

# **Creating Tenant Councils in Supportive Housing**

A guidebook for tenants and partners  
who want to have successful, trauma-informed  
Tenant Councils in Los Angeles





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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
About the Authors .....	3
Definitions and Clarifications .....	6
The Purpose of Tenant Councils .....	11
Partners, Considerations, and Supplies for Tenant Councils .....	14
Building Your Tenant Council .....	18
Tenant and Housing Resources (Websites and Organizations to Help You) .....	27
Appendices.....	29

## Introduction

### *About this Guide*

We wrote this guide for tenants in supportive housing, sometimes also called permanent supportive housing (PSH). If you are a tenant living in supportive housing and looking to create a council for tenants, **this book is for you.**

This guidebook can also be used by PSH developers, property managers and service providers who want to support the development of a healthy Tenant Council- one that is **led by** tenants and operates **for** tenants. Tenant Councils share common goals with property managers and services providers- like wanting to keep tenants housed and have safe, enjoyable communities.

We wrote this guide as a community of authors, using experiences from our own lives as people who live in supportive housing, advocate for supportive housing, have led or participated in Tenant Councils, and who have provided services in supportive housing.

We want this guide to inspire you and to show that **Tenant Councils can be great for tenants and all partners in supportive housing.** Tenant Councils can be trauma-informed, help to build bridges and create more supportive communities for everyone. Like many good things, it takes work to build a trauma-informed Tenant Council. We hope this guide helps you to do that.



## About the Authors



*Linda Arnold*

**Linda Arnold** has lived experience as a tenant in Permanent Supportive Housing and she also has over 10 years of lived experience with homelessness. Linda states that her home is the best thing that has ever happened to her.

Linda was born and raised in Los Angeles County with six brothers and sisters in what she describes as “a very dysfunctional household with very little positive parental guidance and a lot domestic violence.” Linda is an inspiration to many people and a bold advocate for peer support and building more welcoming communities.

Linda has always had a passion for helping others and she especially wants to help with housing issues because she can identify with not having a safe place to call home and she knows, “It’s bad out there in the streets and not having a safe place to sleep is like being in a scary movie.”



*Chrismen Oliver*

**Chrismen Oliver** is a native Los Angeleno who has resided in many areas of the city from South Central to the San Fernando Valley. Chrismen has become involved in this work due to his combined experience in homeless services and property management, motivating him to want to help lift up the voices and opportunities for those in his community to attain a higher quality of life. He believes that the people directly affected by the social service and housing policies should be fully involved in the decisions being made. In his free time, Chrismen enjoys playing basketball, exploring plant-based food restaurants, and listening to music. He hopes that this guide will empower tenants in permanent supportive housing to build a supportive community and strengthen the knowledge of their rights in housing, which will hopefully lead to more fair living in Los Angeles.



*Theodore Patton*

**Theodore Patton** is a native Californian who lives in Los Angeles. He is a consultant with lived experience of homelessness and has been a tenant in PSH. Theodore advocates for state policy and local policy changes to address homelessness. He also advises on ways to improve the homeless system as a consultant and volunteer. Theodore can be counted on to ask the hard questions when others may stay silent- he is an advocate for change. When not working to address homelessness, Theo enjoys watching horror movies.



*Alicia Rhoden*

**Alicia Rhoden** is a mom of twins and came to Los Angeles from Kalamazoo, Michigan. Alicia has lived in both Permanent Supportive Housing and now lives in affordable housing. She is a community leader, a peer advocate, and has led, supported and coached Tenant Councils throughout Los Angeles. In her spare time, Alicia also enjoys traveling and reading. Alicia joined the Los Angeles Co-LAB and served as an author of this Guide because she wants to see a change for the good.



*Holly Sparks*

**Holly Sparks** is a married mother to three beautiful children born and raised in the West Adams area of Los Angeles. She has come to this work because of her beliefs that everyone has a right to access housing and that the people most affected by housing policies should have a seat at

the discussion table. She is committed to work with programs dedicated to ending homelessness. In her free time, Holly enjoys sewing and traveling. She hopes this guide will empower and inspire people to work in partnership for better housing outcomes.



*Cheryl Winter*

**Cheryl Winter** was raised in West Chicago but now calls Los Angeles home. She has worked on housing rights, efforts to end homelessness and in providing supportive services to people living in Permanent Supportive Housing. She believes that everyone has a right to housing, health care, respect, dignity and choice. When not working for these rights, you can find Cheryl in her garden, eating good food with friends, or on a hike. Cheryl hopes this book will inspire new ways of being in community together in permanent supportive housing, new leadership opportunities for tenants, and new partnerships in L.A. neighborhoods and beyond.

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### *About CSH*

CSH works to advance solutions that use housing as a platform for services to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, maximize public resources and build healthy communities. Learn more at: [www.csh.org](http://www.csh.org)

### *About the Los Angeles Co-LAB*

CSH's Los Angeles Tenant Centered Collaboratory (the "Co-LAB") is a hands-on resource-based program acting as our primary training vehicle for building the supportive housing industry's capacity to create and operate high-quality supportive housing in Los Angeles County. The Co-LAB brings together developers, property managers, service providers, and individuals with lived expertise in a group learning experience to provide a space to build the field's capacity to operate sustainable, trauma-informed, and tenant-centered supportive housing. The Co-LAB intends to influence the creation of community environments that are centered around **tenant choice, racial equity, safety, and wellness**. For more information about the Co-LAB you can contact: [jaline.gilliam@csh.org](mailto:jaline.gilliam@csh.org)

## Definitions and Clarifications

### Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care promotes healing and recovery through a culture of safety and empowerment rather than practices and services that may cause people stress or harm. Living through homelessness is traumatic. Period. Trauma affects each person differently and it is important that the organizations, groups and councils we are a part of honor our experiences and do things that promote our healing both individually and as a community.

Many service providers use the term “trauma-informed care<sup>1</sup>” to describe a way of treating people that honors each person’s unique experiences, prevents harm, and creates trust. It is important to know that **you do not have to be a service provider or medical professional to approach life in a trauma-informed way**. Trauma-informed care is a skill that anyone can learn and use in their life. It is a skill that we can use in Tenant Councils. It is a skill that requires thinking and acting in ways that increase the reality of these six principles<sup>2</sup> in the lives of everyone involved. The six principles are:

- Principle 1: Safety
- Principle 2: Trustworthiness and transparency
- Principle 3: Peer support
- Principle 4: Collaboration and mutuality
- Principle 5: Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Principle 6: Being culturally responsive and honoring differences in culture, gender, and individual history.

In this guidebook, we will share examples of how Tenant Councils can use trauma-informed care principles when running a Tenant Council. We made some worksheets that your Tenant Council can use to brainstorm how you can make it trauma-informed for your community. We will also share examples of how property managers and supportive service providers can use trauma-informed care principles in partnership with Tenant Councils.

