

How to Become a Trauma-Informed Organization:

A HOUSING PROVIDER'S GUIDE



Preservation of
Affordable Housing



Preservation of
Affordable Housing



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IMPACT

This resource was created by Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) and Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at traumainformedhousing.poah.org

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is intended for a range of audiences, including housing owners, developers, management companies, resident service providers and others. It offers a team-based approach to developing trauma-informed strategies that are relevant to your unique community or organization. It is based on POAH's experience running a similar process with residents, frontline staff and community partners. It is highly adaptable and can be scaled up or down based on your community's size, needs, resources, etc.

This guide includes several resources that are linked throughout (best for digital) and also listed at the end under the "Helpful Tools" section (best for print).

Visit traumainformedhousing.poah.org for additional background resources, training tools and detailed examples of how POAH is putting Trauma-Informed Housing into practice in design, development, operations and organizational culture.

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What is a Trauma-Informed Organization?

A trauma-informed organization is committed to understanding trauma and viewing every aspect of its work through a trauma-informed lens.

Trauma-Informed Housing goes beyond training, it requires real change to policies, procedures and programs that impact residents and staff. Trauma-Informed Housing requires deep collaboration between residents, staff, community partners, organizational leadership and other stakeholders.

Follow this step-by-step guide to learn more.

Why focus on process?

Trauma-Informed Housing sits at the intersection of human-centered design (a strategy for solving problems) and trauma-informed care (an approach to working with people).

Human-centered design:

- Focuses on **empathy** by centering the experience of the people closest to the issues
- Encourages **creativity** and collaboration through team-based learning
- Embraces **failure** as a learning tool
- Embraces **curiosity** and divergence by engage a diversity of perspectives

This means we design with, not for, communities by sharing power with residents and frontline staff. In other words, the process must model what it seeks to achieve.

POAH's Trauma-Informed Principles

Trauma-informed care is a framework that considers the way trauma impacts the brain, body and behaviors, including our beliefs, emotions and relationships. It reframes our perspective on a person, community or situation from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"

At POAH, we embrace these trauma-informed principles:



TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

Are you leading your team or organization toward Trauma-Informed Housing? Here are 7 things to consider as you get started:

1 Assessment: Where are you now?

Take time to identify where your organization is currently.

- Do your own learning. Use the resources in this toolkit and this [Resource List](#) to help you get started.
- Talk to a few stakeholders. Have open-ended conversations to learn where you are now and what your community cares about. Download two sample interview guides:
 - [Landscape Interview Discussion Guide: Residents & Staff](#)
 - [Landscape Interview Discussion Guide: Leadership](#)
- Consider an organizational assessment. A trauma-informed expert like the [Center for Trauma Informed Innovation](#) can conduct an organization-wide assessment. Use this simple guide as inspiration: [Org Assessment Staff Interview](#).

2 Vision

What's your "Why"? Why adopt Trauma-Informed Housing? What is your motivation? What do you hope to achieve? Think of this as your project mission. Here are some examples:

- To advance our organization's equity goals by recognizing and responding to the way residents and communities have historically been impacted by decisions made without their voice or consent.
- To help residents be economically mobile by ensuring that efforts to support their financial wellbeing also support their sense of agency and belonging.
- To retain staff and reduce burnout by developing an organizational culture that supports their agency, belonging, and wellbeing.
- To stabilize properties by reducing resident turnover and improving lease compliance.
- To design more durable, beautiful, and functional spaces that enhance staff and resident experience.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

3 Leadership

Support from your organization's Executive Director or CEO is essential. Build leadership support by identifying how a trauma-informed approach can support your organization's existing priorities. Select a "quarterback" to manage and champion the project. The quarterback should be empowered to make decisions, adept at building support, and familiar with the organization's existing operations.

4 Resources + Incentives

Advancing trauma-informed work can be a relatively low-cost way to drive meaningful change. Here are three things to budget for your project:

- You will need staff and residents to help you build a trauma-informed organization. Honor their labor through payment and give people specific roles. We did so by creating fellowship positions:
 - [Resident Fellowship Invitation](#)
 - [Staff Fellowship Invitation](#)
- Meals & Transportation: Provide meals or gift cards for virtual meetings and transportation passes for in-person meetings.
- Project Funds: Set aside some funds to test new trauma-informed ideas.
- Consultants and partners can help offer expertise, perspective, or just additional implementation support. Read more about our launch partners:
 - [Design Impact](#) (consultant, facilitator)
 - [MASS Design Group](#) (architect, consultant)
 - [The Center for Trauma Informed Innovation at University Health](#) (behavioral health expert, trainer)
 - [Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future](#) (industry expert, convener)
 - [Community Services League](#) (supportive service partner)

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

5 Skills

Trauma-Informed Housing requires an open mind, empathy, and creativity. Here are 4 types of skills that were critical to advancing this process at POAH:

- Strong meeting design & facilitation. Facilitators create space for collaboration, navigate conflict, engage all participants, ask critical questions, develop creative exercises and can spot opportunities for breakthrough.
- Data synthesis. Collect qualitative and quantitative data, identify themes and trends and packaging learning into digestible insights.
- Knowledge of Trauma-Informed Care. POAH partnered with the [Center for Trauma Informed Innovation at University Health](#) to conduct training and offer technical assistance.
- Technical skills and tools: Miro and Mural are collaboration tools, Zoom and Teams allow virtual meetings and translation services.

6 Commitment to Inclusion + equity

Lived experience is a form of expertise. Value resident and staff perspectives as you would value an academic degree or professional certification.

- Collaboration at every stage. Trauma-informed is not an outcome, but a way of doing business. Seek diverse perspectives throughout your process.
- Center the perspectives of those closest to the problem. At POAH this means prioritizing the experience of frontline staff and residents.
- Here are tactical ways to promote inclusion + equity:
 - Form a core team to set your work's direction. Invite frontline staff.
 - Build a collaborative work group with staff at all levels and departments to weigh in on your process and strategies.
 - Modify staff schedules and tasks and/or include compensation so staff have time to participate.
 - Go slow. When staff are physically and emotionally burned out, new projects can be exciting but also exhausting. Take your time.
 - Set norms and expectations. Do all participants have access to the Zoom chat? Does this meeting time work best for everyone? Are we advancing the agenda and leaving space for everyone to participate?
 - Compensate residents for their participation. Compensation recognizes a person's time and expertise as inherently valuable. Sample compensation rates:
 - Membership on a site team: \$200/month
 - Participation in an interview: \$50/interview
 - Offering an idea for consideration: \$15/idea conversation

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

7 Strategy

You will need a plan of action. This toolkit outlines a highly adaptable process for implementing trauma-informed housing in your organization. You can follow the steps in order or revisit steps as needed.

A Team-Based Process for Trauma-Informed Implementation:

Form a Collaborative Team

Build Community

Clarify Your Focus

Learn From Community

Brainstorm Ideas

Test Your Ideas

Pilot What You Learn

Form a
Collaborative
Team

Build
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Clarify Your
Focus

Learn from
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Ideas

Pilot What
You Learn



Form a Collaborative Team

A collaborative team allows stakeholders with diverse experience to work together to drive change. In a Trauma-Informed Housing model, any group that is making decisions about a community should include members of the community, such as residents and frontline staff.

Why It's Important:

Trauma-Informed Housing affects residents and staff. By incorporating diverse perspectives, we can develop a deeper understanding and generate more opportunities for trauma-informed practices in our communities.

Best Practices:

- Value lived experience as a form of expertise. Recognize that the community, whether residents, frontline staff or broader community members, are experts in their own lives. Center their voices.
- Recruit teams that have shared geography. Participants can flex their expertise and apply it to their own backyard.
- Compensate people for their time. Time is valuable and costly. Appreciate people for showing up by compensating them.
- Utilize team-based peer learning. This allows participants to learn, discuss and apply what they are learning about trauma-informed care in a trusted setting.

Helpful Tools:

- [Building A Collaborative Team](#)
- [Resident Fellowship Invitation](#)
- [Sample Meeting Agendas](#)
- [Staff Fellowship Invitation](#)



Build Community

Get to know one another! Identify what your team has in common, including your shared goals. But don't stop there, integrate community building into your entire process.

Why It's Important:

Trauma is deeply personal; healing and resilience are deeply communal. Create trusting relationships to allow space for honesty and transparency.

Best Practices:

- Invest time in building relationships and developing norms, like community agreements or centering practices.
- Slow down. This work involves real people with real lives. At POAH, when staff and residents told us they were burnt out and dealing with real issues we listened, slowed down and extended grace. In return teams felt more comfortable making mistakes and embracing conflict.
- Focus on learning throughout the process. We prioritized changing mindsets, actions and conditions, as opposed to just creating solutions. When we prioritize solutions, we can miss opportunities to understand root causes.
- Give room to heal. We accounted for and responded to our teams when they experienced firsthand and secondary trauma. Deciding to become trauma-informed does not eliminate trauma. In many ways, it increases one's awareness of the pervasiveness and impact of trauma on themselves and those around them.

Helpful Tools:

- [Centering Exercises](#)
- [Sample Community Agreements](#)

Form a
Collaborative
Team

Build
Community

Clarify Your
Focus

Learn from
Community

Brainstorm
Ideas

Test Your
Ideas

Pilot What
You Learn



Clarify Your Focus

POAH developed eight Opportunity Areas for advancing Trauma-Informed Housing. These are policies and practices in housing that are ripe for change. Use this list to spark discussion with your team: What resonates? What is most relevant to our community? What is most urgent? Which Opportunity Areas are a place to start?

Why It's Important:

There are countless ways to implement Trauma-Informed Housing. Clarify your focus to go deep in the areas that matter most to your community.

Opportunity Areas

- 1 Encourage Community Care:** Communities of support help us deal with challenges and support our resilience. When we invest time and resources into community care, we can reduce requests to frontline staff (who are already stretched) and strengthen resident leadership and autonomy.
- 2 Redefine Leadership:** Residents and frontline staff are often caught in a system where they don't have power over decisions that affect them. Despite their expertise, skills and valuable perspectives, they are often disconnected from the entities that make decisions on their behalf. And when we don't have agency or trust, it's easy to slip up.
- 3 Strengthen Workplace Collaboration:** Property Management and Resident Services staff have the same goal: safe, quality places for residents to live. But our roles, responsibilities and even physical surroundings can create tension. When we work on teams with seemingly opposing views, we miss opportunities to collaborate and lessen our workloads. This makes work more stressful and takes time and energy away from serving residents.
- 4 Organizational Support for Burnout:** The housing system places unreasonable expectations on frontline staff to serve residents while also serving funders, regulators and other stakeholders. When we are running on empty tanks, we cannot adequately serve residents, let alone show up with compassion or empathy for others. And too often, avoiding burnout falls on us.

Opportunity Areas *continued*

- 5 Prioritize Healing:** Frontline staff and residents are experiencing trauma inside and outside of their jobs and homes. Recognizing that we all experience trauma is important, but without proper support and resources to address underlying issues, we may continue to inflict harm on one another.
- 6 Address Community Trauma:** Trauma doesn't just stem from inside of housing, but what's going on outside as well – neighborhood violence, gentrification and poverty can all be traumatic to us. And that trauma affects how we interact with each other, how we respond to issues, and even how we see the owner or management company. Housing providers may not be responsible for trauma, but they are institutions that can continue the cycle of trauma, or help disrupt it.
- 7 Communicate with Dignity & Belonging:** Housing can send certain message through space, signage and rules, like "You are welcome. You belong." Or "There's an entire waiting list that could replace you. We don't trust you. This place is not meant for you." Messages that don't fully communicate our dignity or honor us as humans can retraumatize us.
- 8 Design Trauma-Informed Spaces:** The physical environment can impact our attitude, mood, health and well-being. Spaces that are poorly lit or closed off from the surrounding area can trigger past trauma or contribute to stress. Spaces that are warm, bright and flexible can promote a sense of safety and calm.

Helpful Tools:

- [Deeper Dive on the Opportunity Areas](#)
- [Activity: Clarify Your Focus](#)



Learn from Community

Now it's time to learn with empathy. How does the Opportunity Area you're focusing on impact your community? What is working? What needs to change? What "workarounds" has your community developed to navigate the issue or challenge you are exploring?

Why It's Important:

Knowing that an issue or challenge exists is different than understanding why it exists and how it impacts your community. By centering the experience of those directly impacted, we can identify needs, pain points, workarounds, and opportunities for the end result to be truly meaningful and impactful.

Best Practices:

- The community should lead at every stage: designing your learning plan, collecting data, interpreting feedback and making sense of what is learned.
- Trauma-informed care principles are universal, but their implementation is local. Learning from community considers the specific context, location, culture and people.
- Thoughtful engagement builds trust. Too often, decisions are made without the perspective or consent of the communities that are impacted. The process of learning from and with your community can contribute to your result by disrupting systems that have historically stripped communities of their power.

Helpful Tools:

- [Synthesis Discussion Guide](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Ideas](#)
- [Photovoice Activity](#)



Brainstorm Ideas

Utilize creativity and imagination to create a bank of ideas that can respond to the challenges and opportunities you heard from your community. Brainstorming is limitless – start from the perspective that anything is possible.

Why It's Important:

Brainstorming allows us to utilize creativity to solve old problems in new ways. When the people who are closest to the problem (residents and staff) are a part of the brainstorming process, we can generate solutions that outsiders or organization leaders may not have considered.

Best Practices:

- Creativity is hard! There are many types of brainstormers: green light (anything is possible!), yellow light (let's make some tweaks), red light (will this really work?). Embrace all types as necessary and useful.
- Trauma can make it difficult to imagine the future. Get creative with ways to engage your team in future thinking – brainstorm as a group, incorporate music, try improv, use games, look for ways to have fun. Utilize the worksheets in the "Helpful Tools" section for more guidance.
- When brainstorming, stay brainstorming. Don't jump straight to implementation or feasibility just yet. This phase is about imagining what is possible, without limitations.

Helpful Tools:

- ["Yes, And" Worksheet](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Ideas](#)
- [Newspaper of the Future](#)



Test Your Ideas

Use quick, low-cost tests to see if your ideas have merit. We test to learn and we learn by challenging the basic assumptions our ideas are based on.

Why It's Important:

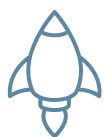
Testing allows us to get closer to root causes. When we test, we learn whether our ideas are worth pursuing and whether they are actually addressing the problem we seek to solve. Testing also allows organizations to manage risk by challenging assumptions. If we allow experimentation and are willing to fail, we are less likely to run with (or invest in) an idea that doesn't have a solid foundation.

Best Practices:

- Ideas are based on assumptions. Even if we collect great feedback, we may still brainstorm a solution that does not match what the community wants or needs. Testing allows us to challenge the assumptions our ideas are based on.
- Bring a learner's mindset, not an expert mindset. If we want to get closer to root causes, a learner's mindset allows us to be flexible, open-minded and adapt when things don't go as planned.
- Testing is good business practice. A company doesn't take a product to market without getting feedback from their users – why should housing be any different? Testing allows us to learn before investing our precious resources in something that may not work as intended.

