

NAHP Update

Creating a High-Performing Team | BY JENNIFER JONES

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No man is an island, wrote English poet John Donne, believing the idea that human beings do badly when isolated from others and need to be part of a community in order to thrive. The same idea can be broadly applied to our daily work lives where the need arises to step out of the departmental silo and collaborate with others in order to accomplish a common goal.

Sounds easy enough, right?

In July, NAHMA, in partnership with the local AHMAs, held a webinar *NAHMA Presents Key People Skills for Property Management Staffers: Developing a Top-Performing Team*, to provide the skills needed to make sure your team runs smoothly. Brenda Harrington, founder of Adaptive Leadership Strategies LLC, led the seminar.

The first step in creating an efficient team is to determine if you are part of a work group or in fact, a team.

According to Harrington, a work group is employees working to achieve a task. They have a common purpose, but



not shared goals and objectives. They represent different priorities or departments and do not hold each other accountable. By contrast, a team is made up of employees with complementary skills with a shared objective or goal and shared rewards. There is a high degree of interdepen-

dence and accountability for the collective performance.

"If everyone works together then it's a win for everyone," Harrington said.

Once you have your team set, you need to make sure everyone is on the same page. Now is the time to manage the competing objectives of



NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (NAHMA)—Protecting the Interests of Affordable Housing Property Managers and Owners



the team members. Since your team is made up of people who may come from different departments, everyone's objectives may not align. For example, Harrington said, the different team members could be focused on issues specific to their department such as budget, responsiveness, compliance or customer service. Additionally, those individual objectives do not always align with the corporate office.

She said it is important to understand the different perspectives and challenges of each team member. The members need to focus on shared strategic objectives while being aware of how the task at hand is impacting the rest of the team. Ultimately, the team has to do what is best for the business and adopt a "we vs. me" approach.

Harrington said there needs to be clarity on the team's priorities as they relate to the overall strategic goals. To do that, the team members need to communicate their concerns about challenges to accomplishing the objective openly, emphasizing the impact on each team member's role on achieving the objective.

That leads to the need to establish ground rules for engagement.

Remember to be respectful and nonjudgement, said Harrington. Team members must provide input in a positive helpful manner focused on the desired business outcomes. Members should address concerns from a professional, not personal perspective. It is also important to build in accountability measures. She suggests

there be a "say it here" policy, which encourages team members to speak their mind and address any concerns immediately rather than in side conversations after the fact.

"Sometimes people in the field don't understand the business purpose for a change. It is important for everybody to understand the strategic reasoning why something is happening, but also why they are important to the change," Harrington said. "Try to educate everyone on the why."

Team members should ask inquisitive questions rather than adopt a critical approach to ideas.

Once ground rules are set, it is time to establish accountability and dealing with constructive conflict.

A healthy diverse debate is the most important element of a high-performing team, Harrington said. It is up to the members to take a constructive rather than a punitive stance when it comes to differing views. She said to place emphasis on the team's collective reliance on individual capabilities and contributions.

That requires soliciting the ideas and opinions of everyone on the team. Harrington said to set realistic expectations about disagreements; allow each team member to voice his/her point of view; help team members understand team and organizational strategy and think strategically; make sure differences are focused on the business

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NAHP Update is published four times a year by the National Affordable Housing Management Association, 400 North Columbus St, Suite 203, Alexandria, VA 22314, Phone 703-683-8630, website: www.nahma.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Complimentary to NAHMA credential holders.

QUERIES: Letters to the Editor and other queries should be sent to Jennifer Jones, NAHMA manager of communications and PR, jjones@nahma.org or to the address above.

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processes and do not become personal; and discourage group think.

She said there will be people who are not comfortable sharing because they feel they will not be well received. By setting guidelines, the team knows everyone has a different idea and is open to maintaining a nonjudgmental space.

"If it isn't a good idea, here are the reasons why,"

business case for why the change is warranted and emphasize the future benefits and added value.

Again, engage all team members in the conversation about the potential new practices including encouraging collaboration among all team members even if the changes will not affect them directly.

Harrington said to use a process for making decisions: define the problem; identify

criteria needed to achieve the goal. You need to make room for team members to utilize their talents, interests and skills while also encouraging healthy debate. Do not forget to set the expectation that there will be differing opinions and encourage constructive, respectful debate. Finally, make decisions based on what is best for the business.

The next professional development webinar,

ACCORDING TO HARRINGTON, A WORK GROUP is employees working to achieve a task. They have a common purpose, but not shared goals and objectives.

They represent different priorities or departments and do not hold each other accountable. By contrast, a team is made up of employees with complementary skills with a shared objective or goal and shared rewards. There is a high degree of interdependence and accountability for the collective performance.

Harrington said. "Everybody has to know how the work they are doing ties into the overall organization."

When it comes to group think, Harrington said, it becomes easy for someone to share an idea and everyone else to just go along with it rather than speak up for themselves. As a result, you could be missing individual ideas and opinions. One way to avoid the group think problem is to actively go around the table and engage everyone in the conversation.