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<sup>1</sup> [SAMHSA’s Trauma-informed Approach: Improving Care for People Living with HIV \(nasmhpd.org\)](https://www.nasmhpd.org/)

<sup>2</sup> [SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.hhs.gov/)



## Tenant Council

A Tenant Council is a tenant-led group who meets regularly to address needs, goals, and hopes for their community of tenants in that building. The group helps all tenants with concerns about their unit, their building and the community. The Tenant Council can act as a mediator between tenants and the property manager or landlord. It can also host activities for the housing community. A Tenant Council does not include the landlord, property manager, or any of their representatives as members, but these partners **can** be invited to attend specific meetings for problem solving and making decisions together. Tenant councils can be referred to by different names, including tenant associations, tenant unions, or tenant councils. These names often refer to the same thing, as long as they are a group of tenants, led by tenants, who organize to address tenant needs. It is up to the tenants in the building to determine what they want to be called, be it a tenant council, tenant association, or tenant union.

## Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

In Los Angeles, supportive housing is called Permanent Supportive Housing or PSH. This is a type of housing that is affordable for tenants and comes with the option to receive personalized services that support you in getting housing, staying housed, and feeling healthy, connected and happy in your new home and community.

PSH should always be affordable for you, the tenant, and should always come with the choice of having a housing case manager's supportive services. The best PSH services happen when you have a team of people working with you to offer services who have enough time to really get to know you, help you reach your goals, and know how you prefer to receive their help.

## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a term that is used to describe any kind of housing situation where the tenant who holds the lease pays no more than 30% of their income. *For example, if a person's income (or SSI benefit) is \$1000 each month, then affordable housing should not cost that person more than \$333.* Many times, in affordable housing, when a tenant pays 30% of their income, a rental subsidy or voucher program covers the rest of the rent price.

If you are receiving social security benefits your housing should cost no more than one third of what you get each month from social security. If you have trouble affording your housing and you live in PSH, you can ask your services provider or case manager to help you with making a budget and planning for rent. They can also help you to find other ways to stretch your money such as accessing food banks, getting CalFresh, and getting connected to other benefits.

## Tenant

A tenant is a person who has the legal right to occupy a home because they have a lease or sublease that is the legal document with their name, address, rental amount, tenant rights and responsibilities on it.

## Resident Services

Some affordable housing buildings offer resident services in addition to supportive housing services. These are two different kinds of services. Resident service coordinators may offer referrals or resources to helpful community organizations for anyone in the building. They may also coordinate social activities. A resident service coordinator will not create an individualized housing support plan with you- that is something that supportive housing tenants should do with their supportive housing service provider instead.

## Supportive Housing Services

Supportive housing services are voluntary services that are specifically designed, with you and for you, to help you keep your housing and to be sure you are happy and safe. These are services designed to meet each person's individual needs in PSH. If you are not sure what types of services a supportive housing case manager should provide- see Appendix A where we outline more about what you can expect from good supportive housing services. In supportive housing, the services that a housing case manager provides to you should be services that you want and need to help you stay housed and happy in your housing. A supportive housing case manager will work with you on a housing support plan. A housing support plan can help you to say what help you want from service providers to help keep track of paying rent, to help in asking for and ensuring repairs happen in your unit and building, to help address safety and neighbor concerns, to help talk with property management, and to support you so that you can remain housed and not worry about eviction.

## Tenant Council Leader (AKA Council Chair or President)

A Tenant Council Leader/Chair is someone who is voted into the position by the tenants to be the main contact person to lead council meetings, keep the council focused on priorities and addressing tenant concerns, and to serve as the main voice to other partners for the Tenant Council. Their duties include hosting meetings, setting the agenda, welcoming new tenants, and at times being the mediator between the tenants and the property manager or landlord. They may also attend other community meetings to build relationships in the neighborhood.

## Tenant Council Assistant Leader or Co-Chair

Someone who is voted to the position by the council to serve as second in command to the Tenant Council Leader/Chair. The assistant leader should be contacted for concerns when the leader is not available. Some tenant councils want to have two leaders in equal positions who both serve together as Co-Chairs.



## PSH Partners

In several places throughout this guide, we mention PSH Partners. This term includes the organizations and businesses that work together to develop, build, manage, serve and live in permanent supportive housing. **You, as a tenant, are one of the PSH partners.** Other partners include the building owner, property management company and staff, service organizations and housing case managers, and other tenants.

## Housing Discrimination

Housing discrimination is a pattern of discrimination that affects a person's ability to rent or buy housing.

Examples of Housing Discrimination:

- Charging higher fees to potential renters with children
- Refusing to rent to immigrants
- Refusing to rent based on a person's race, color, religion, disability or sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation)
- Refusing to make reasonable accommodations in rules or services necessary for a person living with disabilities to use the housing or refusing to allow a person with disabilities to make reasonable accommodations to their dwelling
- Refusing to rent or sale property to someone in certain areas because a person does not have characteristics of a certain class
- Harassment and treating some tenants differently than other tenants is a form of discrimination

Sometimes proving discrimination can be extremely difficult and may require Legal Counsel for assistance. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, Public Law 101-336) protects persons with disabilities from discrimination. Call 211 to get contact information for FREE LEGAL AIDE assistance near you. There are Federal and State Laws that prohibit discrimination on many factors. The FAIR HOUSING ACT, 42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq. protects tenants from discrimination.



## The Purpose of Tenant Councils

Tenant Councils enable residents to take ownership of their community. A Tenant Council can improve the sense of community in the building and the neighborhood. It allows unity to be created between PSH partners with the tenants at the center. Tenant Councils have the power to advocate, mediate, connect and educate fellow tenants.

Tenant Councils address a unique dynamic between power and proximity to power. A lot of times, when we think about who has power, we think of the person holding power as the formal authority- like the landlord, or property manager who have the power to make decisions that impact housing quality and eviction. Having proximity to power, or being close to power, gives a tenant access to that authority and can influence decision-making. In a Tenant Council setting, both dynamics exist. The Tenant Council will **hold power** to develop programs and activities, with its own funding, to improve tenants' living experiences. The Tenant Council also has **power as a group** to address and resolve tenant concerns through its' **proximity to power**, as it holds a formal relationship with the property manager and/or building owner.

Here are examples of what a Tenant Council can do:

- Discuss safety concerns and present solutions and recommendations to Property Management and the building owner
- Create unity between PSH partners while centering tenants
- Improve sense of community in the building and neighborhood
- Develop relationships with council members, churches, local police and businesses
- Improve access to resources such as SSI, Section 8, Moving On, educational services, social services, legal rights, employment services, senior centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, and health centers
- Social event planning such as game nights, outings, and workshops
- Implement a welcoming committee to greet new tenants and provide support during move in
- Accompany a tenant or support a tenant in talking to property management about a concern.

## What IS a Tenant Council and How Creative Can We Get in Building Ours?

Tenant Councils are formed when a group of tenants who live in the same building decide to **organize themselves and elect tenant leaders to address concerns, needs and social goals of their own and their neighbors**. There are many different types of Tenant Councils or tenant union structures. There are organizations in Los Angeles<sup>3</sup> that can help you to create a Tenant Council that meets you and your neighbors' needs for building community together and addressing shared concerns in respectful ways through partnership.

