



WELCOME to Cornerstone:
Participant Handbook

- ❖ We are glad that you are participating in Cornerstone transitional housing program and we congratulate you on taking this important step!
- ❖ We know that you have overcome some serious difficulties to get here and we applaud you.
- ❖ We are proud to be part of your journey as you continue to create a safer life for you and your family.
- ❖ This handbook was designed to provide you with information about Cornerstone.
- ❖ We promise to do our best to support you through this journey.
- ❖ As you read this information, please do not hesitate to ask questions or make comments.
- ❖ Cornerstone is for you and we want to be responsive to your needs! We look forward to working with you.

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Program Overview

DASH History & Mission

The District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH) was founded in 2006 to provide relief to survivors of domestic and sexual violence, through emergence and long-term safe housing, and innovative homelessness prevention services. DASH is an innovator in providing access to safe housing and services to survivors and their families as they rebuild their lives on their own terms. No matter what the situation, DASH meets survivors where they are and strives to eliminate all barriers that prevent them from accessing safe housing.

DASH has several programs, all of which serve survivors of domestic and sexual violence in an effort to reduce barriers to housing. The program you are connected with is Cornerstone. DASH also has another program, called the Community Housing Program (CHP). CHP runs two services: the Empowerment Project and the Housing Resource Center. The Empowerment Project is a scattered site, rental subsidy program for survivors and the Housing Resource Center provides housing advocacy and assistance to survivors during weekly walk-in clinics.

{ORGANIZATIONAL CHART}

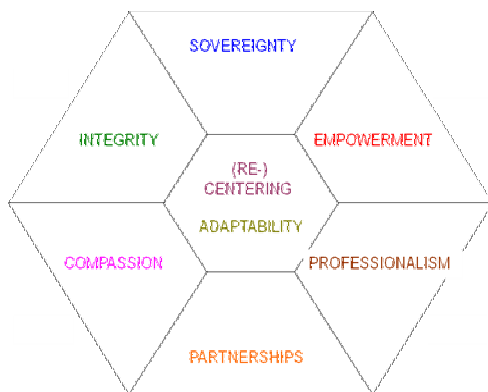
About Cornerstone

Cornerstone is a low-barrier, safe housing program in a 47-unit apartment building. When it opened in November 2012, Cornerstone was DC’s largest dedicated safe housing program. The Cornerstone Building incorporates principles of universal and green design so that the space is physically accessible to all survivors and provides a peaceful sanctuary from abuse.

Vision

Cornerstone is a safe housing sanctuary for survivors of domestic and sexual violence to heal, explore, and transform at their own pace. Cornerstone seeks to provide intensive support services on a voluntary basis, allows residents the opportunity to determine their own goals towards re-establishing their lives on their own terms.

DASH Model



DASH developed a model that is used to help staff make decisions when working with survivors and community partners. The model includes the following principles:

- *Integrity* ~ Behaving consistently with the values you promote; striving to know yourself and behaving authentically.
- *Sovereignty* ~ Having the freedom and responsibility to determine what is right for you and be self-governing.
- *Empowerment* ~ Giving voice to your own power, and providing the tools to help others recognize and access their power.
- *Professionalism* ~ Being accountable to a set of standards, keeping clear boundaries between yourself and your work.
- *Partnerships* ~ Having mutually cooperative and respectful relationships with all who are doing the work, including program participants, service providers, investors, and the community.
- *Compassion* ~ Having empathy for others who are affected by misfortune, and working to understand and help them.

Re-Centering

Located at the center of our model is a term called “re-centering.” There may be a time when you feel disengaged from your goals, violate the program agreement, have conflicts with another resident, or need more hands-on assistance with a challenge you may be facing. Any of these situations would give reason to start the process of re-centering: a time to openly discuss your actions and collaborate with your advocate to get back on track.

If your advocate feels you need this added assistance, you will be notified that a re-centering meeting must take place. During the meeting, your advocate will guide you through the re-centering document which includes the purpose of the discussion, what you can do change the situation, and how your advocate can help you do so.

