[APPROPRIATE AGENCY LETTERHEAD]

WELCOME to The Transitional Housing Program!

NOTE: Organizations are welcome to adapt these sample materials to fit your needs and the work you do. You may change wording to match the language your organization prefers (e.g., survivor or service participant). Before using this template, delete any notes in grey and be sure to replace all highlighted sections with you program-specific information.

We are glad that you are participating in The Transitional Housing Program and we are happy to be here to support you!

During the next 6 to 24 months we will be available to provide you with support, resources, and services to meet your needs. We have designed this packet of information to provide you with everything you’ll need to know while you’re in the Transitional Housing Program.

We promise to do our best to provide you with supports that are meaningful and useful to you. As you read through this information please do not hesitate to ask questions or provide feedback, this Transitional Housing is for you and we want to be responsive to your needs. We look forward to working with you.

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**The Transitional Housing Program:**

Here you’ll put a short description of the organization, and/or transitional housing mission. An example description is below that you can use or edit. Always keep in mind how the language will come across to a survivor, and err on the side of being friendly, respectful and welcoming.

Example: The Transitional Housing Program provides safe, affordable housing and support services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and stalking, and their children. We believe survivors are resourceful adults who are the victims of someone else’s behavior, and who are the experts in their own lives. We believe abusers must be held responsible for their actions.

We aim to assist survivors with their personal, economic and housing goals by offering financial assistance to secure and maintain stable and safe housing, and time to heal. We offer advocacy, emotional support, referrals for practical resources such as furnishings, and assistance gaining economic stability through education, employment and/or applying for public assistance. We honor each individual’s process and timeline and are available to assist, not to lead. We will provide a variety of resources and support depending on each survivor’s situation and goals.

Then you’ll want to outline the basic guidelines of the program – what the survivor can expect from the program and what the program expects from them.

For example:

While you are in Transitional Housing you will have a variety of supports and assistance available to you. Because we want to be responsive to your needs, assistance is offered to you on a voluntary basis, which means you can access as much or as little of these services that you would like.

Specific assistance includes:

* Advocacy and emotional support, for you and your children
* Housing Advocacy: explain what this entails
* Safety planning and safety devices for your home
* Vocational Assistance: explain what this entails
* Counseling
* Rent subsidies and other types of financial help, such as for transportation, childcare and household furnishings.
* Resources for fun and recreational activities, such as BBQs, free or discounted spa nights, movie tickets, etc.
* Follow-up services for a minimum of three months, once you have exited the program.
* Others...

**Participant’s Rights:**

You have a right to expect:

* Your advocate, all staff and program volunteers will treat you, your children and your pets with respect and dignity.
* All staff to listen to what you tell us and carefully consider positive and constructive feedback.
* Staff and volunteers to do our best to help you, your children and your pets stay safe during your time in, and following, Transitional Housing.
* Your privacy and confidentiality will be thoroughly protected. Information you share with staff will not be repeated or otherwise shared without your explicit permission.
  + With limited exceptions, such as when compelled by an official court order or state law. These exceptions will be fully explained to you and the program will always act to protect your information to the greatest extent possible.
* You have complete decision making power over what assistance you access, and the timeline in which you access supports.
* Others...

**Transitional Housing Guidelines:**

We do not believe our purpose is to monitor your daily living routines, judge your personal decisions, or play referee between participants. However, we ask that you respectfully follow the below guidelines, in order to protect the privacy and safety of other program participants and the legal obligations of the program.

Please feel comfortable to provide any feedback you might have about these guidelines as we strive to continuously improve the program.