### Boundaries of a Tenant Council – What a Tenant Council IS NOT

1. **Tenant Councils Are Not a Security Team or Police:** If the Tenant Council members or tenants have any concerns about illegal activity in or around the building, they should bring it to the property manager's attention. The Tenant Council should not police the building. Some neighborhoods may choose to form a neighborhood watch or choose to train tenant leaders as gang intervention specialists, but these are separate activities from a Tenant Council's responsibilities.
2. **Tenant Councils should not take on any responsibilities of the Property Management or Landlord:** A Tenant Council should not step into the manager's role and try and collect rent, make repairs, or give housing/property notices of any kind, including eviction and/or grievance notices. Tenant Councils should not be used by property management to threaten or intimidate other tenants to change behaviors.
3. **Tenant Councils are not there to replace paid service providers:** In PSH there are service staff who are paid to provide housing support services to tenants in PSH. Tenant Councils can talk with service staff about concerns and can raise service needs to services staff, but Tenant Council members should not be expected to provide the same services that housing case managers are being paid to provide. Remember: the Tenant Council is a volunteer group that exists to help create community and uphold tenant voices, grow tenant leadership and support tenant rights. If you are interested in providing services to tenants in PSH, and you live in PSH yourself, we encourage you to pursue becoming a paid peer mentor. There are several training and certification programs in Los Angeles to help you do this.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> LA Tenants Union can help your tenant group to get organized with bylaws and plans for how you'll run your Tenant Council. Visit: [Resources - Los Angeles Tenants Union \(latenantsunion.org\)](https://latenantsunion.org)

<sup>4</sup> Careers for a Cause, Social Services Job Training Program, Visit: [https://laedc.org/connectory\\_resource/careers-for-a-cause-c4c-social-services-training-program/](https://laedc.org/connectory_resource/careers-for-a-cause-c4c-social-services-training-program/)

4. **Tenant Councils are not legal aid:** Some tenants may have legal concerns about their rights in the building. A Tenant Council can help connect fellow tenants to legal aid or even invite someone from a legal aid agency to a Tenant Council meeting to help answer questions. Tenant Councils should not be expected to answer legal questions.
5. **Tenant Councils should not be expected to argue or threaten partners:** Tenant Council leaders hold a special role in the building to advocate for tenants, but they do it in a respectful, non-threatening way. Tenants should not expect the Tenant Council to threaten property management or act unprofessionally. The goal of the Tenant Council is to build community and represent tenants in a way that works together with community partners. There are special training courses for improving these skills.<sup>56</sup>



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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lahsa.org/leab>

<sup>6</sup> <https://latenantsunion.org/en/2022/07/14/conflict-engagement-guide/>

# Partners, Considerations, and Supplies for Tenant Councils

## Permanent Supportive Housing Partners – Symbol Guide:

Tenants



Building Owner







PSH Service Provider











Property Management















Item or Plan Tenant Council Should Have	PSH Partners Involved	Details to Support this Plan
<p>Tenant Council Leaders who are elected by tenants, including a Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, Sergeant at Arms, and Treasurer.</p>		<p>Service provider staff can support tenants at move in, asking if they would be interested in being a part of a tenant council and/or welcoming committee. Service staff can offer support connecting tenants and setting up structure for elections, meetings, note taking, and donations.</p>
<p>Guarantee of no retribution or punishment for airing grievances</p>		<p>Building owner or property management should have an agreement developed with the Tenant Council</p>
<p>Safe space to meet with and without the property manager</p>		<p>Building owner and property management; or parks and recreation space donated for meetings; some shopping malls or cafeterias also allow community meetings of Tenant Councils</p>
<p>A budget for food, flyers, and gift cards for leaders</p>		<p>Tenants, owner and Service Providers can collect donations</p>



		and/or service provider or owner may be able to contribute from other funding sources
Childcare services for meetings by a licensed child care provider <sup>7</sup>		Payment through gift cards, managed by service provider or petty cash budget from service provider
Support from property management, service providers, and the property owner to receive and respond to feedback from tenants with solutions within a specified timeline		Building owner or property management should have an agreement developed with the Tenant Council
Agenda for each meeting		Developed by the Tenant Council members, sometimes with input from PSH Partners
Group rules		Developed by the Tenant Council with support from established councils (LA Tenant Union), tenants, and this guide
Meeting accessibility (following COVID protocols and precautions, language translation, masks, social distancing, outdoor meeting area, temperature checks if COVID is still active)		Developers and building owners are strongly encouraged to provide meeting room space in the building for tenant councils. If rooms are locked certain hours, property management should support Council in getting in to room.
Voluntary attendance		
Consistency		
Interpreter for tenants who speak other languages (Contact the LA Tenant Union for help with this). The translator should be an adult and should never be a child. If an adult tenant offers up their interpreting services, they should be paid for their		Service provider organizations should support with coordinating for interpreter services and paying interpreters. This funding could also come from building owner or donations.

<sup>7</sup> Toy Lending Library in LA

time, or volunteer on a rotating basis.		
Receipt book with carbon copy		Donations or Owner/landlord
Financial ledger		Donations or Owner/landlord
Notebooks/writing tablets		Donations or Owner/landlord
Pens/pencils		Donations or Owner/landlord
Tape recorder or phone to have a recording of meetings		Donations or Owner/landlord
Access to a printer and fax and printer paper	 	Property Management office or Owner/landlord
Toys and coloring books for children attending with parent		The tenant council can receive donations for these items
Licensed day care worker trained in CPR for childcare	 	Service Provider organization can help the tenant council to identify a child care provider. The building owner can include the hourly pay for the childcare worker in their budgeted costs to support tenant council member attendance.
Plates, forks, silverware, cups for refreshments	 	These items are needed for social events and any refreshments during Council Meetings.

## Welcoming New Tenants

The transition of moving from unhoused into permanent housing can feel overwhelming for some individuals, especially if that individual has experienced traumatizing experiences while they were unhoused. A Welcoming Team can help make the New Tenants transition smoother.

**Welcoming Teams help build stronger communities.**

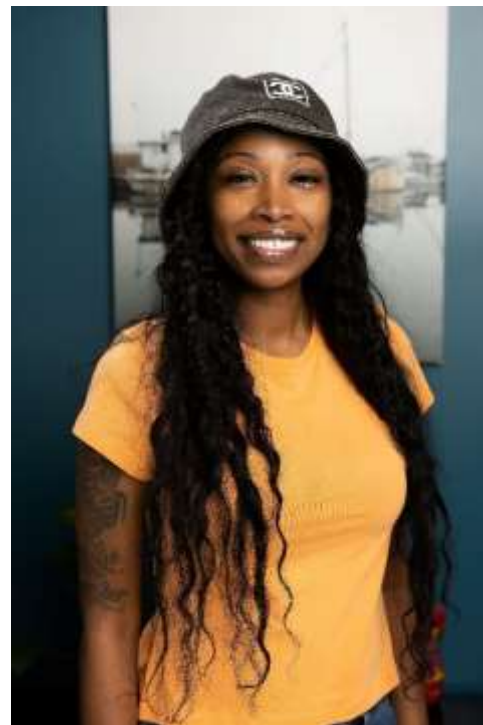
Welcoming Teams are Volunteer Tenant Council members who are dependable and available when the New Tenant arrives to move into their new home. (The Property Manager will know when New Tenants are scheduled to arrive).