Finally, for a team to be successful you have to gain support for the decisions. Harrington said make the

criteria for making a decision (e.g., budget, timeline); prioritize or rank the criteria; develop alternatives; consider pros and cons, select a devil's advocate; evaluate solutions; and select a winner.

By creating a process and having all the team members engaged, you promote a sense of belonging.

"I might not be happy with the outcome. I might not have gotten what I wanted, but at least I was involved in the process," Harrington said.

It is important to develop your team with intention, making sure to pay attention to the skills and competen-

NAHMA Presents Key People Skills for Property Management Staffers: Strategic Thinking and Problem Solving, takes place Nov. 27. Registration for this training session is done through your local AHMA. Contact information for your local AHMA can be found by visiting the AHMA Directory map at <https://www.nahma.org/membership/ahma-directory/> and clicking on the AHMA nearest to your location. The webinar series is brought to you by NAHMA and is hosted by Rocky AHMA. **NU**

Jennifer Jones is manager of communications and public relations for NAHMA.

Steps for Addressing A Hoarding Situation

Picture yourself doing an inspection and the resident has piles and stacks of things scattered all over the apartment. Clearly, this is a hazard and a possible Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) inspection issue. What do you do?

First, you must consider whether this is a case of a collector going too far, a messy tenant, or is the resident a hoarder.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), “People with hoarding disorder excessively save items that others may view as worthless. They have persistent difficulty getting rid of or parting with possessions, leading to clutter that disrupts their ability to use their living or work spaces.”

The APA said hoarding differs from collecting, in that collectors look for specific items, such as model cars or stamps, and may organize or display them. Meanwhile, people with hoarding disorder often save random items and store them haphazardly. In most cases, they save items that they feel they may need in the future, are valuable or have sentimental value. Some may also feel safer surrounded by the things they save.

Hoarding is recognized as a mental health, as well as public health, problem. As a mental health issue, hoarding is subject to the Fair Housing Act, which among other things, provides a provision of protection for people with dis-

abilities. As a result, someone with hoarding disorder has the right to request a reasonable accommodation, which for example, could involve a remedy plan that includes support services, scheduled clean up and inspections, in an effort to avoid eviction.

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development/Centers for Disease Control (HUD/CDC) Healthy Homes Reference Manual, hoarding situations must be handled in a multidisciplinary manner and addressed as part of a team that may include the sufferer, family members, the housing provider, local health departments, representatives of the judicial system, and providers of therapeutic, social and cleanup services. Long-term case management and monitoring is needed.

Compulsive hoarding is a psychological condition defined as having the following three components: 1) the acquisition of and failure to discard a large number of possessions that may appear to be useless or of little values; 2) living spaces sufficiently cluttered so that the clutter precludes activities for which those spaces were intended; and 3) significant impairment in functioning or distress caused by the clutter, according to the manual.

Hoarding represents an extreme type of clutter that may result in filth, infestations and serious maintenance prob-

lems. Commonly associated with hoarding are health and safety hazards, including building code violations.

The most obvious problem with hoarding is violation of building and public safety codes by blocking access to exits, windows and hallways or interfering with proper ventilation in the rental unit, which could result in injuries or fire. Additionally, the clutter may encourage pest infestations. It can prevent emergency workers from getting to the resident and endanger workers as well.

According to HUD, since hoarding may be a symptom of an underlying behavioral issue, addressing the problem might include some form of reasonable accommodation. Besides consulting with your property’s attorney, a service coordinator or the individual’s caseworker may be enlisted to assist in addressing this issue.

Furthermore, HUD recommends you always thoroughly document what actions you have undertaken, including providing housekeeping notices; terminating subsidy for not complying with health, safety and sanitary provisions in the lease; and bringing resident to market rent and eviction for nonpayment of rent.

HUD recommends lease violations should be issued to the resident and to make sure you have some standards in your policy or house rules, not just the lease.

You should give the resident a specific timeframe in order to correct the problem. If the timeframe is not met, you can recruit the service coordinator or caseworker to work with the resident to address the issue. An agreement should be drawn up in order to give specific guidance and timeframes to clean up.

If the problem persists, according to HUD, then subsidy can be terminated for non-compliance with the decent, safe and sanitary requirements in the lease. The resident’s rent should go to market and if unable to pay, then eviction proceedings should be initiated for nonpayment of rent. A court may ask what you have done to accommodate the resident or the resident may litigate for failing to provide a reasonable accommodation. This is why documentation of all your actions is important.

If behavioral issues are raised, it becomes your responsibility to meet the burden of proof that you reasonably accommodated the resident. You may want to request a stipulated judgment from a court. According to HUD, this is an agreement between all parties to specific conditions, such as the resident agreeing to remove the clutter to come into compliance with the terms of the lease. Both the property and resident sign the agreement. Violation of the stipulated judgment would warrant removal of the resident. **NU—JJ**

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- ›› Maureen A. McKeown
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For more information, go to www.nahma.org and click on Education.

