**Best Practice Template:**

**WELCOME PACKET**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEMPLATE USE:**

* **Purpose:** This template will tell a survivor what to expect while they are part of your OVW TH Program. It will also outline what they can expect from support services. The Welcome Packet can play a key role in offering trauma-informed housing and services. The policies and information in this packet can help a survivor make informed choices about which services to take part in.
* **How to use this template:** You may adapt this template to fit your needs and the work you do. You may change the wording to match the language used in your program. Before using this template with a housing applicant, please delete this instructions page. Also, please delete any notes in grey. Be sure to replace all highlighted sections with your program’s information.
  + The policies outlined in this packet can be changed. But, we strongly suggest that programs avoid policies that interfere with a survivor’s autonomy or safety. Autonomy is the freedom to make choices for oneself. Trauma-informed housing is based on building a survivor’s autonomy. We want to support their freedom to make choices about their stay.

**BEGINNING OF TEMPLATE**

*[AGENCY LETTERHEAD]*

WELCOME to Our Program!

Over the next 6-24 months, we will be here to give you the support, resources, and services that you decide will be most helpful.

We promise to offer supports that are meaningful and useful to you. As you read through this packet, please feel free to ask questions or offer feedback. This program is for you. We want to respond to your needs. We look forward to working with you.

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**Who We Help and What We Do**

**Who do we help?**

* Survivors of:
  + domestic violence
  + sexual violence
  + dating violence
  + stalking
* Survivors’ children and/or dependents
* Safe parents, guardians, caretakers of a survivor of sexual assault who is under the age of 18 and is not an emancipated minor

**What do we offer?**

* Safe, low-cost housing
* Emotional support
* Money aid
* Housing aid
* Advocacy
* Referrals
* Any support you believe would be helpful

We believe in offering services that you want and need. Please tell your advocate if there is a service that you think we should offer. We will do our very best to add it. We aim to help you meet your goals.

**How long can we help?**

* For 6-24 months
* In some cases, longer

**Support Services**

**Who can use the program’s support services?** You and/or your dependents.

**When can I use support services?** Any time you wish.

**Do I have to use support services to belong to the program?** Not at all.

**What if I change my mind and want to use support services later?** You and/or your children can ask to use support services at any point during your stay. You can choose which services you use. You can choose when and how often you use them. You can choose not to use them.

**What support services does the program offer?**

Our support services include:

* Emotional support for you and your children
* Advocacy: explain what this means in your program (landlord referrals, etc.)
* Safety planning and safety equipment for your home
  + You can meet with your advocate to make or change a safety plan at any time. Your advocate can help brainstorm ways to improve your safety plan.
* Information for school enrollment (for you and your children): (explain what this involves)
* Counseling
* Housing aid
  + Communal/Clustered Living: We offer housing in a communal, or group, living model (explain your model)
  + Scattered Site: We offer housing in a scattered site model, (explain your model)
* Support and referrals for transportation, childcare, household furnishings, etc.
* Self-care and holistic healing: yoga, art classes, movie tickets, etc.
* Check-in meetings: We can meet with you at any time over the next 6-24 months. You can talk about anything you would like to with us. Maybe you have thoughts about how we can improve our program. Maybe you want to talk about how we can help you more. Maybe you want to brainstorm your plans and goals. We are here for anything you want to talk about. You do not have to meet with us to stay in the program. But, we are here to meet as often as you would like. These meetings can take place anywhere you feel safe and at ease. Maybe that’s at the office or in a coffee shop. Maybe that’s at the supermarket. You choose. You can change a meeting time, place, or date if your needs change.
* Children’s services: Entering this program might have been a huge change for you. It might have been a huge change for your children too. While you are in the program, your children can choose to take part in the following services:
  + List the Services here:
* Other services...
* Follow-up services: You can use these services for at least three months up to twelve months after you have moved. Follow-up services are a little different from the services you get while living in Transitional Housing.

**Our Duty to You**

Your advocate, all staff, and volunteers have the duty to respect your rights as follows:

* To treat you, your children, and your pets with respect and dignity
* To listen to what you tell us
* To think carefully about any feedback you offer
* To help you, your children, and your pets stay safe
* To support your safety and healing while helping you keep your housing.

Please let us know if anyone commits the following acts against you, your dependents, or your visitors:

* + sexual violence
  + sexual harassment
  + stalking
  + dating violence
  + domestic violence

**Your Rights:**

* You have a right to live free from sexual violence or sexual harassment in your housing. If any kind of sexual harassment or sexual violence happens to you in your housing, we can look for ways to ensure your safety while keeping your housing. If anyone connected to your housing program has committed sexual violence or harassment, you can speak to the executive director or a board member.
* You have full power to choose what services and help you want. You also control how often and when you use those services.
* The information you give us will be protected. It will be shared only with your consent and say-so. You can learn more details in the section titled “Confidentiality Policy.”

**Grievance Process**

**What are grievances?** In any place where people live together, conflicts, complaints, and concerns might arise. Such problems are known as grievances. They might arise between one person and another. They might arise within families or with staff. They might have to do with a policy or rule.