Helpful Tools:

- [Prototype Exercise Guide](#)



Pilot What You Learn

Now that you’ve tested a version of your idea, it’s time to flesh it out. Pilots explore feasibility, sustainability and the business case that can lead to widespread adoption. While prototypes test a scaled down version of an idea, pilots focus on how the idea can be sustained.

Why It’s Important:

A pilot can help us understand if our idea will have the intended impact. Trauma-informed pilots can consider the impact an idea has on residents, frontline staff and the business model.

Best Practices:

- Take it step-by-step. While it can be tempting to move full steam ahead, piloting requires thoughtful iteration. Breaking an idea down into smaller steps can help identify what’s working and what could be changed.
- Be willing to pivot. Successful tests don’t always translate to successful pilots. Be open to change.
- Assumptions linger. Continue to question what solutions are resting on assumptions. Continue to challenge assumptions through testing and iteration.
- Model trauma-informed leadership through coaching, honest feedback and celebration. Acknowledge when an idea isn’t working. Offer guidance and coaching to your team on how to change. Celebrate wins and learnings as equally useful.
- Even if an idea “works” it may not address the root cause or solve the core problem. For example, a staff wellness day may be a welcome relief, but it does not address the underlying issue that staff feel overworked and under resourced. Keep asking for feedback from your primary user – in our case, residents and frontline staff.

Helpful Tools:

- [Case Study: Staff Wellbeing](#)
- [Case Study: Mind/Body Wellness](#)
- [Case Study: Residents Lead](#)
- [Case Study: Staff Choice](#)

Case Studies

- ▶ Staff Wellbeing
- ▶ Mind/Body Wellness
- ▶ Residents Lead
- ▶ Staff Choice
- ▶ Welcome Home



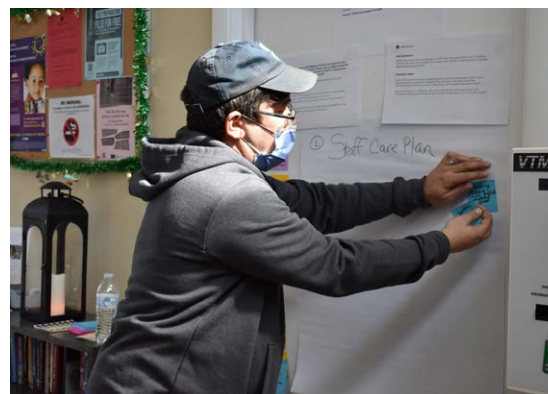
CASE STUDY:

Staff Wellbeing

Challenge	Staff felt burnt out and overwhelmed
Idea	Healing days to incentivize self-care and normalize mental health
Prototype	Staff “Wellness Day” with free self-care activities
Pilot	Regular check-ins with supervisors so staff feel supported and seen

A team of frontline staff was struggling with burnout. They loved their jobs and worked well together, but often felt overwhelmed by the amount of work they were responsible for. They also recognized that their burnout was being passed on to residents – when they aren’t able to take care of themselves or manage their workload in a healthy way, they aren’t able to show up with compassion for residents.

The answer, they brainstormed, was to encourage staff to be well at work. If self-care was accessible and sponsored by POAH, they thought, it would improve staff wellbeing at work. They developed a prototype to test an in-office “mental health day.” With leadership’s support, they closed the office and offered various self-care activities for staff to choose from.



POAH staff brainstorm ways to promote staff well-being at work.

Many staff took advantage of and appreciated the mental health day. They enjoyed the activities and even got lunch with their coworkers with their remaining time off. But while staff appreciated things like free massages and pedicures, they admitted it felt like a band-aid. Mental health days were nice, but they didn’t address the root cause. Staff said they often felt like their leadership didn’t value their ideas or concerns, and that their supervisors were rarely in tune with their frustrations. Supervisors often worked offsite and, in some cases, from a different state. Check-ins were infrequent and everyone had too much on their plate.

The key learning was also important for the prototype team. While they were enthusiastic about self-care – and in need of it themselves - they had to accept that to get closer to the root cause they had to address a different problem. Building off the mental health day prototype, the team developed a

KEY LEARNING

Supporting employee self-care is essential, but it is not a substitute for addressing the root causes of burnout. POAH could offer staff all the wellness benefits they wanted, but without infrastructure and support from leadership, the efforts were only band-aids.

pilot to incentivize more regular supervisor interactions and measure the impact on staff experience. The pilot used games to build habits, inspiration for check-in topics to encourage richer conversation and reminders to offer praise and celebrate small wins together.

Going forward, POAH is looking to support staff wellbeing on three levels:

- 1 Peer-to-peer: Creating spaces for peers to share ideas, challenges and self-care practices.
- 2 Supervisor Support: Training and coaching staff on trauma-informed supervision.
- 3 Organizational Support: Continued investment in employee assistance programs, new secondary trauma-responses for staff and streamlining or centralizing functions to reduce burdens on frontline staff.

CASE STUDY:

Mind/Body Wellness

Challenge	Where cannabis is legal, residents of federally assisted housing are still prohibiting from benefiting from its sale or consumption
Idea	Host a midweek meditation series to build a community that supports mind/body wellness
Prototype	30-minute meditation sessions once/week
Pilot	Trauma-informed wellness programs that incorporate movement, meditation and community building

Staff and residents recognize the inequity in prohibiting cannabis consumption at Flat 9 in Boston, MA and other HUD assisted properties where cannabis is legal. Many of the communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of cannabis are prohibited from benefiting in the legal sale or consumption of it. Residents and staff wanted to change this. They brainstormed a range of ideas for a new approach to cannabis consumption and imagined a revolutionary new wellness space called The Green House.

The Green House would be a holistic response to cannabis legalization, including:

- **Community Garden:** A rooftop garden and farmers' market that would offer a range of produce
- **Health and Wellness:** Meditation in the garden, connections to behavioral health and social services
- **Education:** Workshops and classes on growing cannabis, types of cannabis and uses
- **Community Organizing:** Training and advocacy workshops on cannabis justice
- **Social Connection:** After-hours social events, concerts

In the process of envisioning The Green House, the team realized that the connection between mind and body was at the root of their idea. To learn whether it had legs, they needed to understand whether residents were even interested in engaging in mind/body wellness sponsored by property management. To test this idea, they hosted a weekly meditation space in the property's community room. Each week they hosted a meditation, debriefed as a group and asked for feedback on the session.

Physical health is often a priority for resident services providers, through activities like preventative health workshops, mobile health vans or support for finding health insurance. This work is essential, but often overlooks the reality that our physical health is directly connected to our mental, emotional and spiritual health.

As a result of the midweek wellness prototype, the team sought

out a trauma-informed yoga instructor, trauma-informed nutrition classes and other mind/body wellness activities that support individual resilience and build a community of care.

Going forward, POAH is integrating mind/body wellness into staff meetings and trainings, such as through breathing and centering exercises and education on the connection between brain and body. Resident services staff will then be encouraged to build relationships with providers in their area who offer programs rooted in mind/body connection.

KEY LEARNING

As a result of the feedback, the team realized that physical movement was more important to resident's mental wellness than the idea of pursuing cannabis justice. **Even though their original idea was rooted in equity, they needed to prioritize the perspective and experience of the community.** They also learned that residents were vocal and passionate about mind and body health in tandem.

CASE STUDY:

Residents Lead

Challenge	Residents rarely have choice or power over decisions that impact them
Idea	Create a multi-generational team of resident leaders who advocate to POAH staff and other affordable housing stakeholders
Prototype	Host a pop-up feedback session on an upcoming change to the Brandy Hill property
Pilot	Launch local and national leadership programs, including a resident-to-resident leadership program, state and local advocacy program and Resident Advisory Board

Residents in affordable rental housing rarely have power over decisions that impact them - such as housing rules and policies or changes to the landscape or interiors of their home. A team of residents and staff wanted to change this. They developed an idea for a new resident council that would not just influence decisions at their apartment community but would also advocate to elected officials and affordable housing stakeholders.

The team at Brandy Hill Apartments realized they needed to understand whether residents felt safe and empowered to advocate for what they want, and whether they felt comfortable sharing those opinions with their neighbors. To test their idea, the team decided to host a pop-up feedback session on a topic that would have immediate impact: the redesign and potential relocation of the property's basketball court. Their pop-up was a big success. Residents of all ages came out to weigh-in, share stories of the court and talk about what it means to them. POAH staff had felt the court needed to be repaired and moved to another location on property. But during the pop-up the staff learned that its location was one of the most important features. As a result, they changed their renovation plans and set out to look for more ways for residents to take on leadership roles, such as by leading community programs.



Residents and staff at Brandy Hill host a pop-up feedback session about an upcoming renovation.

Building on the pop-up prototype, staff and residents worked together to brainstorm new ways for residents to lead in their community. Residents would host community events like movie-nights or cookouts and use the events to recruit new resident leaders. These residents would then participate in workshops to learn how to run their own community building programs – for residents, by residents.

KEY LEARNING

Residents have a desire to lead but are rarely invited to take a meaningful role in issues that matter to them.
POAH needed to create more opportunities for resident feedback that are relevant and actionable.

The experience also influenced POAH staff outside of Brandy Hill. As a national owner/operator of affordable rental housing, POAH often advocates on federal policy issues. However, many policy issues that impact residents happen at the state and local level. So POAH launched a state and local advocacy effort focused on getting resident input and engagement closer to home.

In addition, POAH also launched a national Resident Advisory Board comprised of resident leaders from across its portfolio. The Resident Advisory Board meets directly with POAH leadership, learns about strategic initiatives and weighs in issues that directly impact residents. Examples include things like improvements to the annual lease renewal process, how to improve communication between residents and site staff or ways to strengthen a program that compensates residents for their contributions to their community.

CASE STUDY:

Staff Choice

Challenge	Staff struggled to manage work and life on a set in-person schedule; residents wanted more staff presence on-site
Idea	Allow staff to choose their own schedule between 7a-7p, 7 days/week
Prototype	Test these “flex schedules” for 30 days
Pilot	Phase in “choice schedules” across POAH’s portfolio

Workplace flexibility had become the norm for many corporate support staff who were able to work hybrid schedules, choosing days they worked from home or from the office. Yet these same flexibilities weren’t extended to frontline staff, many of whom had continued showing up to their property in person throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, residents across POAH properties shared their feelings that staff presence on-site often made them feel safer and more comfortable. They wanted more staff time on-site, not less.

One POAH staff suggested that choice over their daily work schedule would help staff feel more empowered and practice work/life balance. Moreover, if the daily work hours were more flexible, including mornings, evenings and weekends, it may also increase the staff presence that residents found so valuable. To test the idea, POAH offered frontline staff in multiple properties the opportunity to choose a new weekly work schedule. The test schedule had parameters (work days were limited to 10 hours, offices needed sufficient open hours for residents) but also gave teams the opportunity to work together to find a schedule that worked best for them.

After 30 days, staff completed a survey to assess how the new schedule impacted their work experience. Over 65% of participants found they were less stressed at work as a result. More than 70% of participants wanted to maintain their new schedule, while some chose to go back to their original schedule.



POAH staff worked as a team to develop a daily work schedule that would serve residents and allow flexibility for staff.

KEY LEARNING

At the core of the idea was the notion of choice. **If staff had more choice in their work experience, such as by choosing a work schedule, they could feel more empowered and less stressed at work.** Working together to design a schedule created an opportunity for shared power, rather than leaving power in the hands of a few leaders such as one property manager or supervisor.

The flexibility also gave staff an opportunity to better manage their work and life responsibilities. “Typically my weekends are so busy doing tasks/errands I have no time for during the week.” said one staff person, “The flex schedule allowed me extra days...allowing me to have a “down” day to just relax...Being at the office later enabled me to schedule appointments to accommodate my residents who needed appointments later in the day.”

As a result of the prototype, POAH is piloting a phased-in approach to staff choice over schedules – including “core” work hours and flexible work hours that would meet both resident, staff and property goals. The pilot will monitor the impact of choice schedules on staff wellbeing and performance and assess the impact on resident experience.

CASE STUDY:

Welcome Home

Challenge	Housing rules and lease information is confusing, overwhelming, and difficult to understand
Idea	Orientation to welcome new residents, explain rules, and meet staff
Prototype	90-minute mock orientation
Pilot	Welcome video, simplified handouts, and a 15-minute one-on-one version of orientation

Both residents and staff said that moving into POAH was a stressful experience. Residents felt bombarded with paperwork. Critical information, like house rules and how to renew your lease, were buried under jargon and only seemed to emphasize what you can't do, not what you can do. Residents often left feeling confused, overwhelmed, and unwelcome. In some cases, residents would wind up with a lease violation weeks later for something they hadn't even realized was prohibited.

Teams across POAH wanted to introduce a resident orientation that residents could leave feeling excited and welcome. They also hoped changing how POAH communicated from the very beginning could help lower residents' stress, improve their experience at POAH, and even reduce lease violations down the road.

One team of staff and residents tested a mock orientation with a small group of residents. Neighbors were treated to welcome baskets and dinner. During the 90-minute orientation, they met staff from maintenance, property management, and resident services. They played a "Family Feud"-style game to learn about common lease violations. They left with a list of resources in their neighborhood, a list of important contacts, and most importantly, more confidence, relationships, and information. One resident said, "This was fun. New resident orientation makes feel like the rent office cares."

Staff from across POAH teamed up to turn this one-time orientation into "Welcome Home," a set of tools and resources that any POAH property could introduce to new and returning residents. "Welcome Home" includes handouts, videos (created by residents!), and a revamped orientation that breaks down critical information in simple, compassionate, and inclusive ways. The handouts helped distill critical information in an easy-to-read

format. Residents could use the video to learn more about POAH staff and the kinds of help they offer. What started as an experiment in communicating with dignity and belonging transformed into a set of guiding principles that teams could apply to multiple interactions with residents.

KEY LEARNING

Affordable housing rules and policies are important – and often high stakes. If residents slip up, they may end up with a lease violation or worse, at risk of losing their housing. Staff knew this but felt the best solution was to provide as much information up front as possible. This often meant that the most critical issues (reporting a change in your income, certain work orders, guest policies) often went unnoticed.

Staff learned that they needed to break complex rules down into their simple parts and communicate them in a warm, fun and compassionate way.

Helpful Resources





POAH's Trauma-Informed Principles

Trauma-informed care is a framework that considers the way trauma impacts the brain, body and behaviors, including our beliefs, emotions and relationships. It reframes our perspective on a person, community or situation from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

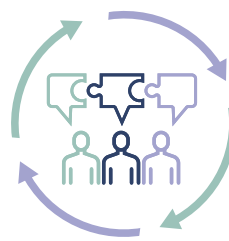
At POAH, we embrace these trauma-informed principles:



**Safety
& Trust**



**Choice
& Empowerment**



**Community
& Collaboration**



**Beauty
& Joy**



Safety & Trust

Staff and residents feel physically and psychologically safe in the built environment and interpersonal interactions. Trust is developed by building genuine relationships and embracing transparency in operations and decision making.