If the situation does not change after the re-centering meeting, your advocate will let you know that a second re-centering meeting needs to take place, which will include the Program Director. In the event that neither of these meetings resolves the issue, a third re-centering meeting with your advocate and the Program Director will be scheduled. At this third meeting, an agreed upon action will be taken. This

could include the changing of policies as they apply to you, or in extreme circumstances termination from the Cornerstone Program.

Resident's Rights

You have the right...

- ❖ To be safe at Cornerstone.
- ❖ To be treated with respect and dignity.
- ❖ To be listened to and for your advocate to believe what you have to say.
- ❖ To privacy and confidentiality.
- ❖ To change your mind about Releases of Information you signed at any time.
- ❖ Decide what assistance you access and when you decide to access support.
- ❖ To get a response to your message from your advocate within the next business day she or he is expected in the office.
- ❖ To access or make any changes to your personal file at any time.
- ❖ To file a grievance if issues arise between staff, individuals or families living at Cornerstone.
- ❖ To file a grievance if issues arise between you and a DASH representative; or regarding specific policies or rules.
- ❖ To receive a copy of all paperwork that you are asked to sign.
- ❖ To end your participation in the Cornerstone housing program at any time.

Program Policies

Program Policies

The purpose of our policies is to ensure a mutually positive and safe experience for residents, staff, volunteers and the community. It is not to monitor your daily living routines, judge your personal decisions, or play referee.

- ❖ Confidentiality ~ We ask that you not advertise the location of the program or disclose information about other families in the program.
- ❖ Meeting with your advocate ~ Within the first week of entering the program, you will meet with your advocate to set up a mutually agreed upon schedule for keeping in touch. These should be at least weekly but can be as often as needed. You are also free to change the schedule as your needs change, with appropriate advance notice.
- ❖ Household composition ~ Only those family members who are approved on your lease can live in your apartment.
- ❖ Program Agreement and Lease Compliance ~ We ask that you sign the Program Agreement and Welcome Packet. These documents outline what DASH expects of you as a resident of Cornerstone and as a program participant. We ask that you adhere to the Program Agreement and Lease, if your actions do not, they will be grounds for violating your agreement with DASH and possibly result in eviction.
- ❖ Laundry ~ Laundry machines are available in the basement of Cornerstone. Washers and dryers cost \$1.50 each to operate. Any clothing brought into the building must be run through the dryer, unless it is new with tags. If you choose to do laundry outside of Cornerstone, expect that you will be required to dry your clothes again here at your own expense.
- ❖ Bed Bug Prevention ~ Bed bugs are a problem in many apartment-style living facilities across the city. We have taken various precautions to prevent a bed bug infestation at Cornerstone, including using metal bed frames and mattress covers in every unit. However, we need your cooperation, including:
 - Placing all or your clothes and your children's clothes in the dryer for 20 minutes before you place your clothing in the closets and drawers.
 - Telling your advocate immediately if you are finding small itchy bumps on your body or on your children's bodies.
 - Cooperating with the exterminators, who will conduct periodic bed bug checks and spray the apartment unit.
- ❖ Visitors ~ All visitors must sign in and leave a valid ID at the front office prior to visiting. Visiting hours are between 8am and 8:30pm. Visitors may not stay overnight without expressed permission from an advocate or the Program Director. Permission will only be granted in special situations. An "Overnight Guest Request" form must be filled out 48 hrs. in advance. Upon arrival, you must escort your guest(s) from the door to your apartment and back again when they leave. **Visitors are not allowed in Cornerstone building common areas for**

confidentiality reasons and may not be left alone or with another resident at anytime.

- ❖ *Computer Lab*~Cornerstone has a computer lab in 4E for residents to use between 9am and 8pm daily. In accordance with our Child Supervision policy (p. 8-9), no children under the age of 12 can use the computer lab unsupervised. Visitors are also not allowed in the computer lab as is outlined in our Visitor’s policy (p. 6). While using these computers, remember that it is a public, safe space. The following activities are not allowed: accessing or downloading porn, violent video games or images, excessive printing, videos or text with excessive use of profanity, homophobic, racist or sexist language, comments or insults. Please do not eat or drink in the computer lab.