Shine a Spotlight on Your Community

Now that summer vacations and back-to-school events are behind us, plan to enter the NAHMA 2018 Communities of Quality (COQ) Awards competition. The submission deadline to NAHMA is Nov. 2.

To enter the awards competition, a property must first apply for and achieve national recognition as a NAHMA Community of Quality with a minimum score of 325 points on its National Recognition application.

“The Communities of Quality Awards honor the achievements of affordable housing providers who make an unprecedented contribution to developing outstanding properties for families of modest means. NAHMA believes it is essential that outstanding affordable properties—and the individuals who establish them—be publicly recognized for providing

quality housing that offers a safe, healthy environment,” Michael Johnson, SHCM, NAHP-e, NAHMA president, said. “They are communities supplying essential programs and services for their residents. These awards bring valuable well-deserved attention to the important work we are all doing.”

The awards competition has five categories: Exemplary Family Development; Exemplary Development for the Elderly; Exemplary Development for Residents with Special Needs; Exemplary Development for Single Room Occupancy Housing; and Outstanding Turnaround of a Troubled Property

Award winners will be notified in early January 2019 and will receive their awards in a special ceremony at the NAHMA 2019 spring meeting, March 3-5, in Washington, D.C.

This year's COQ Awards program is once again jointly sponsored by HD Supply Multifamily Solutions, a leading supplier of maintenance and renovation products to the multihousing industry, and Navigate Affordable Housing Partners, a leading provider of consulting and development services to public housing authorities and the HUD Section 8 project-based contract administrator (PBCA) for Alabama, Connecticut, Mississippi and Virginia.

An overview of the COQ program, along with the awards' detailed application information and submission materials are available at the NAHMA website at <http://www.nahma.org/awards-contests/communities-of-quality/>.

The AHMAs will also be honoring their local NAHMA Communities of Quality program participants. Please check your local AHMA's program details; a directory of the AHMAs is available on the NAHMA website, at <http://www.nahma.org/membership/ahma-directory/>.

For more information about the COQ program and awards, contact Paulette Washington at 703-683-8630, ext. 110 or pwashington@nahma.org.

NAHMA looks forward to judging numerous applications in every category from every AHMA. The time to start preparing applications is now. **NU**

ABOUT THE COQ AWARDS SPONSORS

HD SUPPLY MULTIFAMILY SOLUTIONS: With 50,000-plus items and free, next-day delivery on most items to most areas, HD Supply Multifamily Solutions is your source for maintenance supplies, fabrication, installation, and renovation services. Our 700-plus account representatives serve more than 130 markets, providing personalized service backed by the strength of a national company. To order call 1-800-431-3000 or at hdsupplysolutions.com.

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Sometimes You Have to Follow Your Gut

NAME: Elisabeth Herold, NAHP-e

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: Oceanview Manor Inc.

POSTION: Executive Director

Eliz Herold credits her father as the person responsible for her position as executive director of the management company of what is collectively known as The Pines Communities. The thing is, he passed away in 2005, a year before the job became available.

Twelve years ago, Herold was living in New Hampshire with her identical twin boys—Bill and Ben, now 26—when she visited Maine for a long weekend, and by chance brought a local newspaper

home with her. In it, she saw an advertisement for the executive director position at The Pines in Ocean Park, Maine.

“I was like, where is this? And then, sent in my resume,” Herold said. “A couple weeks later, I got a call for an interview. It was the first time I had seen Ocean Park. A few weeks later, I was offered the position. I think my dad was watching out for me! He was born in Maine and it was his way of bringing me ‘home.’ Everything fell into place. I had lived in Walpole for 20 years, but sometimes you have to follow your gut.”

The Pines consists of 60 apartments at The Pines at Ocean Park LP, a for-profit partnership formed through the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program and 50

apartments at Pinewood Manor Inc., a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. Both properties provide independent and assisted living apartments for persons over 62 or those with disabilities, and offer Section 8 subsidies through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Oceanview Manor Inc. is the management company that is responsible for The Pines.

Herold calls Ocean Park a hidden gem. “Ocean Park has that old-time feel. It’s a beautiful, safe, family-oriented community,” she said.

Herold said based on population percentages, Maine is the “oldest state in the country,” so creating services for the aging population is something the entire state is struggling with.

To make sure her residents

can receive the services they need, Herold and her staff continue to work on partnerships with fellow nonprofits, creating grassroots opportunities. For example, The Pines worked with ShuttleBus Tri-Town Service to get a bus stop so the residents can affordably travel to the surrounding communities of Biddeford, Saco and Old Orchard Beach.

“We’re looking at what works in the for-profit world of senior housing and services and figuring out how to translate that to ‘affordable’ housing and services. I think it’s totally doable. These are real-life issues. People can’t afford a home, car, cable, phone, medications. There are seniors that are couch surfing. Finding a solution, I think that’s a good life’s work.” **NU**—JJ

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGERS AND OWNERS

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Fall 2018

NAHPupdate

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