 - Individuals Involved (Name and address)
 - Account of the Incident. Be as specific as possible, include exact quotes where necessary. Don't inject personal opinions.
 - Names and addresses of ANY WITNESSES.
- 10) Clearly indicate "first hand" or "second hand" information regarding an incident but don't neglect to include all available information in your report.
- 11) Inform the student at the time of the incident, that he/she has had an incident report filed against him/her.
- 12) Turn in the written report to appropriate staff WITHIN 24 hours. Keep an accurate, written record of your interventions.
- 13) YOU must set a personal example of high, not just minimum, standards of behavior.

Residence Hall staff can, and should work toward gaining acceptance of these standards by the community they are living in and strive to develop an atmosphere in which community members maintain the standards among themselves.

We are confident that if these guidelines are followed, problems with the disciplinary process will be minimized.

Incident Reports

What you need at the time of the incident:

- Picture ID from EVERY individual present
- The student's perspective of what has taken place.

Format:

- Be specific and clear in your explanation of the confrontation.
- Put the events in chronological order.
- Be objective.
- State only the facts...do NOT include your own opinions, beliefs, hypotheses, etc.
- Write in 3rd Person using LAST NAMES as a way to make the report easy to understand. IF two or more people have the same last name than distinguish them with their initials.
- Things to keep in mind when writing the report:
 - What conditions surround the observed behavior?
 - Specify what behaviors are causing a problem (rowdiness, messiness, etc).
 - Specify what behaviors you observe that may be causing the person to create a problem (personal isolation, disciplinary action, etc).

The incident report should include:

- Time and date of incident
- Location
- Individuals involved...Including Witnesses (Name, Address, Student ID # and Social Security #)
- Account of the incident...Be as specific as possible, include exact quotes
- Names, Addresses, Student ID # and Social Security # for EVERYONE involved
- Your signature (If submitting a report electronically you can sign the document once it's been printed)

The incident report should include other notations such as:

- Whether you asked to be invited into the room
- Explanation of policy violation
- Indicate if the individuals have been cooperative
- Include the general attitude of the group as you see fit

You MUST always remember:

1. **Never** under any circumstances should you contact a student's parent(s). The only people you need to notify are an Area Coordinator or Hall Coordinator.
2. Remember other people are reading this document: This can be used in court. As long as you are precise and detailed, this document will be **PERFECT!!**