If you knowingly violate any of these policies, your advocate will inform you of the problem, and you will have an opportunity to discuss your actions and collaborate with your advocate to develop a plan to get back on track (re-centering), and it does not mean termination from Cornerstone. If the problem persists after re-centering with your advocate, the Program Director or other relevant staff may be asked to participate in the second re-centering meeting. If neither of these meetings resolves the problem, a third meeting will take place, and the terms of these policies may be changed as they apply to you.

I have gone over Cornerstone’s program policies, listed above, with my advocate. I understand how these policies will apply to me, my family, and my visitors while I live at Cornerstone, and I understand the possible consequences of violating any of these policies. Further, I understand that the visitor’s policy is included in my lease.

Participant Initial

Date

Advocate Initial

Date

Keeping Green

- ❖ Here at Cornerstone, we value being green. One of the ways we hope to ensure this is by providing the opportunity for reducing, reusing, and recycling. Not only are these options great ways to help the Earth, they are creative ways to save some cash for you and for DASH! For example, buying one reusable water bottle instead of bottled water is a money saver; turning off your lights when not in use helps reduce our utility bill.

- ❖ You will also find recycle bins for paper and plastics/glass/cans next to the dumpsters behind the building. Recycle bins will be emptied every Tuesday and Thursday. Please dispose of these items appropriately, as it will help make our world a better place for us all.

Safety

Safety is our foremost priority because everyone in Cornerstone is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence. 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 Cornerstone you will meet with your advocate to discuss your current safety plan. Your advocate will help you identify ways to improve your safety as well as your family's safety. This is your plan and can be changed as often as you want.
- ❖ Overnight Notification Forms~- You must let your advocate know if you plan to leave DASH for more than 24 hours by completing an "Overnight Notification" form. Out of concern for your safety, DASH will call your emergency contact within 3 days of not hearing from you. If we are unable to make contact with you and are unable to obtain any information about your whereabouts we will contact law enforcement to file a missing persons report.
- ❖ Signing in and out of Cornerstone **Signing in and out of Cornerstone**~ You have the option to sign in and out of the building as an added layer of safety. By letting staff know when you are coming and going, we will be more aware if you are gone for an extended period of time and we may be better able identify possible safety concerns related to your absence. Please discuss this option with your advocate and figure out what feel safe for you and your family.
- ❖ Friendly Suggestions:
 - Closely supervise your children, especially when they are playing outdoors.
 - Consider keeping your blinds or curtains closed, especially at night.

- If you see any stranger on the property or any suspicious behavior, please tell staff immediately.
- Make sure you and your children are aware of all exits in your apartment, 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. For example:
 - Don't overload electrical sockets or use appliances with frayed electrical cords.
 - Keep heat vents free of clothing, furniture and other flammable items.
 - Keep exits free of items that may inhibit you from getting out in an emergency.
 - Keep cleaning supplies and other toxic chemicals out of reach of children.
 - Do not leave appliances, such as the stove, on when unattended.
 - Keep small items, such as buttons, small toys, etc. out of reach of young children.

Feel free to speak with staff for tips on childproofing!

Policies for the Family

The following are guidelines for you and your children while you are participating in Cornerstone:

- ❖ Do not leave young children alone. All children under the age of 11 years old be supervised by an adult at all times. Cornerstone follows the laws for child supervision outlined by DC Child and Family Service Agency (CFSA), and your advocate will be happy to review this document with you. In summary, the law states:
 - Children 11 years of age and younger must be supervised by an adult or responsible teenager at all times.
 - Children 13 years of age and older may provide supervision for younger children depending on their maturity level and the preparation provided by the parent or guardian.