* Confidentiality Policy ~ Because of the nature of this work, it is essential that safety and confidentiality be a priority. To this end, we ask that all participants sign and uphold the Transitional Housing Program Confidentiality Policy, that will be given to you separately, which asks that you not disclose information about anyone participating in the program.
* Meeting with your advocate ~ in order for us to provide the support that suits you as an individual we need to have a sense of how things are going, what is working and what isn’t. For this reason, we ask that you maintain regular contact with your advocate. Within the first week of entering the program, your advocate will work with you to set up a mutually agreed upon schedule for keeping in touch. These meetings may be monthly, but can be as often as needed and may be in person or over the phone as agreed upon. The check-in meetings can take place anywhere you both feel safe and comfortable - the office, a coffee shop, the grocery store, etc. You are also free to change the schedule as your needs change, with appropriate advance notice.
* Household composition ~ The funding for this Transitional Housing requires that only you and your dependents receive housing assistance through this program. Please inform program staff immediately if you want a non-dependent (ex. roommate) to share your housing unit. Staff will work with you and try to meet your needs, while maintaining compliance with the program funding requirements.
* Program Assistance Agreement ~ The Transitional Housing Program can assist you financially by paying a portion of your rent for up to 24 months. We ask that you sign a separate Program Assistance Agreement that will be given to you. This agreement outlines what the Transitional Housing Program is going to provide in terms of financial assistance and what portion you will be responsible for. It will also outline your expectations for maintaining the property and any additional requirements regarding your housing unit.

**More on Safety:**

Because everyone in this Transitional Housing is a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and/or dating violence - safety is our foremost priority. We ask that you help us maintain the safest environment possible. Below are some guidelines we ask you to follow, as well as suggested safety procedures that can be used in addition to your safety plan, and adapted to your individual needs and lifestyle.

* Safety planning ~ Upon entering the Transitional Housing Program you may meet with your advocate to discuss your current safety plan, and make changes to fit your current housing needs. Your advocate will work with you to identify further ways of enhancing your safety and the safety of your children, as well as strategies for minimizing or escaping dangerous situations. This is *your* safety plan. We know that you are the expert of your experience and we will help you create a safety plan that makes sense for your current situation. We will revise and change this plan as often as you feel necessary.
* Other Safety Suggestions ~
* Consider where your car is parked as a part of your safety plan. For example, a well-lit lot near your apartment versus or off-street parking if you don’t want the abuser to see the car near your home.
* Let an advocate know if you would like any additional locks or security devices for your home.
* Safety plan with your children, especially for when they are not with you.
* Do not admit anyone into your apartment that you are not expecting or do not know. You have the right to ask for identification from anyone who is trying to enter your home. Program staff will always provide advance notification before visiting.
* If you see any stranger on the property or any suspicious behavior, please call the office at phone number or the crisis hotline at phone number immediately. *(Note: This is only relevant for communal or clustered site housing).*
* Make sure you and your children are aware of all exits in your home, and devise a plan with escape routes, in the event of a fire or other emergency.
* Please remember to use house-related precautions for your safety and the safety of your children. Feel free to speak with staff for tips on childproofing, adjusting to your new community, or navigating a new type of building.

**Children’s Services:**

Just as entering Transitional Housing may be a huge change for you, your children also have adjustments to make. Being here may mean a new school, new housing, new neighbors and friends, and a whole new routine. Some children may feel confused, scared or even angry at the upheaval in their lives.

Our children’s advocates are available to support and assist your children through these changes. Staff can meet with you and/or your children to determine what your children’s needs are and how we can help. Our staff can also assist you with any questions or concerns you may have about parenting. The following are guidelines for you and your children while you are participating in Transitional Housing:

Here you want to outline the parameters as they relate to supervision and support for children. Remember to keep the tone warm and friendly, and err on the side of fewer guidelines, instead of more. \*\*\* And remember - most survivors seeking your help have been raising their children for years - so they don’t need to be told they are ‘responsible’ for their children or other basic facts.

For example:

* Do not leave very young children alone (age varies by state, please check local laws).
* Try not to badger children into getting support or services, and remember to be patient as they go through the healing process.
* School age children must abide by laws governing school attendance.
* Do your best to create a violence-free environment and refrain from hitting, kicking, excessive yelling, swearing, and threatening.
* Here you’ll outline exact types of assistance and fun/recreational activities that are available to the kids in your program.

