## Supportive Housing Policy

Common Ground Queensland is focused on supporting all tenants, staff and visitors in a positive way to create a safe environment. Common Ground Queensland is determined to create opportunities that afford the tenant a sustainable way of living. Common Ground Queensland has the responsibility to carry out all the necessary policies and objectives to ensure best practices.

Common Ground Queensland's mission is to implement the successful supportive housing model practised widely in the United States and the United Kingdom by adapting to local factors. Common Ground Queensland understands the specialised nature of tenancy and property management in supportive housing. The tenancy and property management role must be carefully integrated into the supportive housing team. Partners include:

- Common Ground Queensland Staff, Volunteers and Board Members
- Micah Projects Staff and Volunteers
- Concierge Staff
- Contractors
- Tenants
- Visitors
- Department of Housing and Public Works

Common Ground Qld is committed to ensuring that the principles of supportive housing are clearly understood and practised by its staff and partners to create and sustain a successful community in the building.

- All partners, including Common Ground Queensland, have a shared commitment to the success of the community and each of the tenants who reside in the building;
- All partners have a shared commitment to coordinated communication between the on-site Support Provider, property management and tenant groups;
- There is a commitment to clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders;
- There exists an ongoing forum for talking about and re-negotiating roles and responsibilities;
- There exists respect for the different roles of tenancy and property management, the on-site Support Provider, the property owner and tenant groups; and
- There is acknowledgement and productive use of the built-in practice differences between the different stakeholders, who are working towards the same outcomes.

**Practices of Tenancy and Property Management in Supportive Housing**

- A Deed of Cooperation will be signed with the on-site Support Provider before tenancy and property management in any building is commenced to guide how responsibilities are shared between the parties;
- Best Practices in Supportive Housing guide how responsibilities are shared by Common Ground Queensland and the on-site Support Provider (see Appendix A); and
- Common Ground Queensland works closely with the property owner to ensure it can carry out its policies and objectives with appropriate documentation of obligations.

- The tenants as well as the tenancy and property management staff and on-site Support Provider staff are members of the building community and influence the culture of the community. Staff will be aware of trends in the community and plan strategies for positively influencing the culture;
- Common Ground Queensland will be as flexible as possible in their dealings with tenants;
- Common Ground Queensland recognises the need for harm minimisation practices appropriate to substance abuse;
- While maintenance, rent collection and financial management of the building is largely Common Ground Queensland's responsibility, certain tasks are taken on more collaboratively with the property owner and/or the on-site Support Provider such as tenant selection, move-in and orientation, crisis management and Concierge;
- Common Ground Queensland actively participates in establishing tenant participation groups as a means of addressing issues of Conditions of Tenancy, access to common areas and safety concerns;
- Common Ground Queensland is committed to providing support to tenants as they establish independence by considering them as preferred candidates for site-related training as other Common Ground buildings come on line;
- Absences from a property will be allowed in accordance with any existing statutory requirements (such as 'Temporary absences from your home' – Department of Housing and Public Works Factsheet);
- Common Ground Queensland's Tenancy and Property Management staff and on-site Support Provider staff generally work together to alert tenants to procedures through individual meetings or tenant meetings;
- Both Common Ground Queensland Tenancy Managers and the on-site Support Provider conduct the tenant interviews, focusing on characteristics of a good tenant and neighbour;
- Crisis management regarding property issues requires immediate response from Common Ground Queensland to the property owner;
- Occupancy record keeping is the responsibility of Common Ground Queensland. The on-site Support Provider maintains other records relating to tenants' use of support services. Shared responsibilities for areas such as common areas, evacuations, etc will be documented in conjunction with the on-site Support Provider; and
- Common Ground Queensland staff agree to a philosophy of quality management that includes the following:
  o Recognition that all staff are responsible;
  o Quality comes from effective staff supervision;
  o Clarity regarding procedures is accomplished with well-established protocols and staff supervision;
  o Internal audits are conducted to drive continuous improvement;
  o Tenant feedback is essential for effective continuous improvement;
  o Social inclusion is supported through the formation of tenant groups;
  o Ensuring building safety and security by conducting ongoing inspections and addressing all safety and security issues;
  o Orient tenants about the building issues to ensure safety through responsibilities such as visitor registration and fire drills; and
  o Help tenants in any aspect and support their needs to establish their tenancy.