Welcoming teams help give the new tenant a sense of belonging and being cared for.

In order to ensure SAFETY, all New Tenants are to be welcomed by a Welcoming Team of 2 or 3 Tenants Council Members because they will be welcoming a stranger (someone who they don't know anything about).

A welcoming team is not allowed to touch any of the new tenants' personal belongings unless they are asked for help by the New Tenant.

The welcoming team will want to introduce themselves to the New Tenant, offer the New Tenant a welcome basket or gift for their new apartment, and invite the New Tenant to the next Tenant Council meeting. The welcoming team may also want to ask the New Tenant if they would like a tour of the building or if they have any questions about the neighborhood. The goal of the welcoming team is to help assure the New Tenant that they are welcomed in the building, that the team is happy the tenant is moving in and there to be good neighbors, if the new tenant has any questions.



## Addressing Crisis

When it comes to addressing crisis, there should be policies and procedures in place. The council should be clear on what crisis can be addressed by the council and what needs to be raised to other grievance or crisis services. Some things to consider are:

- How to address the crisis when tenants are concerned about landlords or property managers retaliating?
- What resources are available to help tenants during a crisis? (If you are living in Los Angeles, our co-author Theodore Patton put together a list of tenant resources you will find in the appendices section at the end of this handbook).

## Building Your Tenant Council

Here are important steps and tips for building your Tenant Council:

- 1) Educate tenants about the opportunity to join and be a leader on the Tenant Council (if no tenant leader is able to do this, service staff can host a mixer or orientation about the Tenant Council shortly after the first group of tenants move into a building.)
- 2) Gather all interested tenants for a public meeting to explain what a Tenant Council is and how voting for leadership will happen.
- 3) Meet and talk through the leadership nomination process. Post information about how and where to nominate tenants in public places throughout the building. People can nominate others and themselves.
- 4) Set a deadline for accepting leadership nominations. Thirty days is a good amount of time for people to get to know neighbors to nominate others or themselves.
- 5) Check with all nominated tenants to see if they are interested in running for a leadership position and learn which leadership positions they are interested in. The LA Tenants Union can support in the election process. See the Resources section on page 27.

### Tenant Council Leadership

Tenant Council leadership is important to the success of the Council. There should be policies and procedures in place on how to identify, recruit and rotate leadership. This should be a democratic process where tenants nominate, elect, and have ongoing reviews of leadership. Councils have to consider how to support the leader (i.e., training on TIC, community organizing, communication, and conflict-based resolution). In addition to being a democratic process, leadership should also be diverse and have representatives from all genders, age, race/ethnicity, religion, and inclusive of language differences.

Leadership roles include Chair & Co-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer (optional), Sergeant at Arms, and interpreters/translators.

### *The Chair and Co-Chairs*

Tenants elect the Tenant Council Chair. Many Councils choose to have two leaders, Co-Chairs, who share the responsibilities and divide tasks based on each person's strengths.

Council Chairs and Co-Chairs should be people who want to and are able to lead the Tenant Council. They should know and believe in the importance of representing the vision of the tenant community. A good Council Chair values relationships and relationship building. This is very important since the Chairs will be a key connection between Property Management and the Tenant Council. The Chairs will share information back and forth between PSH partners and tenants. The Chairs work to represent the Council and tenants' concerns and discuss solutions and commitments between the Property Management and the Council. The Chairs need to be a reliable contact, spokesperson, and advocate for the council and tenant community.

#### **Some of the Chair's responsibilities are to:**

- arrange meetings and prepare meeting agendas
- ensure the minutes of the council meetings are recorded
- facilitate conflict resolutions
- communicate with the property manager and PSH partners on behalf of the tenants

### *The Tenant Council Secretary*

The Tenant Council Secretary is someone who is a good communicator, organized, and can absorb a lot of information and take notes on what is talked about and decided on. The secretary has the important role of taking notes during each meeting, making sure the notes make sense and include everything that was discussed during each meeting. The Secretary also give the notes to the Chair so that they can be approved at the next meeting. The Secretary is also the person who is responsible for getting any posters or signs made and posted in approved community spaces, like on bulletin boards, in elevators and in email newsletters.

Because of this grand responsibility, the secretary is expected to attend all Tenant Council meetings and let the Chairs know if they will miss a meeting, so that the Chair can find another note taker. This position can be one that tenants vote on or a volunteer who can commit to the role and responsibilities.

#### **Some of the Secretary's responsibilities are to:**

- take meeting notes
- distribute the meeting agenda

- record the meeting minutes and draft them for the next meeting
- manage communication materials, such as emails, newsletters, and bulletin board postings
- assume responsibilities of the chairperson if the chair and/or co-chair is absent

### **The Tenant Council Treasurer**

The Tenant Council Treasurer is an elected position. Tenants should vote to elect someone who can be responsible and trusted with the Council's finances, is good with numbers, and has basic computer skills. The treasurer is the person that takes care of the money for the Tenant Council, which can include keeping track of money coming in and going out, keeping a budget, recording and saving receipts, and reporting on the economic status of the Council during meetings. While the Treasurer tracks all money held by the Council, they should never be the only person with access to the money. Council funding, if you choose to have funding, should be kept in a bank account, with multiple people having access to the account, and support from PSH partners in getting access to an account- if needed.

#### **Some of the Treasurer's responsibilities are to:**

- keep track of the money received and spent
- work with the tenant council to prepare the budget
- oversee the financial account(s) and create reports

**Important Note:** *The role of the Treasurer is one that often requires training and special support for learning bookkeeping, managing a bank account, and keeping track of finances to report out at each meeting. This can be a shared role between several people to ensure that tenants and the Tenant Council trust the Treasurers. Sometimes it will take two people working together to track money coming in for Council activities, collecting all receipts, make trips to the bank, have multiple people signing to approve a withdrawal of money for activities, and report on the finances (money going in and out and what's left), and planned budget and future spending at each meeting. The Tenant Council can choose to set up their own bank account with multiple people being signers on the account. (There are some great financial literacy organizations that can help you to do this).*

*Some Tenant Councils may choose to select one of the PSH Partners, like a trusted service provider organization, to act as the Treasurer. If a Tenant Council chooses to give someone who is not a tenant the control of finances, there still needs to be a Treasurer who is a tenant that works together with this support organization to track all money coming in and out. This can be a great skill-building role. There are helpful budgeting*

*classes and trainings available, and multiple people can train to work as Treasurers so that everyone is held accountable and can learn together about bookkeeping, writing checks, opening a bank account, and keeping track of spending.*

### **The Sergeant at Arms**

The Tenant Council Sergeant at Arms is someone who can maintain a high level of integrity, enforce the Council's governing rules and group agreements, and communicate calmly and effectively. It is best if this person has a calm demeanor. The Sergeant at Arms can be thought of like the "security" of the Tenant Council, making sure that the rules, bylaws, and social norms are respected by everyone. This person is not there to police behavior, but to help keep meetings respectful, moving along, and safe for everyone to attend. This person also provides management of the meeting environment, working to maintain order and keeping the group focused on the meeting goals. We highly recommend that the Sergeant at Arms participate in a course on de-escalation techniques and peaceful problem solving, as this person often sets the tone for keeping the meeting going and the environment peaceful.