Examples:

- Light-filled stairwells help residents feel safe traveling to and from their apartments.
- After a critical incident on or adjacent to a property, Property Management swiftly notifies residents. They distribute essential information, the public safety response and resources in a location and format that residents can easily access.
- A leasing office welcomes new residents by sending them a video featuring staff, neighbors, and company leadership.



Choice & Empowerment

Staff and residents have agency, representation, and choice in their work and community. POAH recognizes the way residents and communities have, historically, been impacted by decisions made without their voice or consent. Individual and community strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon.

Examples:

- Before a property decides to renovate its rundown basketball court, staff invite residents to weigh in on the proposed changes.
- Residents are invited to a participatory budgeting workshop while their building is under renovation to learn about the projects financing and weigh in on the direction and scope.
- Housing staff can choose flexible weekly work schedules that meet their performance goals while accommodating family commitments.



Community & Collaboration

Collaboration minimizes power differences between leadership, staff and residents, and looks for ways to share in decision-making. Positive relationships support resilience and healing. Everyone in the organization plays a role in being trauma-informed.

Examples:

- Residents lead workshops to teach their neighbors how to run their own community events.
- Before conducting an annual survey of all residents, staff can choose whether to administer the survey in a 2 month "sprint" or to spread the survey out over the course of the year.
- A regional portfolio builds a "flex team" of Property Management, Maintenance and Resident Services staff that travels to short-staffed properties to fill in and train new staff.



Beauty & Joy

Resilience and healing happen in physical, social and cultural environments that evoke hope and imagination. POAH staff and residents are encouraged to practice self-care and supported in practicing community-care. The built environment considers how physical spaces can support rest and connection and celebrate the history and strengths of the community.

Examples:

- Interior common spaces feature art by local artists that represent the neighborhoods history and cultural fabric.
- A property hosts a weekly mindfulness class to encourage residents to take care of their body and spirit.
- Staff host and participate in peer circles where they can discuss challenges, share ideas, and be in community with one another.

Trauma-Informed Housing is not the same thing as trauma treatment. Any of us can be trauma informed, anywhere, with anyone. At POAH, we understand that our job is not to diagnose or disclose trauma, but to recognize that past experiences can influence how we show up in the present moment.



TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:
traumainformedhousing.poah.org



Resource List: Trauma-Informed Care and Housing

About This Tool

This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

Use this list of resources to kick-start your journey of trauma-awareness. This list is not exhaustive, but simply a place to start. Read, watch, share!

Understanding Trauma

- [How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime](#) (video) / Dr. Nadine Burke Harris
- [Three Realms of ACES](#) (graphic) / ACESconnection.com
- [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) (website) / Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Adverse Childhood Experiences impact lifelong health and opportunities](#) (website) / Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Trauma-Informed Care

- [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#) (report) / SAMHSA
- [Building resilient and trauma-informed communities](#) (report and case studies) / SAMHSA
- [Orientation to trauma-informed care](#) (video) / Center for Trauma Informed Innovation, University Health
- [Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center](#) (website, case studies) / Center for Health Care Strategies

Trauma-Informed Care + Affordable Rental Housing

- [TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITY BUILDING: The Evolution of a Community Engagement Model in a Trauma Impacted Neighborhood](#) (report) / Bridge Housing
- [Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement](#) (report) / Urban Institute, Bridge Housing
- [Trauma-Informed Community Building: A Model for Strengthening Community in Trauma Affected Neighborhoods](#) (report) / Bridge Housing
- [Widening Our Health Lens: Incorporating Trauma-Informed Practice into Affordable Housing](#) (article) / Mercy Housing

Trauma-Informed Building Design

- [Designing for Healing, Dignity and Joy](#) (report) / Shopworks Architecture
- [Architectural Principles in the Service of Trauma Informed Design](#) (report) / Shopworks Architecture
- [Trauma Informed Design Process](#) (report) / Shopworks Architecture

Self-Care Tools for Practitioners

- [Culture of Caring: Compendium of Self-Care Tools and Workforce Support Principles for Front-Line Staff in Service-Enriched Housing](#) (report) / Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future
- [Virtual Room of Refuge](#) (website) / Center for Trauma Informed Innovation, University Health

Landscape Interview Discussion Guide: Leadership



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

- Better understand each site's culture and current capacity to take on this work.
- Learn about deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and emotional connections in the organization that may help or hinder this work.
- Unpack what is sticky from the introduction or kickoff event. Identify where more clarity is needed.

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Practice transparency:** Explain to the interviewee how this information will be used and what measures are in place to protect their privacy.
- **Offer choice:** Offer the interviewee choice on the interview time, location, format (virtual/in-person, camera on/off), wherever possible.
- **Give room:** If difficult feedback or painful emotions arise in the interview, allow room for expression. Avoid minimizing the experience or proposing solutions that may bypass it.

INTRODUCTION (5 min)

Background

- Introduce yourself and the organization(s) you represent, including roles, mission, and any other background you think may be relevant about who you are.
- Introduce participants to the goals of your broader effort, how staff are involved in that effort, and how the current exercise relates to that effort.
 - For example, “this is part of a broader effort within the organization to work with staff to explore how we might reimagine more compassionate property management and resident services practices. We’re having this conversation today to help us all understand the culture at this property, and explore some of the assumptions, beliefs, and emotional connections related to this work.”

Framing the Discussion

- We ask that you **speak from your own experience**, but also think about your community-at-large.
 - Community can be your family, neighborhood, racial group, city, property staff, etc.
- **We may not all agree, that’s ok.** We want various perspectives.
- **There are no right or wrong answers.** Speak your truth.
- **Another important thing to note:** We are hosting this conversation because we want you to be open and honest. You won’t hurt our feelings. We are here to learn from you.
- **How will this information be used?**
 - What’s said here stays here, what’s learned here leaves here.
 - We will share what we learn, but we won’t share names or anything like that outside of this conversation. We’ll share what we learn from this conversation (and other conversations like this) to help us **understand how best to approach this work and create more compassionate experiences for our staff and residents.**
 - We want to know more about what makes your site and your team unique.
- If there is a consent form, be sure they have filled it out.

INTERVIEW (50 min)

Warm-up (5 min)

- Share your name.
- How long have you been working with the organization? Have you changed roles?
- Why did you choose to work here?
- Tell me about your role. What are some of the responsibilities you have? Do you manage any people?

Site Kickoff Debrief (10 min)

A few weeks ago, we gathered teams from around the country to kick this project off. During that time, we introduced trauma-informed care and the principles that will guide our project (safety, choice, trustworthiness, collaboration, and empowerment). We also talked about what this process is going to be like - engage the community, generate new ideas, test these ideas. (Note: If the interviewee did not attend the kickoff, or the kickoff has not been held yet, this is a good time to introduce basic information about trauma-informed care and the project.)

- Were you able to attend the kickoff?
- Is anything sticking with you from the kickoff?
- Do you have any unanswered questions? (Note: we might not be able to answer them here, but we can follow up)

Project Understanding and Assumptions (15 min)

We want to understand how you are thinking about this project, the trauma-informed approach and where you see initial opportunities for the staff, residents, and buildings.

- Prior to this project, had you ever heard the language **trauma-informed approaches**?
- What do you think about when you hear the phrase **trauma-informed care**?
- When you think about this project, where do you think the organization has an opportunity to be more trauma-informed?
 - Physical buildings
 - Property management
 - Resident Services

Getting to Know the Site (10 min)

We would like to know more about your site, the staff, and the properties.

- When you think about staff and residents, what do you celebrate?
 - What makes this group uniquely positioned to tackle this project?
- When you think about staff and residents, where do you think the greatest challenge exists in transforming...
 - Physical buildings?
 - Property management?
 - Resident Services?

Participation (10 min)

We would love to know more about how you think we can best leverage your position and perspective. We also want to understand what might be barriers for the staff in fully participating

- What is your current understanding of how you will be engaged in this work?
- When you think about the roles and responsibilities of the staff and the demands of this project, what will be the biggest barriers to participation?
 - How can we support the full participation of the team?
- Is there anything I didn't ask that I need to know?

THANK YOU!



Landscape Interview Discussion Guide: Residents + Staff



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

- Better understand each site or community's culture and current capacity to take on this work
- Learn about deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and emotional connections in the organization that may help or hinder this work.
- Unpack what is sticky from the introduction or kickoff event. Identify where more clarity is needed.

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Practice transparency:** Explain to the interviewee how this information will be used and what measures are in place to protect their privacy.
- **Offer choice:** Offer the interviewee choice on the interview time, location, format (virtual/in-person, camera on/off), wherever possible.
- **Give room:** If difficult feedback or painful emotions arise in the interview, allow room for expression. Avoid minimizing the experience or proposing solutions that may bypass it.

INTRODUCTION (5 min)

Background

- Introduce yourself and the organization(s) you represent, including roles, mission, and any other background you think may be relevant about who you are.
- Introduce participants to the goals of your broader effort, how residents and staff are involved in that effort, and how the current exercise relates to that effort.
 - For example, “this is part of a broader effort within the organization to work with staff and residents to explore who we might reimagine more compassionate property management and resident services practices. We’re having this conversation today to help us all understand the culture at this property, and explore some of the assumptions, beliefs, and emotional connections related to this work.”

Framing the Discussion

- We ask that you **speak from your own experience**, but also think about your community-at-large.
 - Community can be your family, neighborhood, racial group, city, property staff, etc.
- **We may not all agree, that’s ok.** We want various perspectives.
- **There are no right or wrong answers.** Speak your truth.
- **Another important thing to note:** We are hosting this conversation because we want you to be open and honest. You won’t hurt our feelings. We are here to learn from you.
- **How will this information be used?**
 - What’s said here stays here, what’s learned here leaves here.
 - We will share what we learn, but we won’t share names or anything like that outside of this conversation. We’ll share what we learn from this conversation (and other conversations like this) to help us **understand how best to approach this work and create more compassionate experiences for our staff and residents.**
 - We want to know more about what makes your site and your team unique.
- If there is a consent form, be sure they have filled it out.

INTERVIEW (50 min)

Warm-up (5 min)

- Share your name.
- How long have you been working/living at this property or another of our properties? If staff, have you changed roles in the organization?
- Why did you choose to work/live here?
- If staff, tell me about your role. What are some of the responsibilities you have? Do you manage any people?
- If resident, tell me more about your experience at this property. How long have you been here? What motivated you to join the project?

Site Kickoff Debrief (10 min)

A few weeks ago, we gathered teams from around the country to kick this project off. During that time, we introduced trauma-informed care and the principles that will guide our project (safety, choice, trustworthiness, collaboration, and empowerment). We also talked about what this process is going to be like - engage the community, generate new ideas, test these ideas. (Note: If the interviewee did not attend the kickoff, or the kickoff has not been held yet, this is a good time to introduce basic information about trauma-informed care and the project.)

- Were you able to attend the kickoff?
- Is anything sticking with you from the kickoff?
- Do you have any unanswered questions? (Note: we might not be able to answer them here, but we can follow up)

Project Understanding, Assumptions and Role (15 min)

We want to understand how you are thinking about this project, the trauma-informed approach, and learn a bit more about how you see your role playing a part in this project.

- Prior to this project, had you ever heard the language **trauma-informed approaches**?
- What do you think about when you hear the phrase, **trauma-informed care**?
- How are you making sense of this connection between being trauma-informed and your responsibilities and day-to-day?
- Property managers/maintenance: When you think about your day, what is the most challenging part for you?
 - Tell me a story.
 - How do you work through those challenges? *Probe: What people support you? What workaround do you use?*

Getting to Know the Site (10 min)

We would like to know more about your site, the staff, and the properties.

- When you think about the community, where do you think we have an opportunity to be more trauma-informed or compassionate? *Probe on three areas, encourage storytelling.*
 - Physical buildings
 - Property management
 - Resident Services
- This project is probably different for everyone involved - residents and staff coming together to problem solve.
 - When you think about the staff and residents working together, where do you think the greatest challenge exists? What hurdles might we face?
 - Are there any relationship dynamics we should know about?
- When you think about the staff and residents, what do you celebrate?
 - What makes this group uniquely positioned to tackle this project?

Participation (10 min)

We would love to know more about how you think we can best leverage your position and perspective. We also want to understand what might be barriers for the staff in fully participating.

- What is your current understanding of how you will be engaged in this work?
- When you think about the roles and responsibilities of the staff and the demands of this project, what will be the biggest barriers to participation?
 - How can we support the full participation of the team?
- Is there anything I didn't ask that I need to know?

THANK YOU!



Trauma-Informed Care Organizational Assessment: Staff Interview Guide



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with University Health’s Center for Trauma-Informed Innovation as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH’s work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization’s efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH’s Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

- Identify strengths that already align with trauma-informed practices
- Identify early recommendations for implementation of trauma-informed practices
- Surface insights into the broader organization culture that may impact the work of the site team

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Practice transparency:** Explain to the interviewee how this information will be used and what measures are in place to protect their privacy.
- **Offer choice:** Offer the interviewee choice on the interview time, location, format (virtual/in-person, camera on/off), wherever possible.
- **Give room:** If difficult feedback or painful emotions arise in the interview, allow room for expression. Avoid minimizing the experience or proposing solutions that may bypass it.

INTRODUCTION (5 min)

Background

- Introduce yourself and the organization(s) you represent, including roles, mission, and any other background you think may be relevant about who you are.
- Introduce participants to the goals of your broader effort, how staff are involved in that effort, and how the current exercise relates to that effort.
 - For example, “this is part of a broader effort within the organization to work with staff to explore how we might reimagine more compassionate property management and resident services practices. We’re having this conversation today to help us all understand the culture at this property, and explore some of the assumptions, beliefs, and emotional connections related to this work.”

Framing the Discussion

- We ask that you **speak from your own experience**, but also think about your community-at-large.
 - Community can be your family, neighborhood, racial group, city, property staff, etc.
- **We may not all agree, that’s ok.** We want various perspectives.
- **There are no right or wrong answers.** Speak your truth.
- **Another important thing to note:** We are hosting this conversation because we want you to be open and honest. You won’t hurt our feelings. We are here to learn from you.
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 - We want to know more about what makes your site and your team unique.
- If there is a consent form, be sure they have filled it out.

INTERVIEW (50 min)

Warm-up (5 min)

- Share your name.
- How long have you been working at this property or another one of the organization’s properties? Have you changed roles within the organization?
- Why did you choose to work here?
- Tell me about your role. What are some of the responsibilities you have? Do you manage any people?

Understanding the Organization's Strengths (10 min)

- We want to know a little bit more about the organization and your experience here. What do you like best about working here?
- What does your organization do really well?
- How would you describe the residents who live in the communities served by your organization?

Presentation of the Principles of Trauma Informed Care

Share the principles of trauma-informed care with the interviewee. Offer 3-5 minutes for the interviewee to read the principles on their own and ask any questions.