**Termination**

Our goal is to support you as obtain stable, safe housing. We will do our best to accommodate your needs while in Transitional Housing, and help ensure a positive experience. We will always attempt to work out a solution rather than immediately dismissing you. Unfortunately however, there are some situations in which we may need to ask you to leave Transitional Housing. Our policy is to make these determinations on a case by case basis, and take into account your particular life circumstances. There are no set number of issues or ‘warnings’ that constitute automatic dismissal, but in order to prevent being terminated, please follow these guidelines:

* Violence/Threatening Behavior ~ We are committed to doing our best to create a safe, violence-free environment for participants and staff. We need your help to do this and therefore require that you refrain from verbally, physically or emotionally threatening, abusing or endangering your children, other participants, staff or volunteers. A list of behaviors that will not be tolerated includes (but is not limited to): hitting; kicking; punching; slapping; name calling; threats; excessive use of profanity; intimidating behaviors; and homophobic, racist or sexist language, comments or insults.

\*\* Please understand that some staff may be mandated reporters. This means that the law may require us to report situations in which we feel your children are in danger or are being abused or neglected, to the Department of Children Services. This department is charged with investigating reported incidents of child abuse and neglect, and will work with you (and us) to help your children stay safe. Whenever possible we will notify you when we need to make a report, and will ask you to participate in this process or make the report yourself. If you have any questions about this policy or procedure, we are happy to talk with you.

* Visitors ~ We understand that you cannot control your guest’s behavior, but do ask that you use caution and good judgment when inviting people into your home. If there is a protection order (or similar legally binding order) in place between you and another individual, you must not invite that person onto the organization’s property, or into your housing building or unit. If someone you have a protective order or restraining order against forces or coerces you to allow them in the home, that will not be considered a violation and is something we encourage you to discuss with the advocate when you feel safe so that we can support you.
* Illegal Activity ~ Refrain from engaging in illegal behaviors while participating in this program. Illegal behaviors include (but are not limited to): prostitution; illegal drug manufacturing, use or sales; child pornography; and illegal storage or use of firearms.

If you do knowingly engage in the behaviors described here, we reserve the right to terminate your participation. Again, we hope this will not occur and commit to working with you to prevent it. If dismissal is necessary, the procedure for termination is as follows:

* If a safety concern or imminent danger exists, you will be given three days maximum from the date of termination to exit the program.
* In the absence of a safety concern, \*\* here you want to spell out the procedure for informing participants of problem, allowing them to respond, meetings with staff and supervisor, opportunity to resolve issue, what the final step is, and exactly what termination means (i.e. what is no longer available to participant).

**Grievance Procedure:**

We recognize that in any environment in which people interact regularly, conflicts, complaints and concerns may arise. These issues may be between individuals or families in transitional housing, with staff or regarding specific policies or rules. This grievance procedure is in place to ensure you have a process to formally log your complaint or concern, be heard and have an opportunity for resolution.

You have the right to begin the Transitional Housing Grievance Procedure if you believe that any transitional housing policy has been unfairly applied to you, or that you and/or your children have been mistreated by anyone living in transitional housing or by anyone professionally associated with the organization.

* Here you want to spell out the grievance procedure steps very clearly – who is informed of what, how information is conveyed (i.e. in writing) and to whom, how long the process or each step in the process will take (i.e. you have three days to submit a formal grievance in writing, and staff have three days to respond, etc.)

**Signatures**

We appreciate you signing (or verbally dictating your signature) this document to indicate you understand the program guidelines, and what you can expect the program to provide. You will receive a copy of this packet, with signatures from you and your advocate, within 1 day (24 hours) of entering the program. Please let us know if there is any other information you need or feedback you’d like to give us. We are available to assist you in any way we can.

Participant printed name Participant signature

Date

Staff printed name Staff signature

Date