

The Basics of the Voluntary Services Approach

1. The Voluntary Services approach is based on the notion that participation in services should be voluntary and not a condition of housing or receiving other services. This approach emphasizes respectful and welcoming behavior in all aspects of the work. Services are driven by the needs, wants, and individual goals of survivors.
2. This approach is based on the belief that survivors should have the freedom to make their own decisions about their lives.
3. This approach promotes the building of relationships between staff and survivors in transitional housing, working as allies and not as ‘providers’. This relationship is then used as the foundation to assist the survivor in reaching their goals.
4. Input from survivors is the foundation of services and policies. This is to ensure a survivor-driven program design. Programs may implement a satisfaction survey, survivor focus groups, or other methods for gathering feedback from survivors.
5. Services are consistently made available to encourage participation and ensure assistance is as relevant and accessible as possible. Staff are encouraged to make suggestions and express concerns or encouragement as appropriate, but to never require participation.
6. Creative and less-traditional services can be offered exclusively or in conjunction with more traditional approaches, depending on the needs and wants of the individual survivor.
7. Choices and options for survivors are highly valued and prioritized. Decisions made by survivors shouldn’t be judged but present opportunities for further discussion and support.
8. A nonjudgmental, safe space is provided for survivors to talk about their experiences, fears, beliefs, and goals.