- When you look at these principles, what resonates with you as important or relevant to your organization? Why?
- What doesn't make sense to you or doesn't seem relevant to your organization? Why?
- When you think about working here, what gets in the way of being able to carry out these principles?

Staff Check-in

Ask the interviewee to consider the wellbeing of the staff they supervise.

- How are your staff doing at this moment in time? Do you have any concerns about their wellbeing? Can you give a specific example?
- What types of organizational self-care strategies do you have in place? Where can staff go when they are having a difficult time or need support?

Lastly, do you have any questions for us/me?

THANK YOU!



The Challenge

We know that stable, affordable housing helps us stay healthy and safe. But we also know that when life hits us with intense, overwhelming experiences, we are more likely to bounce back when we have support, compassionate care, and healthy ways to cope.

Unfortunately, affordable housing is often focused on compliance and managing risk. This approach can send messages to residents that they can't be trusted, and frustrate staff who have limited power to help. As a result, rental models like this can create adversity for residents, rather than reduce it.

What would it look like if affordable housing centered on **compassionate care**? How would that change the way we work with residents, manage properties, and design buildings?

About This Project

Resilient Communities is a two-year project with POAH and Design Impact. POAH residents and staff from four different cities will work together to learn how compassionate care can **reduce adversity and harm and promote resilience at POAH**.

Teams will spend two years learning from each other and testing new models to:

- Improve resident services, property management, and physical design;
- Increase residents' and staff well being and satisfaction;
- Increase interest in trauma-informed approaches in the affordable housing field

POAH Site Team Members

Each site team includes **5-6 POAH staff and residents**. Team members will use their experiences, knowledge, gifts, and perspective to guide this project and collaborate with other staff and residents.

Time Commitment:

- **60-75 hours**
- Approximately **6-7 hours** per month



Responsibilities

- Attend regular virtual meetings and workshops
- Conduct interviews and research with POAH residents and staff
- Collaborate with other residents and staff
- Learn with and from teams from other cities



Staff Benefits


- Additional temp or consulting services to reduce your workload
- Optional PTO or annual bonus
- Monthly training and workshops
- Coaching and self-reflection prompts
- Networking with nonprofit and community leaders
- Recognition in project-related reports and research



Contact

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POAH Resilient Communities Timeline

	<p>SITE TEAM KICKOFF</p> <p>Build shared understanding and vision for this project. Identify individual and team commitment and strengths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Session 1 Building the Team Session 2 Rooting in Trauma-Informed Practice 	March
<p>PHASE</p> <p>1</p>	<p>DISCOVER</p> <p>Learn community engagement techniques and listen to staff and residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #1 Learning from the Team Workshop #2 Community Engagement Training & Practice 	April - May
<p>PHASE</p> <p>2</p>	<p>MAKE SENSE</p> <p>Share what we heard through community engagement and decide what our teams should focus on changing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #3 Share Learnings Workshop #4 Determining Focus 	June - September
<p>PHASE</p> <p>3</p>	<p>BRAINSTORM</p> <p>Generate ideas to transform resident services, property management and physical space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #5 Brainstorm Workshop #6 Identifying Top Ideas 	October - January
<p>PHASE</p> <p>4</p>	<p>PROTOTYPING</p> <p>Learn ways to test ideas that are quick and inexpensive. Run those tests to understand how they could or could not work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #7 & #8 Testing Workshop #9 & #10 Pivot & Test Again 	February - May
<p>PHASE</p> <p>5</p>	<p>PILOT</p> <p>Prepare long term strategies for our ideas and tell our story to others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #11 Workshop #12 	June - October



The Challenge

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About This Project

Resilient Communities is a two-year project with POAH and Design Impact. POAH residents and staff from four different cities will work together to learn how compassionate care can reduce adversity and harm and promote resilience at POAH.

Resilient Communities Fellowship

The **Resilient Communities Fellowship** is a 12-18 month leadership program for POAH residents. The Resilient Communities Fellow will work on a team with four or five POAH staff and residents. Fellows are critical members of the Resilient Communities site team who will use their experiences, knowledge, gifts, and perspective to design and test new approaches to affordable housing.

The Fellowship is for...

- POAH residents at least 18 years of age
- Compassionate connectors who know and care about the community you live in
- Changemakers who want to reimagine more compassionate housing for all
- Collaborative, dependable team players

Program Structure

Resilient Communities is a two-year project with POAH and Design Impact. POAH residents and staff from four different cities will work together to learn how compassionate care can reduce adversity and harm and promote resilience at POAH.

Leadership Training

At least once a month, teams will attend virtual workshops and meetings to check in, learn from each other, and develop skills and knowledge to be community leaders. Topics include trauma-informed care, community engagement, and human-centered design.

Community Engagement

Resilient Communities Fellows will use community conversations and creative techniques to learn from POAH residents and staff about the strengths and resources they utilize to overcome major stresses and challenges.

Experiential Learning

You'll learn from teams across the countries as you design and test new models to:

- Improve resident services, property management, and physical design;
- Increase residents' well being and satisfaction;
- Increase interest in trauma-informed approaches in the affordable housing field



Time Commitment

- **60-75 hours** (12-18 months)
- Approximately **6-7 hours** per month



Program Benefits


- Monthly stipend for training and community engagement (*Note: This will not impact your rent*)
- Stipends for meals, transportation and childcare
- Hands-on community work
- Monthly training and workshops
- Coaching and self-reflection prompts
- Networking with nonprofit and community leaders
- Recognition in project-related reports and research



Contact

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POAH Resilient Communities Timeline

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<p>PHASE</p> <p>3</p>	<p>BRAINSTORM</p> <p>Generate ideas to transform resident services, property management and physical space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #5 Brainstorm Workshop #6 Identifying Top Ideas 	October - January
<p>PHASE</p> <p>4</p>	<p>PROTOTYPING</p> <p>Learn ways to test ideas that are quick and inexpensive. Run those tests to understand how they could or could not work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #7 & #8 Testing Workshop #9 & #10 Pivot & Test Again 	February - May
<p>PHASE</p> <p>5</p>	<p>PILOT</p> <p>Prepare long term strategies for our ideas and tell our story to others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #11 Workshop #12 	June - October

Building a Collaborative Team: Types of Teams



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

Trauma-informed housing is multifaceted, touching residents and staff across an organization. Collaborative teams incorporate diverse perspectives, enabling deeper understanding and generating more opportunities for trauma-informed practices in our communities. These four types of teams were utilized to drive organization-wide change at POAH.

■ Core Team:

The Core Team guides the project.

The Core Team is comprised of stakeholders with direct experience in both the problem(s) you seek to solve and the solution(s) that can respond. The Core Team makes iterative and adaptive decisions about the project's direction, shaping each stage based on their lived experience and their connection to the Site Team.

Key Features:

- Meets monthly for the duration of the project
- Includes representatives from each site team, called "Site Team Lead"
- Includes outside content experts (designers, architects, behavioral health experts)
- Brings some knowledge of trauma-informed care (formal or informal)
- Voluntary

■ Site Team:

The Site Team are the "End Users" that lead the project on the ground.

At POAH, the Site Team are comprised of residents and frontline staff from locations of various sizes, geographies, physical configurations, staffing models. The Site Team acts locally, determining what is most important to their community.

Key Features:

- Meets 1-2 times/month for the duration of the project
- Members are recruited by a Site Team Lead
- Includes representatives from resident services, property management, maintenance, residents and community partners
- Members bring lived experience in their local community
- Members commit to a one-year Fellowship
- Voluntary, Compensated

■ Project Champions:

Project Champions are staff that sit in the corporate or regional levels of the organization. Project Champions believe in and support the project and are committed to organization-level change.

Project Champions represent different departments (Development, Acquisitions, Human Resources, Resident Services, Policy, Regional Leadership) and occupy various levels of seniority. Project Champions provide feedback at critical stages and look for ways to integrate the Site Team's learning across the organization.

- Meets monthly/bi-monthly
- Includes representatives from most of the organization's departments
- Members have influence within their department
- Members understand the connection between trauma-informed and the organization's goals and vision
- Voluntary

■ Leadership:

Leaders are people in positions of power that support the project and green-light ideas for testing and expansion.

Leadership includes the supervisors of frontline staff (such as Regional Managers) and an organization's Executive team (such as the CEO of the owner and/or management entity). Leadership offers feedback, provides financial support, advances ideas, and influences broader organizational culture and operations.



Sample Meeting Agendas



Preservation of
Affordable Housing



DESIGN
IMPACT



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

Being trauma-informed is not just an outcome, it's a practice. That's why integrating trauma-informed strategies into your day-to-day work is so important. These sample agendas provide basic activities that can be utilized in your group meetings. Feel free to take the pieces that work and leave the ones that don't.

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Abandon the plan if necessary:** Be responsive to the needs and desires of participants. Prioritize the group over the agenda.
- **Practice transparency:** Explain the purpose and plan for the session. Set clear expectations. Articulate what comes next.
- **Offer choice:** Offer participants choice wherever possible, such as meeting time/location, use of camera or chat (virtual) or whether to split into breakouts or remain as a group.
- **Give room:** If difficult feedback or painful emotions arise in the discussion, allow room for expression. Avoid minimizing the experience or proposing solutions that may bypass it.

SETTING THE SPACE:

Safety and trust are built through transparency and consistency. These activities can be integrated into the start of a meeting to help create a safe space for participants to share, collaborate and engage in honest dialogue. Use some or all of these, depending on the setting and purpose.

- **Soft Start.** Allows time for participants to arrive, get settled. Facilitator can play music, share food (if in-person), informally chat with participants.
- **Why We Are Here.** Introduce the purpose of the session and what participants can expect. Keep it brief!
- **Connect and Center.** Invite participants to join in a centering or breathing practice. Check out [Centering Exercises](#) for inspiration.
 - If meeting for the first time, explain why (It's a strategy for taking care of yourself when things get stressful)
- **Zoom / Housekeeping.** Cover basic housekeeping logistics for in-person or Zoom (taking breaks, using chat, restrooms, etc.).
- **Introductions: Who's in the room?**
- **Goals for Session(s).** Explain what we hope to achieve.
- **Today's Agenda.** Brief but detailed look at the meeting agenda.
- **Collective Agreements.** These are commitments that the group makes to promote safety and collaboration. Use the first meeting to define the agreements as a group. Revisit as needed. Check out [Sample Community Agreements](#) for inspiration.

SAMPLE KICK-OFF MEETING(S):

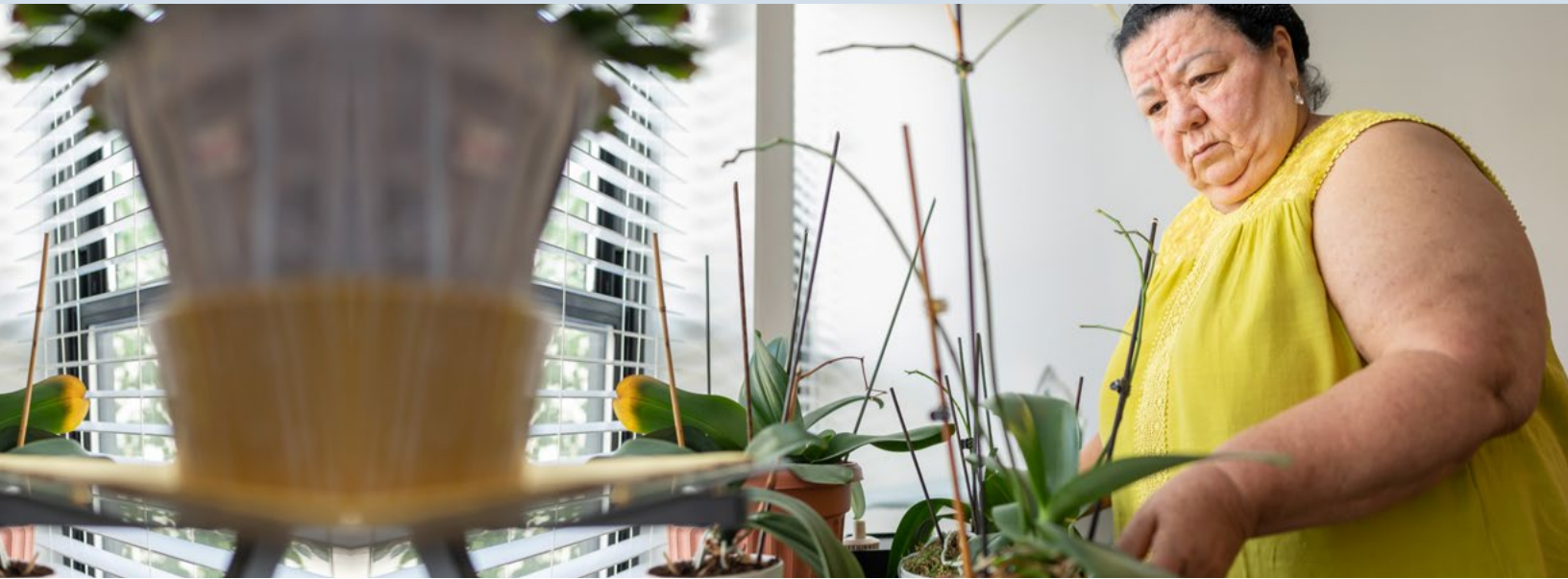
- **Introduce Trauma-Informed Housing.** Provide basic introduction to trauma, it's causes, prevalence and impact, and the trauma-informed housing model. Utilize these POAH tools:
 - [Trauma-Informed Housing Domains](#)
 - [Principles of Trauma-Informed Housing](#)
 - [Introduction to Trauma-Informed Housing Video](#)
 - [Introduction to Trauma-Informed Housing Slide Deck](#)
- **Project Basics.** Provide details about the project purpose, participants, timeline and meeting cadence, if known.
 - What is the project?
 - Who is involved? Why are you involved?
- **Small group / Large group discussion.** Provide opportunity for participants to meet one another and discuss how the material connects with their own experience.
 - How can we connect trauma-informed principles to our work?
 - How are these concepts relevant to us?
 - What opportunities do we already see for change?

- **Practicing Design.** Utilize an activity that models the design process and emphasizes creativity, fun, collaboration, brainstorming. Here's an example:
 - Start with a fun and creative prompt (Design a block party!)
 - Brainstorm ideas
 - Pick 1 idea
 - Mock-up your idea (draw, role play, find an image)
 - Share it back with the group
- **Individual reflection.** Allow time for participants to reflect on their key takeaways.
 - What are 3 things you're taking away from today?
 - What are 2 questions coming up for you?
 - What is 1 area you're excited to work on?

