

Voices of Shelter Workers

“Finding innovative ways to encourage trust...and keep everyone in harmony! What a challenge! It is a goal I try to meet everyday. Every time we succeed at this, it is a gold star on my heart.”-Shelter Advocate

...on Rules

“It is amazing...the advocate and client bond is so much stronger now that I am not nagging about rules!”-Shelter Advocate

“The rules we do have are taken seriously, because they are about health and safety.”-Shelter Manager

“We have developed a secure building approach rather than keeping our location a secret...now I don’t have to watch women with hands full of children and bags struggling to get to and fro the shelter to get things done. That was such a hardship.”-Shelter Manager

“When I came to work in shelter, I thought I would be doing empowerment work, instead, I feel like I am babysitting.”-Shelter Advocate

“We have resident forums to decide the rules.”-Shelter Advocate

“The challenge to minimize rules is realistic. We have implemented most of them.”-Shelter Manager

“I felt attached to structure and rules as providing safety and stability. Now I realize that I was really trying to control things that are impossible to control and creating so much undue stress for everyone. With or without rules, programs have the same reoccurring challenges. Knowing that some of this is unavoidable and making the best with what we have and not feeling so responsible for every little thing frees us up to do great DV work. Working for permanent solutions has worked much better than having lists of rules.”-Shelter Manager

...on Chores

“Offering residents the chance to come up with a group cleaning plan and work cooperatively and hold each other responsible for shelter cleanliness works better for us.”-Shelter Advocate

“I totally understand the feeling some clients get that they have left one controlling relationship just to get into another. Sometimes I feel more like a rule keeper than an advocate.”-Shelter Advocate

“All of the cleaning we do, it keeps us from our advocacy work. We want to do one on one advocacy and group sessions, but every time we go to the shelter, it’s cleaning.”- Shelter Advocate

“Some advocates want to do room checks to make sure the rooms are clean, but to me this feels like an invasion of privacy.”-Shelter Advocate

...on Change

“It’s hard to get rid of the rules that have been in effect for so long. We are going to review the rules we have at our shelter and re-evaluate them. The hardest part will be getting everyone on the same page. Everyone is so busy.”-Shelter Manager

“There is always a theory and a practice; rules can be written the best way, but enforcing them this is another topic. Nothing will be different, if our spoken language and our behavior stays the same. So for me, any change should be not only on the paper - it should go deeper. Basically, first of all, we need to want to change ourselves.”-Shelter Manager

“I don’t feel that I came to this work very skilled in boundaries, and I had to really work hard to be flexible because my tendency is to become rigid.”-Shelter Advocate

“I was the most systematic person I know. If I can change, anyone can.” -Shelter Advocate

“Change itself is a subject of empowerment”-Advocate

“Taking the time to say ‘Yes, there is a problem’ and admit being part of the problem is a great thing. This is how you can begin to be a part of the solutions.”-Shelter Manager