**What can I do if program staff, volunteers, or other tenants fail to respect my rights?** You can use our grievance process. It is a clear set of steps you can follow.

**Why should I use the grievance process?** It allows you to formally report your complaint or concern. It lets you be heard. And it gives you a chance to solve the problem.

**How do I file a grievance?** Your advocate will talk to you about the process at any time. They will tell you the steps you need to take.

**Program Guidelines**

We are not here to control your daily life. We are not here to judge your choices. But, we do ask that you follow the guidelines below. Doing so will protect the privacy and safety of other survivors. It will also help the program meet its duties under the law.

Visitor Guidelines:

**Are visitors allowed?** Visitors are welcome while you are staying here.

**What if someone forces their way into my home?** Please tell your advocate as quickly as you can. We will work on safety planning with you.

**Do visitors have to follow any rules?** Yes. We ask that they follow the same policies about violence and illegal activity that you do.

**What if my visitors don’t follow the policies about violence and illegal activity?** We may ask that they do not return.

Household Member Guidelines:

**Can members of my household get money to help pay housing costs?** Our funding requires that only you and your dependents get money and housing aid.

**Who are my dependents?** Anyone who depends on you for nearly all their money needs. They might include:

* children in your full-time or part-time care
* elderly parents or grandparents
* grown children who are disabled

Please speak with us if you have questions about who counts as a dependent.

**What if I want to live with a roommate?** That might be alright. Please let your advocate know. We may ask the roommate to pay part of the rent. That’s because our funds can only pay for you and your dependents.

Please offer any feedback you might have about these guidelines. We are always looking for ways to improve our program.

**Confidentiality Policy**

**Is my information safe with you?** We take pride in keeping all of your information confidential.

**Should I be careful about sharing information?** We ask that you do your best not to share certain information with people outside of the program. Please try not to talk about the lives of others in the program. Please try not to share information that might identify a fellow survivor to someone who is not in the program.

**Will you share or repeat things that I tell you?** We will protect your privacy and confidentiality in all ways. Information you share with staff will not be repeated or shared without your stated permission.

**What information do you keep in my file?** We collect as little information in your file as we can. We do this to protect your privacy and confidentiality.

**Can I see what is in my file?** You can read your file or ask for a copy at any time.

**Are there any limits to confidentiality?** Yes, there are a few.

* Sometimes an official court order or state law might require us to share your information.
* In this state, there are \_\_\_\_ exception(s) to confidentiality, based on state law.
  + First is when there is a valid court order. (explain your agency’s subpoena and court order policy here)
  + Second is mandated reporting. *Mandated* means *required by law*. Note: Not all advocates are mandated reporters. Please check your local statutes, and include any important language about mandated reporting laws here.
  + Third is our reporting requirements. Our funders will ask us to submit reports with nameless data (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.). We will not share information that could identify you. You have the right not to answer questions about age, gender, ethnicity, etc.

**Leaving the Program**

**What if I want to leave the program?** You have the right to leave at any time.

**Do I have to stay in the program for 24 months?** No. You choose how long you stay.

**What if I feel ready to leave?** Let your advocate know when you feel ready. They can help you with anything related to moving. That includes moving costs, buying some household items, and other things.

**What happens after I choose to leave?** You can get up to 12 months of after-care. After-care services include but are not limited to: advocacy, case management, and emotional support.

**What if I have a problem with a person or policy while I’m in the program?** In any place where people live together, conflicts, complaints, and concerns may arise. We know and understand that fact. We have a process in place to help solve problems. You can read more about it in the section titled “Grievance Process.”

**Will I be asked to leave if I have a problem in the program? Will I lose my housing aid?** We will always try to solve a problem before taking such steps. We decide how to solve each problem on a case-by-case basis. We keep in mind your specific needs, resources, and concerns.

**Can you to ask me to move out of the program?** There are only a few reasons why we might ask you to leave.

* Violence/Threatening Behavior: We ask that you do not verbally or physically threaten or abuse other survivors in the program, your dependents, or staff and volunteers.
* Illegal Activity: We ask that you do not take part in any and all illegal acts while you belong to this program.

**What happens if I act violently or threaten someone? What happens if I do something illegal?** We may have to ask you to leave the program. Again, we hope this will not happen, and we commit to working with you.

**What happens if I am asked to leave the program?** We will help you find other housing. We also will help with some moving costs. Again, we hope this will not happen, and we commit to working with you.

**What if there is a safety concern or imminent danger?** We will meet with you right away to talk about next steps.

Important Phone Numbers and Contact Information

**Agency**

* [Agency] Crisis Line/24-hour line:
* Your advocate
  + Name:
  + Phone:
  + Email:
* Residential Supervisor
  + Name:
  + Phone:
  + Email:
* Residential Director
  + Name:
  + Phone:
  + Email:
* Executive Director
  + Name:
  + Phone:
  + Email:

**Housing Related**

* Maintenance
  + Phone
  + Email
* Landlord
  + Phone
  + Email

**Community Resources**

In case of emergency call: 9-1-1

Non-Emergency Police Department:

[Others?]