- Children ages 12 years of age and older may be left home alone for up to five hours during the day, if they meet the criteria outlined in the CFSA document.
- ❖ If you ask another resident to watch your child(ren), you are encouraged to fill out a “Resident-to-Resident Childcare Agreement” form. This form should be signed by you, the resident providing childcare and your advocate. This form may be helpful in clarifying expectations and obligations. You can get this form from your advocate.

DASH does not require that residents fill out a Resident-to-Resident Childcare Agreement form; however it can serve as documentation showing that you secure child care whenever you leave the building without your child.

- ❖ Try not to force children into getting support or services, and remember to be patient as they go through their healing process.
- ❖ School age children must abide by laws governing school attendance. If you need information about this please ask your advocate.
- ❖ The Cornerstone Playroom operates Monday through Thursday with varying hours that will be posted weekly. If you would like your child(ren) to participate in playtime, you will need to sign a “Playtime Agreement.” Your child must be prepared for Playtime according to the guidelines outlined in the agreement form. You must pick your children up on time. If you are late three times, your child will no longer be allowed to participate in Playroom activities.
- ❖ Please do not send your child to program and activities if he or she is sick. Sick children will not be accepted without a doctor’s note.
- ❖ Do your best to create a violence-free environment on program property and refrain from: physical discipline, spanking, hitting, kicking, excessive yelling, swearing and threatening.

Please be aware that DASH staff, interns, and some contractors, including your advocate, are considered **mandatory reporters** of child abuse and neglect. If the DASH staff, intern, or contractor knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, a report will be made to DC Child and Family Service Agency (CFSA). Some instances that may necessitate a report include unsupervised children or school age who are not enrolled in school.

DASH staff will make every attempt to identify possible problems early and assist families so that reports do not have to be made.

If possible, prior to making the report your advocate will let you know that a report will be made. You will be given the opportunity to make the report yourself. However, if you choose not to or it is not possible to notify you that a report will be made, a report will still be made to DC CFSA.

I have gone over Cornerstone’s family policies, listed above, with my advocate. I understand how these policies will apply to me, my family, and my visitors while I live at Cornerstone, and I understand the possible consequences of violating any of these policies. I understand that DASH staff are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect.

Participant Initial

Date

Advocate Initial

Date

Support Services

- ❖ ***Advocacy and emotional support:*** Your advocate can be a support and resource to you as you work on the goals that you set for yourself. We ask that you meet with your advocate on a regular basis. It is recommended that you meet with your advocate weekly, but you and your advocate should discuss an arrangement that works for both of you. Some of the supports provided in these meetings include:
 - Helping you to clarify your goals;
 - Help you set priorities;
 - Help you recognize your successes;
 - Helping you locate permanent housing;
 - Providing referrals to employment counseling, mental health counseling, legal services, food banks, childcare, and other resources to help you meet your goals; and
 - Parenting support

- ❖ ***Safety planning:*** Your advocate will help you develop a safety plan, or help you refine an existing safety plan according to changes in your situation.

- ❖ ***Counseling and support groups:*** Your advocate and the rest of the Cornerstone staff will also provide emotional support throughout your stay. Some of the counseling and support services offered include:
 - Helping you to process your feelings;
 - Helping you identify a counselor or therapist; and
 - Offering support groups that are not mandatory but may help you connect with other survivors with similar experiences.

- ❖ ***Other resources for fun and recreational activities:***
Based on feedback from residents, we have created a menu of services and activities. If you would like to participate in any of the activities, please inform your advocate.

Children's Services

Just as entering Cornerstone 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. Ultimately, we hope being in

Cornerstone will allow for a calmer, more stable and safer life for your family, but we know the process doesn't happen overnight.

Advocacy and emotional support, for your children: Your advocate is available to support and assist your children through this process of change. Your advocate can meet with you and/or your children to determine what your children's needs are and how we can help. Some of the support includes:

- Counseling or therapy referrals;
- Opportunities to be involved with the Playtime Project;
- Access to the playroom on the 2nd floor to play with your children;
- Developmental assessment referrals;
- Mommy & Me projects; and
- Information on nearby activities and resources for children to play and opportunities for family bonding.

