

public housing fact sheet #2: **The Resident Advisory Board**

questions answered in this fact sheet:

- What is a Resident Advisory Board (RAB)?
- How can you get involved?

important terms:

- Resident Advisory Board (RAB): a group of residents that advises the housing authority on the PHA Plan.
 - Resident Council: a group of public housing residents in your development that meet and talk about issues important to all residents. Sometimes members of the Resident Council are also members of the RAB.
 - jurisdiction: the area that your housing authority serves. A jurisdiction may be your city, state, or county. For example, the jurisdiction of the New York City Housing Authority is all of New York City. The jurisdiction of the Delaware Housing Authority is the entire state of Delaware.
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1. WHAT IS A RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD (RAB)?

A Resident Advisory Board (RAB) is a group of residents that advises your housing authority about its Annual and 5-Year PHA Plans. That means that they look at the Plans and give the housing authority feedback. The law says that your housing authority **has to** have a RAB for the entire PHA Plan process.

The residents on the RAB should be similar to the residents living in public housing. If the public housing residents are very diverse, the RAB should also be very diverse. Housing authorities sometimes have more than one RAB.

2. WHAT ARE PHA PLANS AND WHAT IS THE PHA PLAN PROCESS?

PHA Plans are developed by your housing authority. There is an Annual Plan, which is produced every year at the same time. There is also a 5-Year Plan, which talks about long-term goals. They contain a lot of information about your housing authority's rules, including:

- how tenants are admitted and evicted
- decisions on collecting and raising rents
- plans for resident programs, such as youth groups and job training seminars
- decisions about spending money on maintenance, repairs, security, and other programs

The PHA Plan Process is a step-by-step process that your housing authority must follow each year to produce the annual PHA Plan. The housing authority must follow strict rules—and resident participation is important. **The Resident Advisory Board is the key to effective resident participation.**

For more information on PHA Plans, see “Public Housing Fact Sheet #1: PHA Annual and Five-Year Plans”.

3. WHO BELONGS TO THE RAB?

The RAB is made up of public housing residents and resident leaders. The members should come from many different properties. Most housing authorities with a Section 8 voucher program have to choose voucher residents to serve on the RAB.

4. HOW IS A RAB CREATED?

In most cases, the housing authority creates the Resident Advisory Board. There are strict rules that the housing authority must follow in choosing members for the RAB. In some cases, there may be more than one RAB.

The Resident Council can play a very important role in creating the RAB. The Resident Council is different from the RAB. It is a group of public housing residents that gets together to talk about issues important to all residents. Some Resident Councils are made up of members from just one property. Other Councils are made up of members from many properties—these Resident Councils are known as “jurisdiction-wide” councils.

If the Resident Council follows resident participation rules, then it has the right to select members for the RAB:

- 1. When the Resident Council is jurisdiction-wide:** In this case, members of the Resident Council can become the RAB. This happens when the Resident Council is a jurisdiction-wide council.
- 2. When there is more than one Resident Council from different properties:** In this case, members from all of these Councils can become the RAB. The housing authority can also choose other public housing residents as additional members.
- 3. When there is no Resident Council:** In this case, the housing authority can select all of the members for the RAB.

5. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE RAB? WHAT DOES IT DO?

The purpose of the RAB is to participate in the PHA Plan Process and to represent the views of the residents. RAB members should find out what issues are important to residents and what issues the housing authority should know about.

Your RAB is responsible for:

- reviewing your housing authority’s PHA Plans
- making comments on the PHA Plans (what’s good, what’s bad, what should be changed)
- meeting with housing authority staff to talk about the PHA Plans.

If it wants, the RAB can talk about the PHA Plan without the help of any housing authority staff. The RAB can also meet with residents to get information and pass information along.

Throughout the PHA Plan Process, your housing authority has to consider and respond to the comments of your RAB. It is the law!

6. WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO THE RAB?

By law, the housing authority has to provide resources to the RAB. Examples of resources include meeting space, computer access, supplies, and funds. The RAB needs resources in order to:

- understand housing authority policies and programs
- communicate with other residents
- hold resident meetings
- access the Internet

About Resident Participation Funds: In addition, “resident participation funds” may be available to work on the PHA Plan process. Each year, your housing authority receives \$25 per apartment just for resident participation activities. If there is a Resident Council, then the Resident Council decides how to use this money. If there is no Resident Council, then the RAB suggests how to spend it.

Residents might decide to use these funds to help pay for PHA Plan activities. Examples include training, organizing and meeting activities.

7. HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR RAB?

- If there is a Resident Council:
 - Talk to the Council members about becoming a RAB representative
 - Talk to the current RAB representative.
- If there is no Resident Council:
 - Tell your housing authority that you want to be a member of the RAB
 - Think about forming a Resident Council. Talk to your neighbors about joining.
- Talk with current RAB members to find out what’s going on. The housing authority should help you by giving you a list of members. A list of members should also be attached to the current PHA Plan.
- Ask the RAB if you can attend RAB meetings.
- Find other partners to help you get involved. Examples of partners include local housing advocates, homeless advocates, church groups, unions, fair housing organizations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- 42 U.S.C.A. § 1437c–1.
- 24 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 903 is available at www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-table-search.html
- Public Housing Agency (PHA) Plan Desk Guide (Sept. 20, 2001), available at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/>

For additional information on the PHA Plan Process:

- Public Housing Fact Sheet #1: PHA Annual and Five-Year Plans
- Residents' Guide to the New Public Housing Authority Plans (Center for Community Change, June 1999) available at <http://www.communitychange.org/publications/housingcommdev.htm> (also available in Spanish)
- *HUD Housing Programs: Tenants' Rights* (National Housing Law Project, March 2004), Chapter 12

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