

## **QUESTION #7: RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZING**

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### **How and when can I get involved?**

*HUD and the City encourage residents to be engaged in the RAD process, during the planning phase, the repair and rehabilitation period, and in the operation of the property over the long term.*

There are ways that you can provide input and feedback and help make decisions about your housing and ways that you can organize together with other residents to make sure that your voice is heard about issues that affect your housing.

Not only does HUD encourage residents to be involved in RAD, but the City and SFHA also require the new owners to develop and implement a “resident engagement plan” that will involve meetings, workshops and other chances for you to have a say in what is going on in your building. The new owners should be asking for your ideas and concerns about things such as: condition of the property; the rehabilitation and repairs that ought to be made; the need for services; security; house rules; and other management issues.

For the Phase One properties, the development teams have begun meeting with residents and will continue to do so throughout the coming years. Meetings with residents in Phase Two buildings will begin in June 2015, if not earlier, and likewise will continue throughout the coming years. **To find out if your building is Phase One or Phase Two, see the listing of San Francisco’s RAD properties in this Resident Tool Kit.**

Many things that the new owners are required to do will benefit from residents’ input. For example, owners will be required to:

- Adopt and use fair, reasonable and compassionate screening standards and procedures
- Use eviction only as a last resort, and always considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives before evicting
- Maintain the property in a habitable condition in accordance with the project-based voucher rules and local building codes



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**For more information and help, contact:**

Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco, 415-703-8634 Ext. 111 or [candy@hrssf.org](mailto:candy@hrssf.org)  
Bay Area Legal Aid, 415-982-1300

- Notify residents of and use the grievance procedures
- Respect residents' rights to organize
- Involve residents in designing of "house rules," policy changes, changes in procedures and practices and rehab plans
- Seek the input of residents and legitimate resident organizations on issues related to the operations and management of the property
- Develop a relocation plan

Housing Rights Committee is available to hear your questions, concerns or ideas for the future of your building. You can call, email or write to us:

**Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco**  
**417 South Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco**  
**Phone: 415-703-8634 Ext. 111 Email: [candy@hrssf.org](mailto:candy@hrssf.org)**

## **The Resident Advisory Board**

The SFHA is required to produce an Annual Plan. Any changes that SFHA proposes to make in the Annual Plan and policies contained in the Administrative Plan must be shared with the program participants, who include residents of public housing, the voucher program and project-based voucher properties. You have the right to make comments about the changes. There is always a public hearing once a year (usually in May) where residents can hear about the proposed changes, ask questions and provide feedback. This will continue to be a way that you can get involved in the future of your housing.

As part of the Annual Plan, there is a "resident advisory board" (RAB). This is a group of residents who meet four times in the spring to learn more about the proposed changes and to provide feedback to the SFHA about their concerns or support for the plans. The RAB's comments are sent to HUD with SFHA comments and responses. If you are interested, you will be able to serve on the RAB as a project-based voucher resident. This is a great chance for you to have communication with the SFHA staff that operate the project-based voucher program.

## **SFHA Commission**

The SFHA Commission will continue to oversee the project-based voucher program. The Commission meets every other week in City Hall and you have the right to raise any concerns during the public comment portion of the meetings. Meeting schedules and agendas are posted on the SFHA website: [www.sfha.org](http://www.sfha.org).

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Federal law requires at least one resident commissioner who is “directly assisted” by the housing authority. California state law additionally provides that there must be at least two “tenants of the housing authority” on the Commission, one of whom must be elderly. In San Francisco, the mayor appoints the Commissioners. Residents who are living in a project-based voucher property could be appointed as a Commissioner. You can reach out to the resident Commissioners and any other Commissioners to raise concerns.

## **Resident Organizations and Resident Organizing**

*You have the right to establish resident organizations in your building under RAD.*

Under the RAD project-based voucher program, an owner must allow a resident organization and resident organizers to engage in the following activities:

- To hold meetings without management in attendance
- To use community space for tenant organization meetings
- To communicate with and flyer other residents in the building
- To have a tenant organizer assist in supporting the organization
- To be recognized by management
- To respond to the owner’s request for conversion to tenant-paid utilities and/or to reduce the utility allowance.

*You do not have to obtain the owner’s or manager’s permission to do these things.*

## **What is a Legitimate Resident Organization under RAD?**

An organization established by the residents that

- meets regularly,
- operates democratically,
- is representative of all residents in the development, and
- is completely independent of owners, management, and their representatives.

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## **Do the owners have to work with the resident organization?**

Owners and their agents must recognize legitimate resident organizations and give reasonable consideration to concerns raised by legitimate resident organization for the purpose of addressing issues related to their living environment.

## **Can we have outside help to organize?**

Owners must allow a resident organizer to assist residents in establishing or operating an organization. (An organizer is defined as a resident or nonresident who assists in establishing a resident organization or operating a resident organization and who is not an employee or representative of the owner.)

## **How are Legitimate Resident Organizations funded?**

The owner must provide \$25 per occupied unit for resident participation of which \$15 per occupied unit must be provided to the “legitimate resident” organization at the property. The \$25 per occupied unit must be used for resident education, organizing around tenancy issues and training activities. In addition, the SFHA has committed that “all net income from laundry and vending machines will provide support for the operations of resident organizations.” Thus, existing resident organizations should continue to receive funding to support their activities.

As new resident associations are formed in properties without an existing legitimate resident organization, they will also be eligible to receive the funding.

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