Termination

Our goal is to work out solutions rather than immediately terminating residents. However, there are some situations in which we may ask you to leave Cornerstone. We will make these determinations on a case by case basis. Although there is no set number of issues or warnings that will result in automatic termination, we do ask that you follow these guidelines:

- ❖ *Violence/Threatening Behavior* ~ We are invested in 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.
- ❖ *Illegal Activity* ~ Refrain from engaging in illegal behaviors while on the Cornerstone property and while representing the organization (such as on a job interview). 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 are actively using drugs or alcohol, you can work with your advocate to safety plan around your addiction so that no illegal activity is brought into Cornerstone.**

- ❖ Abandonment of Unit ~ As stated above in the “safety section,” DASH will call your emergency contact and/or law enforcement within approximately 3 to 7 days of an unexplained absence. If we learn that you are safe and have decided to abandon your unit, DASH has discretion to terminate you from Cornerstone. DASH will provide you with a termination notice upon your request detailing the reason for termination. Your belongings will be bagged and stored for 2 weeks (including weekends) from the date of program termination. After that point DASH has the discretion to discard your belongings.

If you do knowingly engage in the actions described here, DASH reserves the right to terminate your participation in Cornerstone and possibly all DASH programs. Again, we hope this will not occur and commit to working with you to prevent it. If termination is necessary, the procedure is as follows:

- ❖ If DASH assesses that a serious safety concern or imminent danger exists, you will be asked to pack your belongings and exit the program immediately. A written notice detailing the reason for the termination will be provided to you if it is possible. Otherwise, the written notice will be mailed to you 15 days after your exit if your whereabouts are known.
- ❖ In the absence of DASH assessing a safety concern or imminent danger, your advocate will inform you of the problem and you will have an opportunity to discuss your actions and collaborate with your advocate to develop a plan to get back on track (re-centering), and it does not mean immediate termination from Cornerstone. However, if the problem persists after completing the three re-centering meetings outlined in the re-centering process, as a final step, DASH has the discretion to consider terminating your residency at Cornerstone. If this is the case, you will be given written and oral notice of your termination 15 days before the effective termination date. Within that time, your advocate will work with you to secure alternative housing. If you disagree with the termination decision, you have a right to file a grievance.
- ❖ Once you are terminated from the Cornerstone program you may no longer receive housing or services from your advocate. However, you are welcome to access other DASH program services unless stated otherwise.

I have gone over Cornerstone’s termination policies, listed above, with my advocate. I understand how these policies will apply to me, my family, and my visitors while I live at Cornerstone, and I understand the possible consequences of violating any of these policies. I understand that violating these policies may result in the termination of my lease.

Participant Initial

Date

Advocate Initial

Date

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 living at Cornerstone and staff, a DASH representative, or regarding specific policies or rules. To ensure fair and expedient handling of resident concerns, DASH utilizes a resident grievance procedure 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 Grievance Procedure if you believe that any Cornerstone housing program policy has been unfairly applied to you, or that you and/or your children have been mistreated by anyone living within a DASH housing program. Grievances should be filed as soon as possible after the concern has been identified.

Procedure:

- ❖ If you have a concern with or complaint about another individual receiving assistance and/or living in a DASH housing program, you are always encouraged to first address it directly with that individual and to attempt to work cooperatively to come to a mutually acceptable solution. You are always welcome to seek the advice and support of your advocate.
 - If communicating directly is unsuccessful, you are encouraged to complete a grievance form, and discuss the situation with your advocate. A meeting by DASH staff will be arranged with all involved parties within 3 days (72-hours).
 - If a satisfactory solution is still not found, the organization's Program Director or Director of Operations will be included to discuss next steps. You may be asked to submit written or audio taped documentation of your concern.