- Conditions of Tenancy:
    - o Focus on preserving the physical integrity of the building and ensure the quiet enjoyment of the premises for all tenants;
    - o Are reviewed with all tenants at time of move-in; and
    - o Are reviewed periodically with tenants and the on-site Support Provider for suggested revisions and may be amended with adequate notice.

- Evictions are reserved for:
    - o Continuing or significant non-payment of rent;
    - o Causing serious physical harm to self, staff or others; and
    - o Pursuing a criminal activity on the premises.

- For other repeated infractions, sanctions other than eviction will be tried first, including such options as:
    - o Arbitration;
    - o Crisis intervention;
    - o Referral to alternative housing; and
    - o Engaging and providing support to assist when necessary.

**Procedures that Implement**

This policy will be actively implemented by adherence to the following procedures:

- Communication with Tenants Procedure
- Critical Incidents Procedure
- Electricity and Hot Water Charges Calculation Procedure
- Ending a Tenancy Procedure
- Key Procedure
- Mail, Deliveries, Notices Procedure
- Non-Critical Incidents Procedure
- Payments Other Than Rent Procedure
- Pet Procedure
- Privacy and Confidentiality Procedure
- Rent Arrears Management Procedure
- Rent Calculation, Collection and Review Procedure
- Smoking Procedure
- Starting a Tenancy Procedure
- Sustaining Tenancies Procedure
- Tenancy Management (Residential) Procedure
- Tenant and Community Participation Procedure
- Tenant Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Procedure
- Tenant Feedback Procedure
- Visitor Procedure

**Appendix A: Best Practices in Supportive Housing**

| | Responsibilities of on-site Support Provider Staff | Responsibilities of Tenancy & Property Management Staff |
|---|---|---|
| **Tenant Selection & Interviewing** | Focus on service description during service interview. | Focus on ability to pay rent during management interview. |
| | Both on-site Support Provider Staff and Tenancy and Property Management conduct the tenant interview, focusing on characteristics of a good tenant and neighbour. Common concerns during selection processes:  Who makes the final decision? How much information should be gathered during the service interview? | |
| **Orientation of New Tenants** | Help tenants with concrete needs around the move in, such as unpacking, getting familiar with the building routine and location of facilities, neighbourhood resources, staff locations and responsibilities. | Orient tenants about building maintenance issues, fire drills and tenant forums. |
| **Rent Payment and Arrears** | Provide tenants with assistance in paying their rent (e.g., budgeting, addressing cost of substance abuse, vocational services, etc.). Encourage payment plans. | Responsible for collecting rent and addressing issues of rent arrears through payment plans, etc. Engaging the on-site Support Provider to assist when necessary. |
| **Dealing with Nuisance and Disruptive Behaviours** | Conditions of Tenancy are generally developed jointly by the on-site Support Provider and Tenancy and Property Management.  Tenants are part of review and amendment procedures. All staff can help promote healthy cultural norms for the building; it is frequently on-site Support Provider staff members who help to structure these efforts. | |
| **Procedures during Crises (e.g. psychiatric, medical, fire)** | Clear policies and procedures should be in place for dealing with disruptions. These should clearly spell out the chain of command in case of emergency, when to summon staff on call, etc. | |
| **Tenant Grievance Procedures** | Staff and tenants should be aware of systems for evaluating the program and the services provided. Tenancy and Property Management staff and on-site Support Provider staff generally work together, with on-site Support Provider staff alerting tenants to procedures through individual case management meetings or tenant meetings. | |
| **Tenant Groups** | Facilitate initial tenant meetings with the goal being to eventually have tenant run meetings. | Attend meeting when issues concern the building or maintenance. Hold regular management/tenant meetings. |
| **Community Building** | Many issues mentioned above involve aspects of community building. The tenants as well as Tenancy and Property Management and on-site Support Provider staff are members of the building community and influence the culture of the community. Staff should be aware of trends in the community and plan strategies for positively influencing the culture. | |
| **Safety and Security** | Responsible for notifying property management regarding security breaches and safety hazards. | Responsible for ensuring building safety and security; for ongoing inspections and addressing safety/security issues that have been identified. |