

## CHAPTER 7

# RESIDENT HANDBOOK

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A Resident Handbook can play an important role in forming the relationship among the owner, agent, and residents. It should not be merely a list of rules. Handbooks can be imaginative, colorful, simple, and helpful; both content and style are important in establishing an atmosphere that will lead to a friendly and cooperative relationship.

The Handbook should contain the telephone number of the Area Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office so that a resident can call concerning any complaints about violations of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, and HUD Equal Opportunity Requirements.

- Pittsburgh HUD office - (412) 644-6965 - TTY 1-800-927-9275
- Philadelphia HUD office - (215) 656-0500 - TTY (215) 656-3452
- Toll-Free Complaints 1-800-669-9777.

Residents should also be made aware of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and its role in investigating alleged acts of discrimination in housing and the workplace. The appropriate telephone numbers are as follows:

- Pittsburgh, (412) 565-5395 - TTY (215) 565-5711
- Philadelphia, (215) 560-2496- TTY (215) 560-3599
- Harrisburg, (717) 787-9784 - TTY (717) 787-7279

A handbook may consist of several parts:

1. Letter of Welcome and an introduction to the property. The format may vary, but the letter should be as personalized as possible. The introduction should help to establish the necessary rapport between the manager and each resident.
2. Emergency phone numbers should be listed prominently, usually on the inside of the front cover. Some important numbers to include are: police station, fire department, rescue squad, ambulance, hospitals, electric, gas, water, telephone company, and the resident manager.
3. Property information should pertain to the following categories:
  - (a) A summary of information about paying rent, including the date it is due, the name to whom checks are payable, and the address where checks are to be sent or delivered.
  - (b) List all charges to be assessed for damages, delinquent rents, and returned checks.
  - (c) Describe the visitor policy.
  - (d) Explain the lead-based paint notice procedure and acknowledgment requirements.

- (e) A section should describe the locations and the general layout of each building in the property.
  - (f) All community facilities should be listed along with the hours they are open and rules for their use. Describe recreational programs sponsored by management or residents.
  - (g) The cost of using utilities should be emphasized in terms of the relationship between waste and rent increases. Tips should be given concerning how to conserve energy.
  - (h) The resident should be informed of regulations regarding garbage disposal, parking, noise, guests, windows, balconies, appliances, storage rooms, pets, televisions antennas, flammable materials, solicitors, waterbeds, etc.
  - (i) How to report maintenance problems; who will be responsible for maintenance.
  - (j) Outline both resident and landlord responsibilities.
  - (k) Clearly define process and reasons for eviction along with cause for grievances and procedure to follow in reporting these.
  - (l) A section of the Handbook should describe the owner's policy regarding:
    - Methods for rent payment.
    - Delinquencies and follow up.
    - The procedures that are to be followed in evicting a resident.
    - Security deposits.
    - Transfer Policy.
4. A section should concern itself with other questions new residents may have about their new home, their responsibilities and restrictions, and the responsibilities of the management agent. This section should offer suggestions to improve the satisfaction residents derive from living in the property. It might also explain how residents should use and care for air-conditioning and heating systems, small appliances, refrigerators, electrical systems, elevators, fans, fireplaces, fire extinguishers, floors, carpet, kitchen cabinets, countertops, plumbing fixtures, telephones and television antennas, furniture arrangement options, household danger (accident points), noise control methods, pest control, insurance, laundry facilities, and resident organizations.
  5. A section should describe the neighborhood and the municipality. Information offered might include information on local history; names of elected officials; population; community recreational facilities; a list of athletic, business, civic, fraternal, service, social, veterans and youth organizations; health services and clinics; dry cleaning shops, furniture stores and clothing stores; a list of nearby schools with addresses and telephone numbers; churches; and a map with an index.
  6. The final section should present a personal statement from the manager concerning principles of management to be followed. For example:
    - To be firm in enforcing rules and responsive in meeting the needs of the residents.

- To keep the buildings in good condition by providing prompt maintenance and janitorial services.
- To treat all residents and prospective residents equally without regard to race, color, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, familial status, handicap, disability, age, or sex.