SAMPLE SITE TEAM MEETING:

- **Soft-start.** Allow time for participants to arrive, get settled. Facilitator can play music, share food (if in-person), informally chat with participants.
- **Today's Agenda.** Brief but detailed look at the meeting agenda.
- **Connect and Center.** Invite participants to join in a centering or breathing practice.
- **Partner Check-in.** Send participants into groups of 2-3 with a prompt question(s). For example:
 - The "Community Meeting" Check-in
 - What is your goal for today?
 - How will you accomplish it?
 - Who can support you in your goal?
 - **Team Fieldwork.** Participants share back what they learned from their fieldwork, such as [photovoice](#) or [interviews](#).
- **Presentation.** If entering a new stage in the design process, this is a space for facilitators to present the information or exercise. For example, conducting community-based research, designing an interview guide or introduction to brainstorming.
- **Group Discussion.** Utilize a mix of small and large group discussion with guiding questions. Ask the group to assign a notetaker and someone to report out!
- **Next Steps.** Use this time to cover what comes next, such as next meeting time/location, any fieldwork to complete, teaser about entering the next phase of the project.

Centering Exercises



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

- Centering exercises are activities that can settle our mind and reduce our stress by bringing awareness to the present moment. They are typically brief and can be done alone or with a group.
- Use centering exercises to practice trauma-informed care with yourself and with your team.
- Consider including a centering exercise at the beginning of your team meetings.
- Start by inviting participants to find a comfortable and safe place to be still.

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Abandon the plan if necessary:** Be responsive to the needs and desires of participants. Prioritize the group over the agenda or exercise.
- **Practice transparency:** Explain the purpose and plan for the exercise, including what options are available and how long it will take.
- **Offer choice:** Offer participants choice to keep their camera on/off (virtual), eyes open/closed or to simply sit quietly instead of participating.
- **Give room:** If difficult feedback or painful emotions arise, allow room for expression. Avoid minimizing the experience or proposing solutions that may bypass it.

EXERCISE 1: P-A-N (Pay Attention Now)

“PAN” is a mindfulness exercise that helps bring awareness to our thoughts, feelings and emotions. By bringing awareness without judgment, we can find calm and reduce stress. This exercise takes about 7-10 minutes and should be done slowly.

- First, bring awareness to what’s going on in your head.
 - What is happening in your thoughts?
 - Are you feeling scattered? Are you thinking about your grocery list?
 - Don’t judge what you are thinking, just notice.
- Next, bring awareness to what’s going on in your body.
 - Are you feeling heavy? Light? Tense?
 - Is there discomfort or tension?
 - No need to judge or fix what you feel, just pay attention to your body.
- Finally, bring awareness to what’s going on in your emotions.
 - How are you feeling? What emotions are surfacing?
 - Are you stressed? Overwhelmed? Excited?
 - Remember, no judgement. Just pay attention to how you are feeling in this moment.
- Take a few more deep breaths. And when you are ready, come back to the group.

EXERCISE 2: Box Breathing

Box breathing is a great way to reduce stress and improve your mood. The instructor starts by explaining the exercise – breathe in for four, hold your breath for four, breathe out for four, hold your breath out for four. The instructor then counts the group through the exercise for 2 rounds, then allows participants to count on their own for 2-3 rounds. This exercise takes about 4-6 minutes.

- Instructions:
 - Start by breathing out slowly, releasing all the air from your lungs.
 - Breathe in through the nose for a count of four.
 - Hold your breath for a count of four.
 - Exhale for a count of four.
 - Hold your breath out for a count of four.
 - Repeat 2-3 more times on your own.

EXERCISE 3: Brain Dump

The Brain Dump is a simple way to ease a busy mind. The Brain Dump can be utilized when participants are feeling distracted by something in the future or feeling pulled in many directions. This exercise takes about 3-5 minutes.

- Invite participants to find something to write with/on, such as a piece of paper or their phone.
- Next, encourage participants to spend 1-2 minutes writing down everything that is on their mind – it could be a to-do list of things they need to accomplish after the session, a lingering thought from a prior meeting or anything else that is on their mind.
- Pro-tip: Play instrumental music while participants are writing out their “brain dump.”
- If desired, participants can throw the thing away (if they want to “release” it) or they can save it to return to later.



Preservation of
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Sample Community Agreements



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Purpose

Community Agreements are guidelines created by a group to ensure open, inclusive, safe, and respectful dialogue. Community Agreements are essential to building trauma-informed teams. Below are sample agreements established by residents and staff at POAH.

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

Start by proposing a few common agreements (marked with * below) and invite participants to add others that are relevant or meaningful. As participants share, repeat back what you heard and confirm that the facilitator's notes capture the participants intent.

Sample Community Agreements

- Bring a learning mindset instead of an expert mindset*
- W.A.I.T. (Why am I talking/Why aren't I talking)?*
- Set a safe space: What's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here*
- Listen with curiosity & compassion
- Celebrate the wins
- Be transparent
- Be patient, practice taking a pause
- Listen with empathy
- Hold space for multiple truths
- Judgment free zone
- Ask for what you need
- Commit to open two-way communication
- Keep each other safe
- Contribute to the well-being of the group
- Speak with intention, use "I" statements
- Be polite and respectful
- Incorporate music, snacks, and swag
- Build breaks into meetings
- Provide frequent reminders ahead of meetings
- Avoid overusing the Zoom chat when many participants are on the phone
- Include games, trivia and videos to keep things fun!

POAH RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

OPPORTUNITY AREAS



OCTOBER 2021

OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- 01 Encourage Community Care
- 02 Redefine Leadership
- 03 Strengthen Workplace Collaboration
- 04 Organizational Support for Burnout
- 05 Prioritize Healing
- 06 Address Community Trauma
- 07 Communicate Dignity and Belonging

TAPPING INTO OUR STRENGTHS

We are more resilient when we can use our strengths and experiences to help our communities. When we can use our strengths, we feel like we have the power to transform our circumstances. Tapping our strengths requires resources, trust, and autonomy from the people and organizations around us. But if we can develop our strengths, we're building a healthy foundation to fall back on when life gets difficult.

01 ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY CARE

POAH staff and residents find ways to care for each other — large and small. These communities of support help us deal with challenges as they come. They also take the pressure off the caregivers in our lives, including staff and residents who take care of others. Community support requires time and resources, but **when we invest in community care, we may also reduce requests to POAH staff and better equip staff and residents to deal with emergencies.**

**How might
we encourage
community
care at POAH?**

01 ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY CARE

- A resident currently in school for social work noticed that her neighbors need mental health support. She offered to do onsite counseling or help with case management.
- Neighbors in one building formed their own resident group. They do a neighborhood watch, host a Secret Santa gift exchange, and give each other rides.
- Some properties don't have community rooms or spaces to get together. COVID canceled many of the programs where residents and staff could get to know each other.
- A staff member recalled at her old job, her office was in the resident's building. Because she saw them all the time, she knew all the residents - their habits and lifestyles, knew when someone might seem off. At POAH, **she can only get to know residents if they come to the office.**

IDEA FROM A RESIDENT **COMMUNITY MOVIE NIGHTS**

Even if you don't get a chance to talk to them, these events create a positive atmosphere and can help people feel less lonely and anxious. Seeing your neighbors also reminds you that your neighbors are just people.

WHAT'S WORKING

A resident with mental illness and her daughter got invited to dinner during a really stressful move. This small gesture gave her the support and comfort she needed in a stressful time.

02 REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

Residents and staff are caught in a system where **they don't have the ability to shape or inform the decisions that affect them.** Despite their expertise, skills and valuable perspectives, they are often in positions where they don't make the rules or get to control what their spaces look like. And they're often disconnected from the entities that make decisions on their behalf.

Residents and staff don't have context for why these decisions matter, or the resources to make their own decisions. And when we don't have agency or the trust to manage their own decisions or spaces, it's easy to slip up. And their jobs and housing depends on everyone being on the same page.

How might we support resident and staff leadership and ownership over rules, policies, processes and spaces?

02 REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

- Staff don't look forward to the recertification process because it's so invasive.
- While staff were assembling mailings for a major campaign, a staff tried to get stamps. They didn't have a company card, so they asked their boss. Their boss offered to purchase a postage machine. Three weeks later, still no postage machine, and still no stamps.
- "People come to the unit unannounced and I just want them to realize this is my home, so give me a notice. You wouldn't show up unannounced to someone's home."
– POAH Resident
- When one site was behind on recertifications, POAH decided that training was the issue. **"We did a training on recertification but it's not the issue. We just don't have time."**
– POAH staff

THE IMPACT

- Rules are ambiguous and often situational → stress on staff and residents
- Residents receive an overwhelming amount of rules → residents break rules
- Bureaucratic decisions and resource dissemination → slower response times for resident issues
- Onsite staff are evaluated and held responsible for a property's success based on other people's plans and ideas
- Participating in trainings that don't solve root issues

03 STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE COLLABORATION

Staff working in Community Impact and Property Management ultimately have the same goal: we want **safe, quality places for residents to live**. We might all want the same thing, but our roles, our functions within the system, and even our physical surroundings can create competing and conflicting agendas so we're not able to work together. When we work on teams with seemingly opposing views, we miss opportunities to support each other or work together to lessen our workloads. This makes work more stressful, taking away time and energy to do the work serving residents.

How might property management and resident services work together in service of the mission?

How might we create environments that encourage us to work together?

03 STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE COLLABORATION

- Community Impact's priority is to ensure residents have the resources and support they need to thrive. They have fewer rules to enforce and more flexibility in their daily tasks.
- Meanwhile, Property Management is responsible for ensuring the properties are in compliance so that POAH can maintain its standing with HUD. Pressing deadlines and policies make it impossible sometimes for staff to adapt.
- Our physical environments matter. How do our spaces contribute to our feelings of how collaborative we can be? What types of spaces accommodate the way we work with residents AND support Community Impact and Property Management coming together.
 - MASS team
- What's working: POAH staff at one property created a youth program where young people set their own mission, agendas, and came up with their own projects for their community. POAH supplied the resources and young residents led the group.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Seen as nurturing and patient
- Focused on residents' resources and support
- More flexibility with workload
- *Example:* CI Staff at one location attend retreats, trainings on trauma informed care

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- Seen as tough enforcers
- Focused on following rules to reduce risk and ensure compliance
- Little flexibility over workload and rules due to outside deadlines and rules
- *Example:* During a major renovation, residents had to move out on short notice. Property management tried to extend the construction schedule so they could offer more notice, but it was out of their control.

HEALING

We can't fix problems until we get to the root. Trauma is pervasive. We have to **understand where trauma comes from, recognize that we — staff and residents — all have trauma**, and see that **trauma affects how we act**. Only then can we promote environments and practices that do more than avoid triggering us...they can help us heal. We need new ways and practices for disrupting this cycle of trauma.

04 ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR STAFF BURNOUT

Staff are constantly overworked and burned out because the housing system places unreasonable expectations on staff to serve residents while also serving funders, regulators and other stakeholders. We don't have enough funding, enough staff, and enough resources to do our jobs well.

When we are running on empty tanks, we cannot adequately serve residents, let alone show up with compassion or empathy for others. And avoiding burnout falls on us. But we need POAH to build and advocate for the resources required to do our jobs well.

How might we create organizational-level support for staff to prevent burnout?

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04 ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR STAFF BURNOUT

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

A resident got a letter that her family was causing a disturbance. The resident came into the office screaming at staff and tossing things. Staff, taking a compassionate lens, understood that the letter had triggered this behavior in the resident and that the resident was taking this out on staff. Staff tried not to react. **“I don’t know what she’s been through.”**

Later when staff relayed the experience to a manager, they felt as though the instances was ‘shrugged off.’ This minimized the staff’s feelings, even though the interaction with the resident made them feel unsafe.

Staff can’t help residents when they are traumatized. When POAH staff have a traumatic experience and they don’t have organizational support to deal with the event or its impact, they bring that stress home to their family and friends.

04 ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR STAFF BURNOUT

- The crushing responsibility of work and the inability to meet resident demands, has Community Impact and Property management + maintenance staff feeling constantly overwhelmed. **"I feel like I'm drowning."**
 - POAH staff
- Staff don't feel like they are equipped to mediate all resident conflict but they are told it's part of their job. When staff is put into positions where they don't feel like they can adequately support residents, this is stressful.
- "I was working til 8:30 last night. There aren't enough hours in the day. My phone starts ringing at 6:30 in the morning. It doesn't seem possible and I'm not really good at taking care of myself."
 - POAH Property Manager
- One property manager said she can set boundaries to leave work at home, but she worries about her supervisor, "Tina." Tina carries a company phone and gets calls on weekends and nights.
- Tina also has her own things going on. **"I don't know how she does it. It really takes a strong person, these jobs aren't for weak people."**

IMPACT OF STAFF BURNOUT ON RESIDENT

A resident put in a maintenance request for a new fridge. Staff were stretched thin so the resident didn't get her fridge for a week. All her food spoiled. Residents don't understand why requests take so long. Staff are stressed because they can't get to tasks quickly enough.

WHAT'S WORKING

Staff do have individual practices for coping with workplace trauma and stress. Some go to the gym, others take walks or connect with friends. Some find comfort in peer to peer sharing. Those who do have a supervisor who can take time to listen, reported a greater ability to leave work at home.

04 ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR STAFF BURNOUT

- Property management and maintenance staff have so much work and so little time that they aren't able to build relationships with residents to best serve them. In some instances, staff feel like they could be more effective if they could eliminate unnecessary practices or protocols.
- "There is one less resident I can help because I have to go through hoops to clear things up [like working with third parties.]"
 - POAH Staff
- High turnover in maintenance and property management staff means residents don't know POAH staff and staff don't know residents.

IMPACT OF STAFF BURNOUT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

Resident has had only a partially working stove for months with four children. She has also had a roach issue months. "It feels like I'm in jail. I'm trying to respect the process but when will things get fixed?"

– POAH resident

IMPACT OF STAFF BURNOUT ON RESIDENTS

"We know residents can't get treatment they need because there are so many properties and so many residents."

– POAH staff

05 PRIORITIZE HEALING

Staff and residents are experiencing or have experienced trauma inside and outside of POAH. Recognizing we all experience trauma is important, but without proper support and resources to help ourselves heal from the underlying issues, we may continue to inflict harm on one another.

Investing in healing could be physical spaces for restoration or community connection, or slowing down work to build relationships and trust so we can understand what staff and residents need.

How might we give staff and residents opportunities to process and heal from their traumas?

05 PRIORITIZE HEALING

- Residents expressed frustration at not getting the same grace they give POAH staff when needing issues fixed in their apartments. **“When I get a lease violation, I’m expected to correct it right away. POAH gets to take their time though.”**
- One resident sees that residents need mental health support. She's getting her social work degree, and offered to do onsite services e.g. counseling or help with case management.
- Neutral spaces (outside on a bench instead of in the office) can help alleviate tension and stress when you need to have a hard conversation.
- In Hawthorne Community Building planning process, the design calls for a “Refresh Room” for staff - a literal room to heal during the day when staff need to step away to connect or take a moment alone.

When someone has experienced trauma or is in stress response they might not show outward behaviors - it might look like keeping to yourself or saying that you are ‘fine’ because crisis or trauma is normalized.

Understanding what residents might need will take intention — and the time to build relationships.