#### **Some of the Sergeant at Arm's responsibilities are to:**

- make sure the communal space is ready for the meeting
- call to order the meetings, and adjourn the meetings
- greet all attendees, (this may include waiting by the door to greet late attendees and be sure they get a copy of the group agreements and agenda)
- address any disrespect or violations of the Council members

### **Other Leadership Roles**

You can include several other helpful leadership roles in your Tenant Council. Some examples that we have found to be helpful include:

- A Timekeeper;
- A Welcome Committee;
- Set Up and Clean Up Crew; and
- People to help remind tenants and invite everyone to the upcoming meetings.

The Los Angeles Tenant Union has volunteers ready to help you create your Tenant Council rules, vote on Tenant Council leadership, find and pay interpreters and learn how to run a meeting. Check out their website or call our Solidarity Network Hotline [\(213\) 986-8266](tel:213-986-8266) for more information.

## Rotating Leaders to Prevent Burnout

Usually, leaders in a Tenant Council can be rotated every two years to help keep leaders from burning out, but some councils choose to rotate leaders more often, as often as every six months. Rotating leaders more often allows people in the building to get a chance to lead and it helps build unity in the building. Some Tenant Councils offer mentoring programs to help interested tenants in learning the skills they'd need to become a tenant leader. Tenant mentors can be trained by past leaders or can receive training from the LA Tenants Union who offer Saturday School on how to run a tenant union or tenant program. These Saturday School trainings are free and happen once a month. Housing and service case managers in PSH can play an important role in connecting new tenants to the LA Tenants Union training and to Co-LAB technical assistance.

It's important to support tenant leaders so that they don't get burnt out or too stressed. Tenant Council potlucks, barbecues and retreats can be helpful to keep things unified and fun for all tenants in the building, including the tenant leaders. These retreats and barbecues can also be nice times to invite your City Councilmembers, Board of Supervisors, local businesses, and community partners who want to connect their services to tenants.

## Managing Responsibilities and Self-Care

Being a tenant leader comes with responsibilities to attend meetings, meet with property management and service providers at times, plan events, and hear feedback from other tenants in your building. In addition to your other ordinary life responsibilities, being a tenant leader adds responsibility to your plate, and so it is important to take time for self-care. The most important responsibility you have is self-care. It is important to stay connected to your health care providers, case managers and people who care about you and ask you how you are doing. Your support system, or village, is of paramount importance to keeping balance in your life.

It can be helpful to have tenant leaders who have lived in PSH for more than a year or who understand how permanent supportive housing should work well, so that these leaders can be good advocates to tenants. CSH has some online trainings that explain what high quality supportive housing should look like. Reach out to the Los Angeles Co-LAB team if you want to learn more about what good quality supportive housing should have in place and how you can make it work better for you and your neighbors.<sup>8</sup>

### *Paying for Tenant Council Leadership Retreats & Activities*

Tenant Councils can request funding from the building owner, local community partners or government partners to help fund community events and tenant leadership retreats.

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<sup>8</sup> Email: [quality@csh.org](mailto:quality@csh.org)



City Councilmembers often offer funding for events happening in their community, and we have included a sample support request letter in Appendix D on page 37 that you can edit for your Tenant Council to use.<sup>9</sup>

Some funders might include: your building owner, City Councilmember, Walmart, Target, Community Coalition, local churches, local service providers, and local businesses.

Some Tenant Councils choose to collect “dues” to help cover the cost of food at the meeting. It is important that any tenant dues be completely voluntary and only what someone can afford to give. One tenant may choose to pay 50 cents and another may be able to afford \$3. If the Tenant Council is collecting ANY money for activities, there needs to be a treasurer and assistant treasurer who keep track of the funding and report back on all money collected and spent in a report at every Tenant Council meeting. Some tenants may not have any money to contribute to the council, but they may be able to volunteer their time on a committee or share food at a meeting.

## **Writing Your Vision and Mission Statement**

After tenants have met together a few times and voted on tenant leaders, then the Tenant Council is ready to talk through what their shared goals are for their building and community. At this point, tenants participating in Tenant Council meetings should submit recommendations for naming the Tenant Council, and then can vote together on a name. The name of the Tenant Council should reflect the building and the people living in it. The name that gets the most votes will become the name used by the Tenant Council publicly. You’ll want to make sure that the name is respectful to everyone and makes all tenants feel included. This is the name that your Council will use on anything that is public, so it should feel respectful to you.

Once the Tenant Council has a name, the group can move on to discussing their goals for the Tenant Council’s vision and mission statements. There can be different committees within the Tenant Council that help to create the vision and mission statement, and these can include the committee that leads the discussion of what the group wants to be about and stand for (drafting committee), then the writing committee can work together to put words onto paper and edit the language, and lastly there can be a committee for presenting back the Vision and Mission statements to the group. You will want to give all tenants a chance to review the Vision and Mission statements, so printing out the final draft and asking tenants for feedback for 30 days will be an important step.

All members of the Council, which means ALL tenants, should receive a copy of the completed Vision and Mission statements after they are edited with feedback. If there are people who

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<sup>9</sup> EveryTable Foundation to request foods and meal support

want help reading or writing, there can be a member of the Tenant Council who is willing to read the statements or an interpreter at the tenant meeting to interpret the language from English to another language spoken by tenant.<sup>10</sup>

The LA Tenants Union can help your council to draft up its Vision and Mission statements.

## Structuring Your Meetings

Tenant Council meetings happen in many places, sometimes in a Community Room in the apartment building, sometimes outdoors in a courtyard or park, or in a nearby Community Center or gym. You'll want to make sure that all tenants are able to get to the meeting place safely, such as making sure it is wheelchair accessible, that pathways and hallways are clear, and that there are signs telling people where to go.

Tenant Council meetings should be no more than 2 hours. They should start on time and end on time. The Sergeant at Arms can help to be sure things are set up, start on time, and rules are followed.

