



DC | DEPARTMENT of
HUMAN SERVICES

The Aston Briefing on Program Rules

July 31, 2024

What Are Program Rules

“Program Rules means the set of provider rules, client rights, and complaint and appeal procedures, ... proposed by a particular provider for the purpose of governing the behavior and treatment of its clients...”

- Every new resident will receive a written copy of the provider’s Program Rules, and a reading and explanation
 - The rules include a description of any schedule of sanctions that a provider may apply to anyone in violation of the program rules
 - Participants must agree to the program rules to enter the program
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- From The District of Columbia Homeless Services Reform Act (HSRA)
 - Program Rules guidance can be found in HSRA Section 4–754.32. Provider Program Rules.

Program Rules Extend Rights

Rights will include in detail and among others:

- The right to be treated fairly with dignity and respect
- The right to access homeless services free from discrimination
- The right to access services free from verbal, emotional, sexual, financial, and physical abuse and exploitation
- The right to practice or not to practice a religion
- The right to be treated in all ways in accordance with gender identity and expression
- The right to meet and communicate privately with attorneys, advocates, clergy, physicians, and other professionals

Program Rules Extend Rights

- The right to associate and assemble peacefully with other residents, during the visiting hours
- The right to confidential treatment of all personal, social, legal, financial, education, and medical records and information
- The right to file complaints with, testify before, or provide information the Mayor, or other appropriate offices regarding the delivery of services or treatment
- The right to actively participate in the development of case management plans
- The right to timely notice of decisions made that adversely affect receipt of services and the right to appeal any such decision through a Fair Hearing, when required or permitted by the HSRA

Program Rules Outline Living Conditions

Common Items covered in program rules include:

- Case management requirements
- Behavioral and community standards
- Room upkeep and common area cleanliness requirements
- Meals and food storage
- Computer access
- Personal Items storage
- Hours of visitation and curfews
- Grievance and appeals processes

Program Rules Define Residents' Responsibilities

Examples include:

- The responsibility for working with case managers to locate and move to affordable, permanent housing
- The responsibility to search for permanent housing in conjunction with staff, assigned providers, and any other available external resources to expedite movement to permanent housing
- The responsibility to follow case management plans and follow up on all referrals
- The responsibility to participate in financial planning, employment, vocational, and/or supportive services

Program Rules Define Conduct

Programs rules set the tone for how residents are to conduct themselves while participating in the program that will include requirements such as:

- Behaving respectfully to other residents and to staff
- Refraining from profanity and vulgar language as well as yelling, screaming, and playing loud music
- Avoiding verbal or physical altercations, or bullying (including cyberbullying)

Program Rules List Health & Safety Expectations

Expectations like these below will be written in the program rules:

- Residents will allow regular room inspections
- Illegal substances of any kind, or drinking alcohol is not allowed anywhere on the premises
- Contraband is not permitted whether legal or illegal and includes
 - Illegal substances
 - Drug paraphernalia
 - Weapons, such as guns, knives, shanks, nun chucks, and sticks
 - Alcohol
 - Lighter fluid
 - Handcuffs
 - Tasers
 - Chains
- Contraband will be confiscated, discarded, or surrendered to the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department

Program Rules List Health & Safety Expectations

- Prohibited activities include
 - Endangering one's own safety or the safety of others on the premises
 - Intentionally or maliciously vandalize, destroy, or steal the property of any person on premises
 - Failing to accept an offer of appropriate permanent or supportive housing that better serves after having been offered two appropriate permanent or supportive housing opportunities
 - (The staff must make reasonable efforts to help overcome obstacles to obtaining permanent housing)
 - knowingly engaging in repeated violations of program rules
- Illegal activity is prohibited on and could be grounds for termination, including immediate termination if the illegal activity presents an imminent threat

Notes on Substance Abuse

- Intoxication will be prohibited
- If a resident has a current addiction or an addiction history, they may be asked to receive treatment or attend recovery programs as part of their case management plan
- A resident's case management plan may require attendance at weekly substance abuse educational groups, individual sessions, and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings

Program Rules Spell Out Consequences

- Residents will be subject to a progressive discipline policy to address any issues and work towards effective successful program engagement
 - A verbal warning is issued on the first offense with guidance on how to comply with the Program Rules or correct the behavior or issue
 - Alternative sanctions may include the loss of special privileges and the imposition of additional responsibilities
 - Internal mediation
 - Program Termination
- **HOWEVER**, whenever a client presents an imminent threat to the health or safety of the client or any other person on a provider's premises, the provider may immediately transfer, suspend, or terminate the client

Terminations and Discipline

A resident will be terminated from the program when:

- all reasonable efforts to help overcome obstacles to obtaining permanent housing have been taken
- each step of the progressive discipline policy has been exhausted (varies based on severity of offense)
- the resident has had every opportunity to correct any program rules violations
- after two verbal warnings/rule violations, alternative sanctions, and a written participation agreement

Questions?
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