- ❖ If you have a grievance regarding a staff member, a DASH policy, or any other issue, you are encouraged to bring your concern to the immediate attention of your advocate, or her immediate supervisor.
 - If you and the staff person are not able to resolve the issue through discussion or related actions, you will be asked to submit a detailed description and account of your grievance in writing.
 - Your documented grievance will be submitted to your advocate's supervisor, the Program Director.
 - You will receive a formal response within 5 business days (maximum), which may include a plan for subsequent meetings with all parties involved, including the Program Director, Deputy Director, or if necessary the Executive Director.
 - If the response and subsequent actions are not successful or you require further response, you may resubmit your grievance.
 - If the response is final you may appeal within 5 business days (maximum). To appeal you must submit, in writing, your complaint and reason for appeal to the Deputy Director. If the complaint is regarding the Deputy Director the complaint should be submitted to the Executive Director.
 - An appeal meeting will be convened within 10 business days. You are welcome to have a third party present (like an advocate or lawyer); however, if there is a third party present that is not a DASH program staff person the information shared during the appeal meeting may jeopardize the confidentiality of information you provided to the program because not all third parties can protect your confidentiality by law.
 - If the appeal process does not fully resolve the issue, you may seek outside assistance, in the form of mediation or a grievance resolution service. This may result in monetary costs to you. DASH is not responsible for the monetary costs unless DASH deems it necessary to bring in further assistance.
- ❖ All findings and outcomes will be put in writing and placed in a file (but not your case file) and a copy will be given to you.

Exceptions:

- ❖ Grievances submitted by multiple individuals about the same issue will not be accepted. Individuals with common complaints or concerns must submit them separately.
- ❖ Grievances pertaining to a serious safety concern or other situation requiring urgent attention will be dealt with within 24 hours. Responses may not follow the procedures described above.

How & Where to Submit a Participant Grievance

- ❖ Participant Grievance Forms may be given to the Program Director. The Program Director will sign the grievance form to document receipt and give a copy to you.
- ❖ If a participant is in an off-site DASH housing program a completed grievance form may be faxed to DASH at 202-462-3365, Attn: Program Director. A completed grievance form may also be mailed to DASH, PO Box 73186, Washington, DC 20056, Attn: Program Director.

Signatures

We appreciate you signing (or verbally dictating your signature) this document to indicate that you understand the program policies, 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 the first week 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

DASH STAFF CONTACT LIST

Everyone at Cornerstone is here to serve as a resource to you. While you will work most closely with your advocate, you are welcome to talk to any other staff member with questions or concerns as well.

Peg Hacskaylo ~ *Executive Director*

- Location: Cornerstone 111
- Extension: 110

Suzanne Marcus ~ *Deputy Director*

- Location: Cornerstone 109
- Extension: 116

Sharon Lee ~ *Office and Facilities Manager*

- Location: Cornerstone 106
- Extension: 117

Chauncia Johnson ~ *Property Manager, E&G Property Management*

- Location: Cornerstone 1E
- Extension: 1221

Anne Wiseman ~ *Clinical Director*

- Location: Cornerstone B003
- Extension: 119

Bobbi Mason ~ *Cornerstone Director*

- Location: Cornerstone B005
- Extension: 108

Emma Kupferman ~ *Children's Program Director*

- Location: Cornerstone B004
- Extension: 115

Shakeita Boyd-Jones ~ *Community Housing Program Director*

- Location: Lighthouse
- Extension: 202-742-1728

Michelle Linzy ~ *Certified Addictions Specialist*

- Location: Cornerstone B001
- Extension: 109

LaToya Young ~ *Housing Resource and Training Manager*

- Location: Lighthouse
- Extension: 202-742-1728

Afusat Olaifa ~ Resident Advocate

- Location: Cornerstone B027
- Extension: 103

Alison Gurley ~ *Lead Advocate*

- Location: Cornerstone B027
- Extension: 120

Annabeth Roeschley ~ *Resident Advocate*

- Location: Cornerstone B027
- Extension: 122

Connor McFadden ~ *Resident Advocate*

- Location: Cornerstone B027
- Extension: 112

Paul Lipp ~ *Resident Advocate*

- Location: Cornerstone B027
- Extension: 107

Tiffany Harris ~ *Housing Advocate*

- Location: Lighthouse
- Extension: 202-742-1728