Vicarious trauma gets lodged in our bodies. If it gets stuck in our bodies, we tend to pour it into someone else instead of pouring it out. **How can we collectively “pour out” before we pour it onto someone else?**

– Staff, Center for Trauma Informed Innovation

06 ADDRESS COMMUNITY TRAUMA

Our trauma doesn't just stem from our housing, but what's going on outside of POAH — neighborhood violence, gentrification, the pandemic, and poverty can all be traumatic to us. And that trauma affects how we interact with each other, how we respond to issues, and even how we see POAH.

POAH may not be responsible for our trauma, but POAH is an institution that can continue the cycle of trauma... or help disrupt it.

**How might we
acknowledge and
respond to events
and experiences
outside of POAH
housing that can
recreate trauma for
staff and residents?**

06 ADDRESS COMMUNITY TRAUMA

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Flat 9 residents had few complaints about Flat 9 itself, but more about their history and what happened around them. The property used to be owned by Boston Housing Authority. Residents and staff said the former property was traumatic for everyone. People were shot in the building and jumped out of windows; management only interacted with residents to enforce rules and collect rent. Residents are grateful that Flat 9 is night and day from its past, but its history still lingers with residents. Residents were wary about sharing their stories for fear of repercussions. And the property still carries the stigma from being a BHA property.

Residents also talked about the impact of the surrounding neighborhood. The neighborhood has a history of gun violence, crime, and police brutality. And residents are surrounded by construction, watching historic homes get torn down and replaced by luxury condos.

**What impact might these past events and experiences on residents?
How might this affect how residents and staff see each other?**

06 ADDRESS COMMUNITY TRAUMA

- Residents in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods said they struggle to find safe places where their kids can play, where teens can stay out of trouble, or even just a simple laundromat to do laundry.
- One resident said the old laundromat was turned into a bar. Residents notice all the money being poured into the neighborhood, but residents still have to go to another neighborhood just to do laundry.
- On the neighborhood development: **“They made it for them.”**
- Safety looks different from person to person. Some residents said more police, more security, and more cameras will make them feel safer. But other people associate police presence with brutality and violence, and associate cameras with surveillance.
- We won’t make people feel safer with a checklist. Our relationships, actions, and physical surroundings all help contribute to a safer place to live.
- Small things can feel big when you're dealing with a lot in your own life. **“I’m living through all this stuff and you can’t bring me a lightbulb?”**

– POAH resident

Last summer, during the protests sparked by George Floyd’s murder, a POAH site proactively boarded up their first floor office windows to protect tenants’ information. Residents recalled being upset that their first floor residential units weren’t also boarded up. POAH didn’t explain why they boarded up the windows to residents or check on residents to see how the protests — or the underlying issues that caused these protests — affected them. Tenants interpreted the action as POAH caring more about the company than the residents. Staff admitted they didn’t think about how the boarded up windows might impact residents.

07 COMMUNICATE DIGNITY AND BELONGING

Housing can send certain messages to the people living here. The physical spaces, signage, and rules can tell us, “You are welcome. You belong.” or “There’s an entire waiting list that could replace you. We don’t trust you. This place is not meant for you.” Messages that don’t fully communicate our dignity or honor us as humans retraumatize us. When we look around POAH, what kinds of messages are we sending? What harmful stories might we be reinforcing?

How might our interactions, spaces, processes and rules reinforce dignity and belonging?

How might we communicate rules with kindness and compassion?

07 COMMUNICATE DIGNITY AND BELONGING

- Shared spaces often come with unspoken rules or etiquette, but they don't always apply to everyone, and they're not always commonly understood or agreed upon. Breaking these social contracts can lead to conflict, especially when you can't control other people's actions.
- The laundry room is a common source of conflict for residents where "unspoken rules" get broken, like common times to use the laundry or moving someone's laundry. We don't all have the same expectations, nor do they fit everyone.
- "If you are doing what's best for the company, you aren't doing what's best for the residents."
– POAH property management staff
- Hawthorne has one staff who speaks Spanish. Translation is not her sole job and she doesn't have enough time to do this. All documents are in English. As a result, Spanish-speaking residents with limited English said they have no idea what's going on. It also means they're less likely to take advantage of other services they may need.

UNCLEAR RULES

- Neither staff nor residents could figure out if residents were allowed to have bird feeders on the property. They figured out that the rule stated you could have a bird feeder if you had a "reasonable accommodation."
- Residents can't use grills within 10 feet of the building. But since many properties also ban loitering and don't have common outdoor areas, the rule gets lost in translation as "No grills allowed."

"All the rules makes me feel like a child"

– POAH Resident

Activity:

Clarify Your Focus



Preservation of
Affordable Housing



DESIGN
IMPACT



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

POAH identified eight opportunity areas for implementing trauma-informed housing. Consider these a place to start. Use this assessment activity to identify the opportunity area(s) most aligned with your goals and challenges.

Assessment Activity

1. Read through POAH's opportunities for becoming trauma-informed.
2. Which three opportunities feel the most important to address within your organization?
3. Which three opportunities feel like you can most successfully tackle at this time? Where is there already momentum?
4. If you were to address one opportunity, what would it be? What do you think the impact would be if you were able to become more trauma-informed in this way?

Encourage Community Care

How might we encourage community care at our organization?

Characteristics

- Our staff express feelings of burnout through their words, actions or performance.
- Staff often find themselves in a position of caregiving beyond the boundaries of their role. This may sound like “I am the only one they can rely on”, “If I don’t do it, it won’t happen” or “No one can do this job but me.”
- Our programs are often one-sided, where staff play role of provider and residents play role of recipient. There is little involvement from residents in program design.

Redefine Leadership

How might we support resident and staff leadership and ownership over rules, policies, processes and spaces?

Characteristics

- Power is concentrated among a small number of decision makers in our organization.
- We offer staff and residents the opportunity to share perspectives but ultimately make decisions that we deem are best, even if counter to their feedback and requests.
- We value the perspective of staff who have the most formal training or seniority. We prioritize professional training over lived experience, such as the lived experience of being a resident in our community or a frontline staff at our organization.

Strengthen Workplace Collaboration

How might we create environments that encourage our staff to work together?

Characteristics

- Our staff often face barriers or resistance (from their peers or from leadership) when trying to work collaboratively across departments (such as Property Management and Resident Services).
- Our team does not have the time or the organization’s support to slow down.
- Our organization prioritizes staff outputs and deliverables rather than collaborative processes that invite many perspectives.

Organizational Support for Staff Burnout

How might we create organizational-level support for staff to prevent burnout?

Characteristics

- Our staff are reporting mental, physical or emotional exhaustion.
- Our staff report that their relationship with their supervisor is a source of stress.
- Our staff are leaving the organization because they no longer feel like they can manage the stress and obligations of their role.

Prioritize Healing

How might we give staff and residents opportunities to process and heal from their traumas?

Characteristics

- Our staff is not adequately trained to listen and respond to trauma their colleagues or residents face.
- We do not have partnerships or external resources we can bring in to support our staff and residents as they face trauma.
- Staff report or express symptoms of secondary trauma, vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue from their work.

Address Community Trauma

How might we acknowledge and respond to events and experiences outside of our properties/organization that can recreate trauma for staff and residents?

Characteristics

- Our residents live in communities where violence is pervasive.
- Our residents live in communities that are gentrifying.
- Our residents represent communities that have suffered at the hands of oppressive systems.

Communicate Dignity and Belonging

How might our interactions, processes and rules reinforce dignity and belonging?

Characteristics

- Our rules and procedures tell staff and residents what they can't do, not what they can do.
- Our communication materials and styles don't consider different cultures, races and religions.
- Our communication is often complex.
- Our communication is one-sided.

Design Trauma-Informed Spaces

How might our physical spaces support healing and foster resilience?

Characteristics

- Design decisions are made by a small group of staff, with little to no resident input.
- Our office spaces are windowless, sparsely furnished and/or offer little to no visibility from the main entrance.
- Our common spaces are primarily designed to manage risk and limit social activity, such as by removing outdoor furniture, locking courtyard or amenity spaces, or offering little exterior lighting.

Synthesis Workshop Discussion Guide



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

This activity can be completed after data have been collected, organized, and grouped into themes. The purpose of this activity is to unpack the data and discuss whether the themes are reflective of what the participants heard in their interviews and focus groups. Participants should have access to the data before the meeting and have had ample time to review them.

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Abandon the plan if necessary:** Be responsive to the needs and desires of participants. Prioritize the group over the agenda.
- **Practice transparency:** Explain the purpose and plan for the session. Set clear expectations. Articulate what comes next.
- **Offer choice:** Offer participants choice wherever possible, such as meeting time/location, use of camera or chat (virtual) or whether to split into breakouts or remain as a group.
- **Give room:** If difficult feedback or painful emotions arise in the discussion, allow room for expression. Avoid minimizing the experience or proposing solutions that may bypass it.

ACTIVITY

Small Group Discussion (can be done virtually or in-person)

Materials

- Data set including individual data points grouped by theme. Each theme should have a title and brief description. The data set should be printed and/or emailed in advance.
- Note taking materials

Small Group Discussion

For large groups or large data sets, split into small groups that focus on 2-4 themes each. Assign a notetaker!

In groups of 2 or more, give participants the option to read the themes aloud or on their own. As a group, discuss the following:

- What struck you? What stands out?
- What's missing here? Is there anything we heard that is not reflected in these themes? What other stories from your interviews belong here?
- How would you describe each theme? Would you change any of the descriptions?
- Which themes feel especially relevant to your property or your experience?

Large Group Discussion

Come back together as a full group and share back.

- What were some of your takeaways?
- What stood out?
- What changes did your group suggest?



CHOSEN IDEAS

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR BURNOUT

MENTAL HEALTH INCENTIVES AND RESOURCES NORMALIZING SELF-CARE

POAH is committed to creating a culture that values the mental health of employees. Every single employee is offered numerous mental health incentives and resources to encourage staff to prioritize self care. Regular offerings to staff include:

- **Mental Health days** (in addition to PTO)
- **Discounts** to local spas
- Annual **healing retreat** for staff to refresh mindsets
- Regularly scheduled **mental health trainings**
- Monthly **"Healing Days"** to incentivize self-care and normalizing conversations about mental health

PRIORITIZE HEALING

MENTAL HEALTH TEAMS CARING FOR STAFF + RESIDENTS MENTAL HEALTH

POAH offices nationwide are equipped with Mental Health teams—doctors, therapists, psychiatrists and coaches aimed at serving residents and staff. The presence of these teams normalizes mental healthcare and promotes healing. This team of professionals meets residents and staff one-on-one and hosts workshops to equip individuals with healing practices and tools.

POAH YOUTH LEADS CULTIVATING YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND CARE

POAH's youngest residents are the future. They also face many challenges—policy brutality, systemic racism, a global pandemic and climate change. POAH's youth development program focuses on equipping this next generation with healing tools and practices. It encourages engagement between young POAH residents and with their neighborhood. These young leaders are building resiliency through:

- **Mentorship** from local leaders
- Youth healing **retreats**
- **Regular workshops** at Cincinnati Recreation Centers about issues young people care about
- **Events** promoting fun and connection—game night at Play Library

COMMUNICATING WITH DIGNITY AND BELONGING

NEW RESIDENT ORIENTATION

WELCOMING RESIDENTS TO THE POAH COMMUNITY WITH COMPASSION

New Resident Orientation gives new residents an opportunity to learn more about the property, the POAH community, their new neighborhood, the staff and their unit. During orientation POAH staff reviews the roles of staff, policies and procedures, and makes sure the resident has key staff/resident contact information. Maintenance staff walks through the unit with the resident to make sure they know where important things are and that their questions are answered.

Each resident is given information about their new neighborhood including local businesses, civic groups and activities or programming. POAH staff make sure to incorporate tours of the surrounding area and introductions to key stakeholders who might interest the resident. Not only does this provide a warm introduction to the POAH community, it also gives the newcomer perspective on what life will be like in their new home. Orientation also includes:

- A **compassionate explanation** of POAH rules and policies
- **Resident goal setting** with POAH staff
- Welcome basket with **POAH Bucks**—gift cards that can be used at local businesses—laundry detergent, a warm blanket, etc.
- Support in **enrolling in any relevant programs** (i.e. homeownership courses, after-school)
- Building **resident directory** so new tenants know their neighbors
- **Mental health assessment** by the Mental Health Team (if desired)

THE POAH MOBILE

BRING POAH TO THE COMMUNITY

The POAH Mobile is a unit on wheels aimed at bringing POAH staff, amenities and resources to residents' buildings. The POAH Mobile regularly schedules trips to Cincinnati neighborhoods carrying maintenance supplies, snacks for families and even a portable porch where people can gather.

The POAH Mobile is designed to be multipurpose. So, depending on the needs of the residents, the vehicle can be used to support a celebratory community event or host important health screenings. It can also be a temporary office for staff who need to connect with POAH residents on things like upcoming inspections or recertifications.

FUTURE IDEAS

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR BURNOUT

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

MOBILE RELAXATION PODS

DESIGNATED, ACCESSIBLE PLACES FOR STAFF STRESS RELIEF

In Cincinnati, staff is not always near the central office in Over-the-Rhine. The scattered site portfolio means that oftentimes staff are in neighborhoods with no access to private, quiet spaces to prepare for meetings or decompress in the middle of a stressful day. Until now. Staff has access to mobile relaxation pods throughout the City. Each one room relaxation pod offers brief respite from the outside world, ensuring that staff can metabolize stress or trauma experienced in the field.

Mobile Relaxation Pods are designed to accommodate the emotional and social needs of different staff. The pods can include comfy chairs and blankets, gaming devices for stimulation, massage chairs, snacks, and plants.

POAH SATELLITE OFFICES

INCREASING PRESENCE IN NEIGHBORHOODS

Cincinnati's scattered site nature presents a challenge for the property management and maintenance team. In the past, the team had to complete administrative tasks in their cars or waste time traveling downtown to a central office. In addition, residents had to time out of their day to travel if they needed to connect with staff. **POAH established satellite offices in different neighborhoods, giving staff and residents a home base closer to where they work and live.** These offices increase POAH's presence in key parts of the City, making the organization more accessible to residents.

COMMUNICATION CARE STAFF

DESIGNATED EXPERTISE FOR KEEPING CONNECTIONS

Clear, compassionate and timely communication is critical for establishing trust between POAH staff and residents. POAH's Communication Care Staff is dedicated to crafting messages, important rule and policy changes or upcoming events with empathy and an understanding of the resident experience. This person sets the tone for the nature and frequency of communication. They also help the staff develop healthy, responsive communication habits between each other. The Communications Care staff is readily available to talk to residents and address concerns when property management, maintenance or Community Impact staff aren't available. They are responsible for giving residents frequent updates on the status of work orders, inspections or recertifications.