### *Tenant Councils Often Have Agendas that Include:*

- Introductions from all Tenant Council members present
- Review of "Old Business" (i.e., what was talked about at the last meeting). This should be in writing as written notes from the last meeting. The Secretary should provide the notes from the last meeting.
  - The review of the old business has to be voted on to be approved by the majority of tenants who are present, so that everyone agrees on what was discussed at the last meeting.
- Finance presentation: any reports from the Treasurer on any funding available for the council activities. Everyone in attendance should get a copy of this report. IF anyone wants to give a donation of "dues" there needs to be a receipt given. The Tenant Council will keep a ledger of all transactions.
- Discussion of any new issues at hand- this is where new issues that members want to discuss are raised.
- Announcements and Tenant Information Table made available for everyone to peruse

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<sup>10</sup> You can learn more about accessing headsets for translation from the LA Tenants Union. For general inquiries, please contact: [info@latenantsunion.org](mailto:info@latenantsunion.org)

- Resources could include referrals on legal rights, tenant rights, employment and education resources, food banks and
- Time for the group to eat together. This can happen before or after the meeting.
- Next steps or carry over topics for the next meeting. These next steps should be written down by the Secretary.

### ***Key Things to Remember for your Meeting Structure:***

Here is a list of things we recommend you plan for to help keep your meeting organized and successful.

### ***Before the Meeting, You Want to Plan to:***

1. **Make and put up flyers for the meeting.** They should be posted on the rental of office, in laundry rooms, delivered to tenant's doors, on bulletin boards. This needs to happen at least 2 weeks before the meeting. Be sure to ask Property Management for permission to post flyers and use the correct type of tape or pushpin that they say is appropriate for the building.
2. **Make an agenda,** and plan out how long each topic will be discussed. Remember to keep meetings shorter than 2 hours. Be sure to include time for:
  - a. Everyone to introduce themselves from the leadership to the tenants and any guests or PSH partners
  - b. The last minutes have to be read from the last meeting and approved
  - c. Bringing up new business: like discussing and reviewing tenant rights, setting group goals and agreements, planning social activities, holding new elections for leadership with time for candidates to speak.
  - d. Raising concerns and gratitude: time for tenants to discuss issues they may be having with the building or community – this can include time for PSH partners to attend, listen and respond- but it doesn't have to.
  - e. Guest speakers from the community to attend to share about a resource, event, social groups or service
  - f. Guest speakers to present on topics related to tenant rights, community building, skill building and partnering with the Council
3. **Print the agendas,** be sure to print enough for everyone attending
4. **Make a sign in sheet** with the address of the tenant. Include unit #, Phone number and email

5. **Provide refreshments.** It could be a meal, snacks, just drinks- whatever you have the budget or donations for. It could be a potluck, but be sure some people committed to bringing food, and that there are plates, cups and silverware.
6. **Arrange for childcare** with a licensing childcare person- if you have families in the building. There also needs to be supplies for children to play if they are with a tenant who is attending. Supplies like toys, games, books, construction paper, and food. If you have a childcare provider, parents need to sign their children in and out and there needs to be a name tag for each child.
7. **Set up tables and chairs**
8. **Have a suggestion box** for people who may want to share an idea but don't want to speak. Also be sure to offer that the secretary or any Council leader can help someone to write out their suggestion, if someone wants that assistance.
9. **Have pens/pencils and paper** for everyone attending
10. **Have a Resource Table** where you can share materials from local community organizations

### *Reminders for What to Do During the Meeting*

- The meeting has to be called to order by one of the officers
- Everyone needs to introduce themselves from the leadership to the tenants and any guests or PSH partners
- The last meeting's notes (called Meeting Minutes) have to be read from the last meeting and approved by a vote.
- Don't forget to have a break in the meeting- especially if it is longer than 1 hour
- If you plan to collect member dues- be sure to tell everyone it is optional and what it will be used for. It is good to allow people to give any amount and make it clear that they can always attend, no matter what. Not all councils collect dues, some fundraise or get donations instead.

## Tenant and Housing Resources (Websites and Organizations to Help You)

### The LA Tenants Union

“The LA Tenants Union is a diverse tenant-led movement fighting for the human right to housing for all. We demand safe, affordable housing and universal rent control. We organize against landlord harassment, mass evictions, and displacement. We mobilize for the repeal of the Ellis Act and Costa-Hawkins Act. Our mission is to strengthen tenant’s political power through education, advocacy, and direct action. Our phone number is 1-213-986-8266, or email address: [info@latenantsunion.org](mailto:info@latenantsunion.org), for language justice email address: [justiciadellenguaie@latenantsunion.org](mailto:justiciadellenguaie@latenantsunion.org)”

Resources from the LA Tenants Union:

- 1) [LA Tenant Union Handbook](#)
- 2) <https://latenantsunion.org/en/resources/>

### Housing Rights Center of Los Angeles

The Housing Rights Center of Los Angeles is the nation's largest non-profit civil rights organization dedicated to securing and promoting Fair Housing. HRC was founded in 1968, the same year that Congress passed the Fair Housing Act. Their mission is to actively support and promote freedom of residence through education, advocacy, and litigation, to the end that all persons have the opportunity to secure the housing they desire and can afford, without regard to their race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, familial status, marital status, disability, ancestry, age, source of income or other characteristics protected by law.

<https://www.housingrightscenter.org/>

#### Housing Rights Hotline

HRC's phone line is staffed from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM every weekday. If a Housing Counselor is not available, please leave a voicemail including *your city and callback number*, and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

**Toll-Free:** 1 (800) 477-5977

TTY: 1 (213) 201-0867

Email: [info@housingrightscenter.org](mailto:info@housingrightscenter.org)

***Please include your city and contact information to help our counselors provide you with the correct information.***

## Concerned Community Members of Chesapeake Apartments

This group, Concerned Community Member of Chesapeake Apartments, is an example of a tenant council group from Chesapeake Apartments. You can find them on Twitter and their twitter account shows a good mix of taking care of business, tenant housing-related concerns, and building community and sharing in each other's lives.

## National Low Income Housing Coalition

NLIHC Tenant Organizing Guide: [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2021/02-11\\_Resident-Tenant-Organizing.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2021/02-11_Resident-Tenant-Organizing.pdf)

NLIHC Tenant Talk webinar meetings:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_1oTKfLJ8TfCYlIBibtAOHA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1oTKfLJ8TfCYlIBibtAOHA)

## Tenants Together

Tenants Together is California's statewide organization for renters' rights. If your council has questions about your rights to safe and high-quality housing, you can call their tenant rights hotline or visit their website here: <https://tenantstogether.org>

Tenant Rights Hotline: 888-495-8020

## More on Building Tenant Councils

<https://www.masslegalhelp.org/housing/lt1-chapter-10-building-tenant-group>

<https://www.wfdd.org/story/tenant-leadership-academy-arms-renters-knowledge>

<https://la.tierra-vista.com/resident-council/>

<https://www.tenantstogether.org/resources/housing-rights-center-los-angeles>

# Appendices

More Helpful Information



## Appendix A: What You Can Expect from Supportive Housing Services

Everyone who lives in Supportive Housing has the right to receive housing case management services. In Los Angeles, there are supportive housing tenants who live in apartment buildings where 100% of the tenants are receiving Permanent Supportive Housing. There are also tenants who live in affordable apartments in buildings that do not have other PSH tenants. No matter which situation, if someone is living in Permanent Supportive Housing they have the right to receive housing case management. No one should be forced to receive housing case management- this is optional. You should get to choose how often, when and where you connect with your housing case manager.

Here is a list to help you identify what services you can expect and ask for in supportive housing. This list explains the best supportive housing service standards, so you can ask and advocate for them. You deserve them.

### Good PSH services should have:

- There should be enough case managers available to give you one-on-one time with your case manager. For example, if you live in a building with 60 people in PSH, there should be at least 4 case managers.
- Housing case managers should offer services like: helping you to find a doctor, a therapist, any treatment services you want, open a bank account, get a cell phone, or help assisting you in finding social connections and services that you will assist you (like getting a GED or finding job training or employment). Housing case managers can also help connect you to benefits specialists if you get a job and want to be sure you can keep your benefits.
- Case managers should be committed to working full-time and for several years at least since this helps with having a trusting relationship.
- Case managers should have training on how to work well with people of all backgrounds. It will be important for you to share what you prefer and how they can work well with you. Case managers should be respectful, active listeners, who can understand where you are coming from and put your needs first. **Peer counselors can be especially helpful with this.**
- Case managers should meet regularly with the property manager, in order to help you stay housed and feel safe and satisfied in your housing.
- Case managers should help you read and understand your lease, your housing rights, and how to ask for repairs or talk with property management.
- Case managers should ask you for your feedback and let you give answers to a survey anonymously.
- Case managers should be available for you to contact them in the evening or at night- **OR if not**, they should give you a phone number for a services warm-line that you can call if you need someone to talk to during stressful times or if you need assistance after 5 p.m.
- Case managers should let tenants know about any Tenant Council meetings or other social activities happening in the building. This could happen with a monthly calendar, or during regular check-ins together.
- Case managers should help you to find ways to connect to your community and to become a leader.
- **What else do YOU want good services to include that will help you stay housed and successful in your community? Share this with your case manager and make sure it is written in your individual service plan.**



## Appendix B: Worksheet for Council to Find Ways It Can Be More Trauma-Informed

As you begin to create your Tenant Council, you will want to decide on things your Council can do to be sure it is a safe and welcoming place that avoids causing trauma. You can use this worksheet to review examples of what other groups do to be trauma-informed, and to come up with your own ideas of how you can make your Tenant Council a safe place for all tenants to participate and have their voices heard.

Below we've listed the 6 Principles of Trauma Informed Care and some ideas you may want to try in your Tenant Council. We also included some blank lines for your group to write in your own ideas and plans that are unique to your tenants' identities and needs.

- **Principle 1: Safety (Physical and emotional safety)**
  - Example 1: We want tenants to feel safe to share freely and not worry that what they share will be used against them- the Tenant Council should create meeting rules that promote a feeling of safety. One example is: What is said here stays here. We protect each other's privacy and will not share out and talk about their personal stuff outside of these meetings, and only what the tenant feels comfortable sharing.
  - Example 2: Another way to promote safety at the meeting is that tenants who don't want to share a housing problem with the full Tenant Council can choose to share concerns privately with the Tenant Council Leadership or with an advocate that they trust.
  - Example 3: Tenant Council meeting could begin with a meditation or grounding exercise to help put people in a good mood and relaxed state of mind.
  - **Brainstorm Principle 1:** (Brainstorm your own ways the Tenant Council can make its meetings and activities safe for all tenants)

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- **Principle 2: Trustworthiness and Transparency**

- Example 1: Some Tenant Councils have a treasurer who takes care of the petty cash that pays for snacks and supplies- other Tenant Councils do not want to put the pressure of managing cash on any tenant- so they may ask a service provider or property manager to assist in tracking the finances
- Example 2: Be transparent that the Tenant Council meeting is to discuss housing and community issues, things that are only related to the tenants. Personal issues that aren't related to housing should be encouraged to share with their case manager or another self-help group.
- **Brainstorm Principle 2:** (Brainstorm your own ways the Tenant Council can be sure its leaders are trustworthy and its actions are transparent, in other words, decisions and actions are made in a public way that all tenants can understand and trust).

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- **Principle 3: Peer Support**

- Example 1: Form a Welcoming Committee and create and deliver welcoming baskets
- Example 2: Helping someone to call 211 or legal aid
- Example 3: Celebrate together! Birthdays, holidays and other special days can be a wonderful way to come together and support each other.
- Example 4: The LA Tenants Council is available to anyone who is renting in Los Angeles. The LA Tenants Council can help your Tenant Council to create structure and support you.
- Example 5: If your Tenant Council decides to have a Treasurer and keep a bank account- you can have a peer mentor or peer advocacy organization help you to take a financial literacy class, manage the petty cash and financial ledger. The YWCA is an example of a group that can help with financial literacy classes.

- **Brainstorm Principle 3:** (Brainstorm your own ways the Tenant Council can be sure it encourages tenants to find support from peers and peer advocates).

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- **Principle 4: Collaboration and Mutuality** means that everyone is working on it together- there is not one person taking over. Mutuality means that power is shared and that we each are committed to helping each other.

- Example 1: We will have an agenda for each meeting. We will print it out and hand it out so that everyone feels included in knowing what is going to happen or be discussed.
- Example 2: We commit to each meeting making time for introductions so that people attending can learn each other’s names and feel included.
- Example 3: The purpose of the Tenant Council and the particular meeting should be shared at the beginning, so that everyone can understand why they are there and how they can contribute
- Example 4: We want everyone to feel welcomed and included, so we will ask people who have attended but are less involved if they want to take on a meeting role, like time keeper, the person to pass out papers or refreshments, or birthday candle lighter- so that everyone feels included and has a part in our meetings.
- **Brainstorm Principle 4:** (Brainstorm your own ways the Tenant Council can be sure its leaders and tenants work together-making decisions in ways that include all voices and share power).

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- **Principle 5: Empowerment, voice, and choice**

- Example 1: Tenant Council leaders should encourage tenants who have shared at past meetings to wait until tenants who haven't yet gotten to share have a chance to share.
- Example 2: The group could rotate among tenants to have a speaker leader that monitors and helps track the time and number of people who want to share- so that everyone gets time to share. This could be a timekeeper role.
- Example 3: The group could create a group commitment to review at midpoint who has already spoken and then invite those who haven't gotten to speak (but want to) to share.
- Example 4: Participation in the Tenant Council is voluntary and if attendance is low, Tenant Council Leaders should ask tenants what tenants want and need to be different in their building and unit. Also, food, like pizza, is always a good way to help people feel included and inspired to come!
- **Brainstorm Principle 5:** (Brainstorm your own ways the Tenant Council empowers tenants, gives tenants a unified voice to address problems in the building or community, and increases the choices that tenants have over their own lives and community).