PRIORITIZE HEALING

COMMUNITY HEALING CENTERS

PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR COMMUNITY-WIDE HEALING

Community Healing Centers offer therapy, healing and training city-wide to support resiliency and emotional, psychological and social well-being. CHC's are non-denominational and open to all. They spread throughout Cincinnati to ensure easy access. POAH staff and residents utilize the CHC's at no cost. Community Healing Centers include the following:

- Mental Health Teams of **trained professionals to support healing**—psychiatrists, family counselors, therapists, spiritual guides and coaches
- Luscious green spaces to **cultivate connections to nature**
- **Gardening and growing workshops** for all ages
- Activities that promote **cultural competency**
- **Racial healing** workshops and circles
- Art studios
- “Smash rooms” and boxing classes to support rage release
- **Dialogues and forums on social justice** issues affecting the community

CHOICE HOUSING

ALTERNATIVES TO APARTMENTS IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

POAH residents living in Cincinnati now have more choices when selecting housing. In addition to smaller, apartment-style units in dense neighborhoods, POAH has developed options that support individuals and families in aligning their dwelling with their preferred lifestyle and needs.

TOWNHOMES This suburban style home gives families their own greenspace while still living in a community setting. Residents in POAH townhomes also have an opportunity to purchase the home.

TINY TRANSITION HOMES These smaller, temporary dwellings offer refuge for residents in transition (moving from another city) or in instances of emergency (ex. Floods or fires).

MIXED USE BUILDINGS Apartments above commercial units or community centers are available for residents who want a walkable, accessible experience.

POAH residents can easily request a change in unit type based on the growing and changing needs of their families. **They can even request location change should a job opportunity or personal circumstance require the resident to move to a new city.**

(continued)

POAH FLATS

HOUSING WITH MARKET RATE AMENITIES

POAH Flats are overhauled units and buildings with competitive, market rate amenities. These newly renovated units and buildings provide quality, efficient and beautiful housing. POAH Flats are respite for Cincinnati residents and they are aimed at creating ease for families and individuals. Amenities include:

- **Extra large closets** and storage spaces
- **Private balconies**
- In-unit laundry
- **Energy efficient units** with solar powered electricity
- Supply locker(s) in common areas with things like lightbulbs, tools for small fixes, etc. for residents
- Recycling and composting areas
- **Small computer labs** for residents to use (key entry)
- Regular, building wide emails communicating changes, upcoming events or tips for apartment maintenance
- **Healing-centered interior design consultation**

COMMUNICATING WITH DIGNITY AND BELONGING

[READ FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

DESIGNATED, FLEXIBLE RESIDENT SPACES

CULTIVATING PLACES OF BELONGING

While public parks and outdoor spaces are important parts of communities, they are oftentimes programmed extensively. This programming defines the space and how it's used. **New designated, flexible POAH resident space is a beautiful outdoor space that is defined by the community.**

Flexible furniture and programming initiated by and for residents means the space is truly for the POAH community. Whether an individual wants to sit outside and enjoy a cup of coffee or host a birthday party, it allows residents to claim and create spaces that represent belonging. Characteristics of these spaces:

- Expectations and norms around using the space are determined by residents
- Space can be reserved OR used whenever it's available
- Includes amenities like fire pits and grills

POAH CAFÉ

A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE DRIVING CONNECTION

To support resident community building and POAH's bottom line, POAH opened the POAH Café. Staffed by POAH residents, the café is a community center and a revenue generator open to residents and the public. It's a popular spot for staff to gather after work to share a meal, listen to music and build relationships.

The café is family friendly with arcade games for kids and an outdoor patio. There is also a small cyber space with tablets for guests to use, making it fun and easy to access information.

OTHER IDEAS

RESOURCES FOR STAFF

- **Fidget toys to staff** and for residents in lobby
- More smiling faces. Not having anxiety coming to work. Having a better outlook when it comes to dealing with residents.
- **More manageable workloads** so that issues that come don't feel stressful) — staff has time to work with residents.
- **Weekly Appreciation lunch for Maintenance**

FLEXIBLE SECOND CHANCE POLICIES FOR PEOPLE FORMERLY INCARCERATED

NEW HIRING PRACTICES

- Compassion assessments for potential staff to gauge empathy, skills and strengths
- Residents are involved in the interview process

FORM CITYWIDE INITIATIVE FOR COMMUNITY HEALING — INVOLVE THE MAYOR!

- POAH is a champion for community healing
- Different ways to support each other
- Programs for teens to help deal with trauma (CCY)—e.g. employment programs to give teens something to do
- Programs for residents to help get off public assistance (e.g. home purchasing programs)

CHOSEN IDEAS

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY CARE

TRAUMA-INFORMED COMMUNITY LIVING MORE CHOICES IN YOUR AMENITIES AND UNITS

Residents often have few to no choices when it comes to where they live, especially in affordable housing. POAH offered residents more choices and amenities for their apartments, recognizing that residents wanted more opportunities to have agency and control over their surroundings.

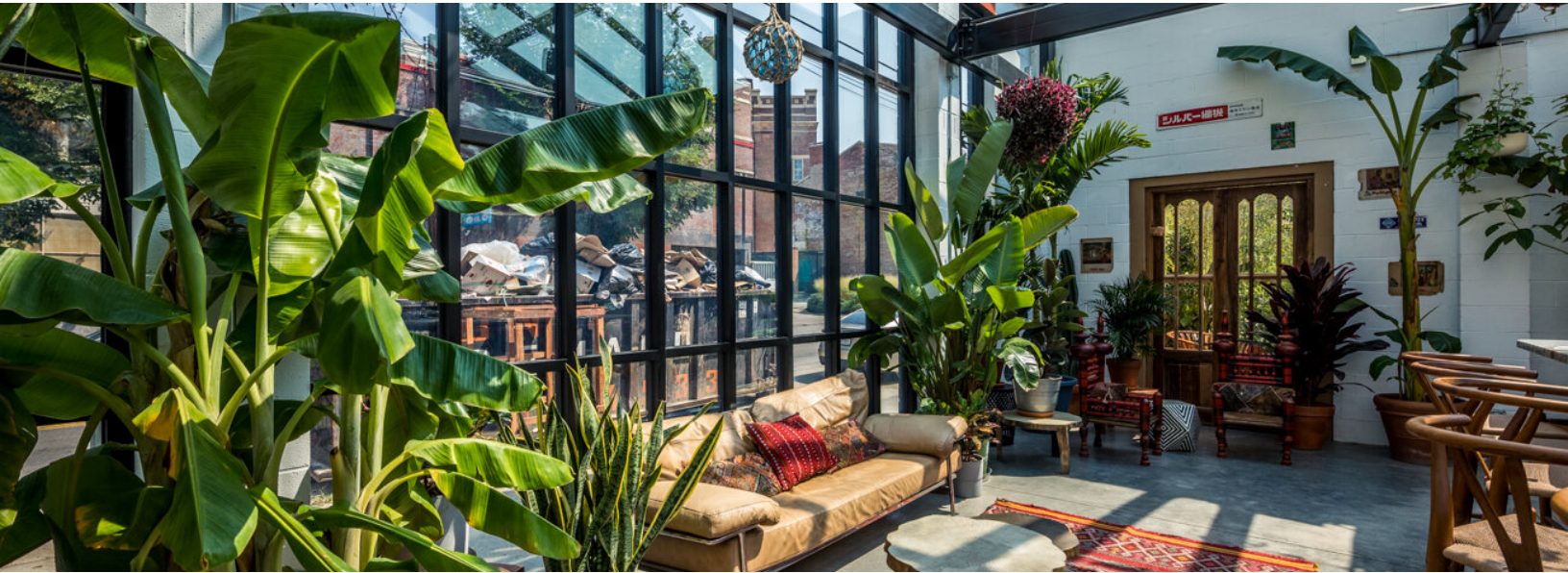
Residents and POAH staff work together to find the living situation that's right for them. This dialogue sets the foundation for a collaborative relationship where residents can share more about their family, living situation, and interests. More choices meant less turnover at Flat 9 and happier residents.

Unit Options

- Choice of a range of floor plans, flooring, select appliances, and paint colors
- Choice of furnished or unfurnished
- Short-term units for temporary and transitional guest stays
- Multi-generational units (e.g. 2+ bathrooms for unit for multiple family members)
- Flexible policies

Community Features and Amenities

- Storage space
- Community supply closet—everything you need to fix minor issues such as spare lightbulbs, batteries, and maintenance manuals
- Community education—ongoing workshops and classes (e.g. home maintenance, summer grilling, etc.)
- Grill area
- Onsite resident assistants and maintenance for immediate support
- Onsite concierge services, including event planning, interior design consulting
- Flat 9 Swap Shop—free, community market—take an item, leave an item
- Easy transition plans for if your family grows



COMMUNITY “GREEN” HOUSE

CREATING ACCESS TO CANNABIS JUSTICE AND WELLNESS

As POAH’s resilient communities took shape, dispensaries opened up all around Flat 9. But in 2021, residents were restricted from using drugs on the property. Moreso, dispensaries were typically owned by privileged entrepreneurs while disproportionately criminalizing poor and BIPOC residents. Later that decade, POAH introduced the Green House, a revolutionary wellness space and social enterprise.

The Green House includes a smoke room, education and workshops, a community garden, and farmers’ market. Residents can learn how to grow cannabis, then sell what they produce. The Green House also helps residents build equity. Residents who volunteer with the Green House may receive funds they can apply toward their rent or home ownership.

- **Community Organizing:** training and advocacy workshops on cannabis justice
- **Education:** workshops and classes on growing cannabis, types of cannabis and uses
- **Health and wellness:** meditation in the garden, connection to social services
- **Community garden and farmers’ market**
- **Social Connection:** after-hours events, concerts

COMMON AREAS AND COMMUNITY SPACES

HAVE A SEAT, BUILD COMMUNITY

Back in 2021, some of Flat 9’s buildings were missing community space. Residents missed the common areas where you could talk to your neighbors. Later, POAH redesigned their buildings and programming so they were more conducive to building community. Some of those initiatives included:

- **Intentional Community Housing** (see below)
- **Bulletin boards** for community announcements
- **Incentives and programming** to encourage neighbors to get to know each other

REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

STAFF-LED DECISION MAKING STRENGTH-BASED SHARED LEADERSHIP AT POAH

Staff wanted more clear expectations and opportunities to make their own decisions. POAH overhauled their staff development by focusing on staff's strengths and shifting the decision-making power to staff. POAH introduced several successful initiatives from hiring to onboarding to ongoing professional development that shifted their staffing and leadership development (see below). As a result, issues got resolved faster and POAH increased their staff retention.

Onboarding and Training

- Reframed to emphasize what you're empowered to do rather than what you're restricted to do
- Invites staff to imagine how their strengths and outside expertise could apply to their position at POAH
- Includes job shadowing so staff could get familiar with other roles and positions
- Peer to peer mentorship support that pairs newer staff with more established staff not linked to formal assessment or evaluation. Can help communicate issues so supervisors can respond quickly.

Management and Support

- Management available for a set number of days onsite → resulted in increased communication and contact between management and staff
- Management has smaller teams and more staff assigned to properties.
- Staff can consult other teams, share expertise → sites could more quickly address issues
- without involving supervisor
- POAH internal network for improved communication (see "POAH Internal Network")

Feedback and Performance Evaluation

- 360 reviews so staff can review peers and leaders

FUTURE IDEAS

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY CARE

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY HOUSING COMMUNITY-BASED HOUSING

The pandemic, climate change, and rising living costs encouraged people across the world to join “intentional” communities, or planned residential communities designed to focus on social cohesion and collaboration. POAH introduced intentional community housing so residents could build a stronger sense of community care. POAH residents live in individual units but share facilities and common spaces with neighbors with similar lifestyles and worldviews. These intentional communities created organic and structured support networks. For instance, one building houses single parents and seniors, which helped reduce isolation and helped alleviate childcare and afterschool care. The building included amenities like a playground and community room.

REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

POAH INTERNAL NETWORK CONNECTING AND CELEBRATING TEAMS

POAH established an internal network where employees can communicate with each other and share and access important information. The intranet includes news, communities, and a strength-based staff directory. The staff directory includes a search feature where you can find staff based on their expertise and skills. The message boards and chat features also offer a platform where you can contact staff to ask questions and ask for advice, and celebrate milestones and share notes of gratitude about your coworker.

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY TRAUMA

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

THE NET: NEIGHBORHOOD EMERGENCY TEAMS RESIDENT CRISIS TEAMS

The Neighborhood Emergency Teams (aka “The NET”) is organized and led by Flat 9 residents who want to help care for the community during major emergencies and crises. The NET team are paid team members elected by residents who can support residents and report back to POAH leadership to make sure residents’ needs are communicated. The NET organizes and provides:

- Ad-hoc reflection groups and events to process traumatic events
- Community resources for healing and processing (e.g. Bible study, reflection prompts)

RESTORATION ROOMS SPACES FOR RESTORATION AND HEALING

Residents have 24-hour access to Flat 9’s many “restoration rooms.” These spaces are designed by and for POAH community members to provide a break from the stress and trauma of daily life. Each room has a distinct look and feel to support different needs. The soundproof room offers private space for staff and residents to scream, listen to loud music, or dance. The “low-stimulation” room offers a dark, quiet space with aromatherapy to slow the senses.



OTHER IDEAS

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

- **Mental Health days for staff** (different than PTO)
- **Staff/peer circles** to share experiences, get support
- **Therapy** for residents and staff: Provided by clinical social workers/interns
- **Mental Health workshops or services:** Specific to skills or certain practices (ex. behavior health strategies or restorative justice circles); open to staff and/or residents; can be tailored to strengths and needs for specific communities (e.g. grandparents); ACES

ABOLISHED POLICE

- Public safety is cared for by neighbors “for us by us”

PROACTIVE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

- Monthly meetings to address issues and come up with ideas to address it — don’t wait for problem to be a huge thing

MANAGEMENT / STAFFING MODELS

- **Cluster model:** Group management model where multiple properties report to a regional supervisor; everyone has similar expectations
- **On-call supervisors (inspired by hospitality managers on duty):** Available for quick responses and troubleshooting. Call tree staffed with people who are familiar with the property.
- **Floor generals (rotating engagement):** Residents in building A are in charge of community activities; rotates every quarter. Distributes expectations and engagement. By floor or building. Give residents leadership so they are comforting presences. Residents who are respected and valued. Making sure they have that support.
- **Upper Management Swap Day:** Upper management spends quality time with residents to be more in touch with what is happening on the ground

FUTURE IDEAS

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY CARE

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

PARENTS LEAD

AWARD WINNING PARENT LEADERSHIP GROUP

Raising young people is hard and lonely work. Parents Lead is a group led by and for parents where POAH families can share the challenges and the joys of supporting and raising their children.

Parents Lead is so much more than just a place to connect or vent. Participants share resources with one another on things such as programs at nearby schools, after-school activities or tutoring support. Parents Lead also helps equip and inspire caregivers to raise capable and caring children through parenting classes and workshops. Upon joining Parents Lead, new parents are assigned a parent mentor so they feel like they belong. Once a year, Parents Lead use feedback from families at Brandy Hill to develop plans for making sure residents are supported.