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- **Principle 6: Ensuring all races, cultures and identities are respected, welcomed and that the Council is being culturally responsive.**

- Example 1: When getting the Tenant Council started and looking for people to join and lead- we will make sure everyone gets invited and NO tenants are left out. We know that best Tenant Councils have leaders that represent everyone who lives in the building. If our building has people from different age groups, different racial and ethnic groups, we want Council members that come from these groups with enough people representing each group so no one feels isolated or singled out.

- Example 2: Everyone has different strengths and challenges- Our Tenant Council will make sure people have support to read and understand what is happening. This means we will work to include and invite interpreters to join the meetings and it will also include translating any written things. We will work with our PSH partners to find money to pay for this. Our commitment to this also means that anything written and handed out in a meeting will be read aloud to be sure that the group understands, no matter someone's reading level or first language.
- Example 3: Food is a great way for people to connect and we want to make sure that all tenants get to enjoy food they like eating during Tenant Council meetings- so we will ask tenants about what kind of food and snacks they like to eat and rotate the menu so that everyone enjoys. We will also have some meetings that are potlucks- where tenants who make food for the meeting can get reimbursed for the groceries. This way people can share their favorite foods or cook together to get ready for the meeting.
- Example 4: We will not tolerate any racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory language in our meetings. People who violate this will be asked to leave the meeting so that others feel safe.
- **Brainstorm Principle 6:** (Brainstorm your own ways the Tenant Council welcomes and appreciates people from all identities and backgrounds, making sure that everyone can participate in the council, no matter their race, gender, age, sexual identity or other identity).

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### *Appendix C: Los Angeles Resources List for Sharing with Fellow Tenants*

It can be helpful for a tenant council to keep a list of resources to share with fellow tenants who may need help with things like budgeting and finances, child care, food support, and other essential items to help people live well in their new apartment. Here is an example of the kinds of organizations you may want to keep a list about for sharing. Your housing case managers or services providers should also be able to help with identifying local resources.

#### **YWCA**

Financial literacy classes are offered at the YWCA.

#### **National Credit Union**

Financial literacy classes and banking, credit repair classes are offered here too.

*Appendix D: Sample Donation Request Letter*

RALPH'S CORPORATION

5000 OBAMA BLVD.

LOS ANGELES, CA 90008

My name is Ms. Alicia Rhoden. I am the Vice Chair of the Lakewood Tenant Association. We are a group of residents advocating for better conditions in our building, and are an important part of your community. We have been in existence for a year. We would like to ask for a donation of food items for our tenant association meetings. We would really appreciate it. The people who are part of the meetings are senior citizens, youth and the general resident population of the building.

We are asking for the donation because we often serve food at our meetings. We will be having a dinner on March 8, 2022. We would be very grateful for your help. You are an important part of this community as well, and we would appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

Alicia Rhoden,

Vice Chair,

Lakewood Tenant Association

## *Appendix E: Sample Tenant Council Group Meeting Agreements & Values*

This is an example of a group agreements list that another tenant council came up with together so that they could be sure to get things done while respecting everyone and making the council a safe and good place to be together. Your Tenant Association should come up with its own list, but you can read this and decide if you want to add any of these to your personalized agreements and values.

### **Our group agreements and values:**

- Please be on time
- Respect each other's opinion
- No crosstalk
- Each one's opinion is their own
- Everyone cleans up after a meeting
- Get one plate at a time and if there is food left you more than welcome to get it
- If you come in late please go to the back so you cannot interrupt the meeting
- If you have questions to ask please raise your hand
- If you have a statement to make try to do it in five minutes or less
- Do not cuss out the leaders or each other
- When you come to the meeting please sign in - that way we can find and notify you of events
- If you have a comment or statement we would like to share and you don't want to say to the group you may give it to the leader
- Do not bring a guest if they are not part of the building because of confidentiality
- If you need special accommodations please let leadership know this
- If a translator is needed please make sure they are there and let leadership know if you need help finding one
- Respect all children- no whippings or beatings will be tolerated- this is a violence free zone
- Do not bring in animals only if they are a service dog are they allowed
- It's okay to disagree but it's how this is done



- Respect all speakers
- Remember to raise your hand
- No drugs or alcohol use will be allowed in this meeting this is a drug-free meeting
- If your children do not go to daycare please keep them with you at all times
- If you need help finding childcare so you can attend the meeting alone, let us know
- If you have special dietary needs please let us know
- There will be no racial remarks at all we are many people who are from a great melting pot
- We will start on time and in the time ending will happen
- If the meeting has to last longer than 2 hours it will be voted on
- If a person is always disruptive at a meeting they will not be allowed to come
- Management must respect all the meetings they may not come to a meeting without invitation- the meetings are a safe place for tenants but sometimes management or service providers will be allowed to come by invitation for specific reasons (discussion, problem solving and community building)
- No leader can be a leader if you're not:
  - o A people person
  - o A caring person
  - o can do mediation or practice patience
  - o willing to learn take different trainings and
  - o must be voted in by the people
- Young people have the right come to meetings and be heard because they live in the buildings too
- If you have a disagreement with any of the leadership it can be handled by talking to the vice president and you can write a grievance
- There will be signs that say no smoking at all
- You will wear a mask and you will commit to social distance during pandemic times
- You are welcome to this meeting this is your time to have your needs met
- We are all leaders we learn from each other
- No question is dumb

- This is a no judgment zone
- Respect the place we have meetings
- You don't have to speak at all that is your right
- We learn from our elders

## *Appendix F: Making Flyers for your Tenant Council Meetings*

### **Key Things to Put on Your Tenant Council Meeting Flyers**

- Name of the Tenant Council
- Be clear on who is putting on the meeting- that it is fellow tenants
- The time the meeting will be (Some people like evening meetings because they may be at work, appointments or school during the day- find out what time is preferred by most of your tenants)
- Location where the event or meeting will be- it could be a gymnasium or a park or a community room at the building where people live
- It is nice to have a theme for the flyer (for example: Tenant's rights. Let's make our building a community!)
- Mention if childcare is provided and if it is free
- There needs to be a nice picture
- It needs to say Refreshments Provided, if you will have drinks or food

### **Ideas for Making and Printing the Flyers**

You may want to connect with a local organization that has a printer and paper they could donate to complete your flyers. If you have help with printing costs list the group in the program or agenda as a sponsor.

Here are some ideas:

- See if there is a printer company that is willing to donate time to help you make the flyer and cover printing costs,
- See if schools are willing to do flyers or help you print them, especially if students from the school live in your building.
- If a tenant's printer is to be used they should be compensated with money or a gift card.
- Check and see if the property management company is willing to do help with making or printing the flyers
- Local area churches may also be willing to donate paper and print the flyers



## ABOUT CSH

CSH works to advance solutions that use housing as a platform for services to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, maximize public resources and build healthy communities.

Learn more at: [csh.org](https://www.csh.org)