Parents Lead is also:

- A first stop for new residents with children
- A visible support system for POAH parents
- A safe space to ask questions about childcare, school and community resources
- A connector for community support such as ride share, meal exchanges or homework help

STAFF CARE PLAN

POLICIES, TRAINING AND SUPPORT TO NURTURE STAFF

POAH believes in prioritizing care for staff. Without a healthy and supported staff, we can't have healthy supported housing. POAH's official staff care plan incorporates everything from a clear and fair distribution of workload on staff to compassionate human resource policies. Some of the staff benefits include:

- **Ongoing training** on trauma resiliency, self care, and mediation / deescalation (see #3)
- 35-hour workweeks and manageable workloads
- 8–10 weeks of PTO
- Multiple staff on call
- **POAH resident support:** Resident Leads, identified and trained residents in each building who can support maintenance in resolving small building or unit issues
- **Vendor/contractors** to handle sporadic, time-consuming, or highly specialized/dangerous maintenance tasks
- **Flex or floating teams:** Staff trained to pinch hit on site teams when the unexpected comes up or in times where capacity becomes stretched, like recertification

RESILIENCY TRAINING FOR STAFF AND RESIDENTS

NURTURING A COMMUNITY OF CARE

POAH incentivizes staff and residents to participate in free resiliency trainings to help empower others to be trauma-informed. These interactive, hands-on trainings are offered to fit different learning styles and often led by residents and staff. Participants receive rewards like gift cards and free movie tickets.

Training topics:

- De-escalation and conflict mediation with helpful scripts and common scenarios to practice compassionate responses, take the pressure off of having the 'right' response in the moment)
- Detecting and understanding burnout
- Healing-centered first-aid and emergency response training

ACCESSIBLE RENOVATIONS

CREATING SPACES OF BELONGING AND INCLUSION

Brandy Hill is a warm, lively community. The property went through major renovations, from the grounds to the common spaces, to center multi-generational families and invite play. Their groundbreaking designs prioritized accessibility, safety, and belonging, helping them win multiple awards. By offering more accessible, ground floor walk-in units than any other property of its size, POAH is able to accommodate more residents and guests with disabilities.

Renovations include:

- **Intercom systems** with cameras that help communicate with people at the door (text, video chat, etc.) to allow of ease in receiving visitors and packages
- **Wide, designated areas to play sports** that are protected and safe for Brandy Hill's youngest residents
- **Free wi-fi** for all residents
- **Designated bike paths** on the property
- **Computer labs** in every building
- **Sound proof** units, common areas and office spaces
- **Tree Fort Bus Stop**, a protected bus stop for kids waiting for the bus. They can safely play while waiting or get out of the rain or snow on a wet day with this state-of the art shelter.

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

FLEX TEAMS

ALLEVIATING WORKLOAD FOR POAH STAFF

POAH knows how important it is for residents to have functioning, quality housing. But sometimes fluctuations in staff or outside events impact POAH's ability to address property and unit issues.

Flex teams include property management, maintenance and Community Impact staff who can fill in and support properties when the unexpected occurs. New capital project that requires additional staff? Damage cleanup from a local storm? The Flex team has that property's back.

POAH Flex teams also support POAH's staff training initiatives. Since the Flex Teams have an eye on multiple POAH sites, they can create training opportunities for new and existing staff that are responsive to recurring challenges.

TRAUMA-INFORMED MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

BUILDING A COMPASSIONATE TEAM

POAH maintenance staff face two key issues: they interact with residents the most, often during stressful moments like during inspections or when units have an issues. Maintenance teams can also feel overwhelmed by the high volumes of work orders. The Trauma-informed Maintenance program includes three critical components:

1. **Training and coaching:** The trauma-informed training program is specially designed to help maintenance staff lead with compassion and care for themselves and their team. Every maintenance staff joins trauma-informed training and meets regularly to discuss ways they are integrating principles and approaches into the day-to-day.
2. **State of the art facilities:** Every POAH site includes designated space for the materials and equipment needed for staff to address site and property issues. This creative and dynamic space elevates the role of this critical, front-line team and makes it easier for the maintenance to complete work orders and serve residents.
3. **Resident workshops:** In order to alleviate the workload of the team and provide residents with choice and agency over their own units, maintenance regularly runs workshops in their facility. By training residents how to properly resolve simple issues in their homes like changing light bulbs or unclogging a toilet, residents and staff can work together to keep POAH housing quality.

(continued)

MAINTENANCE CO-OP

TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The POAH Maintenance Co-op is a training and workforce development program for POAH youth and potential full-time hires who want to learn what it takes to serve on a property maintenance team. The co-op offers a paid, part time opportunity to acquire skills in basic property maintenance and customer service. Not only does the Maintenance Co-op support the POAH maintenance team workload, the program allows POAH to cultivate new employees. Participants in the POAH Co-op program are able to complete on the job training while also receiving training from local vocational schools. The co-op earns credits and experience in the workforce, regardless of whether or not longer term employment with POAH comes to fruition.

JOB SHADOW PROGRAM

MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS

To drive compassion for one another and to inspire career growth within the organization, POAH launched its very own Job Shadow program. The job shadow program gives new and current employees a peek into each other's daily tasks, responsibilities and challenges. Every single employee—even the CEO—participates in POAH's job shadowing program to broaden their perspective on the employee experience.

Since the program launched, POAH's executive leadership have made more informed decisions about staff and organizational policy. They see first-hand how their decisions directly impact staff's daily workload. POAH leaders also know how and when to advocate to policy makers and funders to change things like HUD regulations since have a better understanding of residents and staff's experiences.

Peer sharing has reduced workplace tension and inspired the staff. The POAH team knows how their jobs and roles are connected. When issues arise, staff is able to problem solve using multiple perspectives. When teams feel stuck, shadowing their counterparts at other sites opens up new possibilities. And the Job Shadow program better prepares new hires. They receive a more immediate and holistic picture of how POAH functions and get chances to learn by doing.

COMMUNITY SKILLS WORKSHOPS

EDUCATION AND TRAINING BY AND FOR RESIDENTS

Brandy Hill organizes regular workshops and information sessions to teach residents new skills or learn about important changes at POAH (e.g. recertification). These workshops are planned and occasionally led by residents. Residents can offer workshops based on their skills or strengths and can even partner with POAH staff. For example, at least once a year POAH maintenance and residents co-host a basic maintenance course to help give the community the confidence to undertake simple unit maintenance, like changing the range hood filter. An updated database of building or resident issues and resident strengths help inform content for the workshop series.

(continued)

BRANDY HILL RESIDENT COUNCIL

SUPPORTING RESIDENT LEADERSHIP

The Brandy Hill Resident Council (BHRC) is a multi-generational team of leaders who represent resident issues and advocate on their behalf to POAH staff and other key affordable housing stakeholders. The BHRC members are appointed by their neighbor and include residents from ages 14 and older. This council has a number of responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- **Inform POAH's strategic plan** and hold POAH accountable to its execution of the plan
- **Support the creation and enforcement of rules**, using a restorative justice approach to mediate conflict between residents
- **Determine workshops to support resident requests.** For example the BHRC might partner with maintenance to host a recertification training.
- **Advocate for changes in policy or legislation** at a local and national level, advancing the work to develop quality, trauma-informed affordable housing
- **Interview candidates** for POAH staff opening

Each resident who is part of BHRC is compensated for their time. Members also have an opportunity to learn credits and certification as they receive training or earn leadership experience.

COMMUNICATING WITH DIGNITY AND BELONGING

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

BUILDING CAPTAINS

CREATING COMMUNITY ONE BUILDING AT A TIME

Every building at Brandy Hill has a peer nominated and compensated resident leader. This Building Lead has a birds-eye view of the residents well-being and potential issues - both interpersonal or related to the property. The Building Lead is responsible for supporting community development, regularly hosting meetings or experiences that allow residents to connect with one another.

The Building Lead facilitates an annual “House Rules” meeting where each tenant in the building can help set the building rules and norms. Residents can also share any circumstances or needs that might be important for their neighbors to know (e.g. working third shift). This annual house rules meeting also helps the residents determine how to respond to issues in building and which issues are most important.

Other Building Lead responsibilities:

- **Organizes a Welcome Wagon** as new residents move in
- **Supports communication** between residents and staff
- Informs property-wide workshop topics
- Organizing **social events and activities**
- Helps **residents register bikes**

NEW RESIDENT ORIENTATION

WELCOMING RESIDENTS TO THE POAH COMMUNITY

POAH’s Resident Orientation gives new residents an opportunity to learn more about the property, the Brandy Hill community, the staff and their unit. During orientation POAH staff reviews the roles of staff, policies and procedures, and makes sure the resident has key staff/resident contact information. A walk through of the unit with maintenance allows the resident to become familiar with their new home.

Each resident is greeted by the Building Lead or Welcome Wagon (group of residents). Not only does this provide a warm introduction to the POAH community, it also gives the newcomer the resident perspective on life at Brandy Hill.

(continued)

BRANDY HILL PRIDE 2.0

INVESTING IN OUR NEXT GENERATION

Brandy Hill Pride was reinvigorated following the pandemic pause. Brandy Hill Pride is a youth-led social group that works to make connections between young people living at POAH. BHP chooses a different focus area each year. **Brandy Hill also built a new youth community room to provides space not only for meetings but also for youth to relax, study or hang outside of their home.**

Some things BHP focuses on include:

- **Environmental stewardship:** partnering with maintenance to preserve nature at Brandy Hill
- Organize fundraisers and awareness around **social causes**, like animal rescue
- **Anti-bullying** education and conversation
- **Recycling** workshops

By participating in BHP, youth can also earn leadership accreditation and certificates to support their educational goals after high school.

OTHER IDEAS

MORE SPECIALIZED ROLES

- Designated staff roles based on strengths where they can utilize their expertise and specialized training

AUTOMATED RECERTIFICATION

- Residents are automatically recertified

CHOSEN IDEAS

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR BURNOUT

COMMUNITY CARE PLAN

TRAINING, SUPPORT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND COMMUNICATION

Neighbors and staff informed and defined the Hawthorne Community Care Plan, a multifaceted plan. As a result, Hawthorne's culture shifted. Taking "mental health leave" became normal and celebrated, which helped reduce resident and staff turnover. The plan consists of four main facets:

1. Community-Wide Training

Staff and neighbors are incentivized to participate in free resiliency trainings to help empower others to be trauma-informed. These interactive, hands-on trainings are offered to fit different learning styles and often led by residents and staff. Participants receive rewards like gift cards and free movie tickets. Topics include:

- De-escalation and conflict mediation
- Detecting and understanding burnout
- Cultural humility to help understand other perspectives

2. Support

POAH offers several resources for families and staff suffering from burnout. They also established emergency plans to help staff respond to burnout (care packages for families that include gift cards and stipends for childcare support, meals, and family activities)

3. Accountability

Regular check-ins; plan is publicly posted and updated

4. Communication

POAH established multiple initiatives to improve communication between teams and partners.

- Efforts to openly celebrate and communicate
- Small efforts include designated "staff mailboxes" to drop off documents, physical indicators on the desk or mailbox to help create boundaries.
- Initiatives that encouraged staff to ask for help, communicate their needs, and share how they're feeling
- Community agreements
- Administrator to manage community calendar and help synchronize individual calendar

Note: group suggested merging this facet with "Ongoing Education and Training for the Hawthorne Community"

REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

HAWTHORNE NEWSLETTER

A NEWSLETTER WRITTEN BY AND FOR HAWTHORNE'S RESIDENTS

POAH hired resident reporters to help bring back a newsletter for Hawthorne residents. Reporters submit stories, help maintain a community calendar, and publish important events and announcements. Because the newsletter is written by and for residents, residents were more in the know about what was going on at Hawthorne.

RESIDENT LIAISONS

ADVOCATES FOR RESIDENTS

Hawthorne introduced **resident liaisons** to help reduce miscommunication and stressful interactions between residents and staff. Hawthorne residents helped outline the liaison role and chose liaisons who were trusted by community, but could also take action and work with partners. Many of the liaisons are multilingual, helping fill a major need at Hawthorne. The liaisons treated residents with dignity and respect and patiently answered questions, quickly making them invaluable members of the community. Some of the ways they support Hawthorne residents:

- Connecting residents to support
- Sharing information, important announcements
- Working directly with POAH and community partners to respond to specific concerns.
- Mediating conflict with focus on restorative justice
- Hosting open office hours and community forums to listen to residents' ideas and concerns
- Resident liaisons are community members but do not live at Hawthorne to protect people's privacy.

Note: This idea is a combination of the volunteer ambassador and resident liaison ideas.

HAWTHORNE ZONE TEAMS

STAFF AND RESIDENT LIAISONS FOR YOUR BLOCK

Hawthorne recognized that their largest property needed more targeted support to reduce stress on residents and staff. POAH divided Hawthorne into "zones" and assigned each zone a comprehensive support team. The team, which serves up to 90 families in their zone, helped address issues faster, improved communication and reduced backlogged orders. These smaller, more nimble teams were able to host office hours and meet residents onsite to help meet residents where they were. Each team includes:

- **Rotating management** help assist the support team and communicate issues and needs back to POAH and partners. They also help facilitate more complex initiatives, like helping residents set their own inspection days.
- **Maintenance advocate:** Residents and maintenance often miscommunicate about maintenance issues, which wastes time and resources. The problem doesn't get fixed and then maintenance has to come back. A maintenance advocate works directly with residents to understand the maintenance issue, then communicate with maintenance.
- **Resident liaisons** (see above)

Note: Teams liked that Zone Teams offered a single point of contact, or "one-stop family support" for families. However, this is not related to the idea "One-Stop Family Support," which specifically relates to case management.

COMMUNICATING WITH DIGNITY AND BELONGING

RULES AND POLICIES REIMAGINED

A MORE COMPASSIONATE APPROACH TO THE RULES OF POAH

Whenever you asked staff and residents if they could change anything, the rules always came up. Many of the rules and policies were confusing, difficult to understand, and seemed unnecessarily harsh. POAH decided to overhaul some of their processes and rules to make them more compassionate and easier for everyone to understand. Some of the changes they made included:

- Introducing rewards for on-time recertification
- **Changing language** to be positive rather than punitive
- Working with CSL to assist neighbors with certification
- Creating an **easy-to-read guide on POAH housing expectations and rules** for partners and neighbors
- Introducing forms with information about onsite partners (a “get to” and not a “have to” to maintain your housing)

FUTURE IDEAS

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR BURNOUT

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

REIMAGINE THE 5 DAY WORK WEEK FLEXIBLE STAFF POLICIES AND A MORE INCLUSIVE CULTURE

POAH drastically altered their staffing structure and created more flexible schedules. POAH instituted a four-day workweek and allowed staff to work flexible hours outside the typical 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM workday. This flexibility allowed staff to build in self-care breaks.

POAH's trust in their staff and flexibility slashed staff turnover. In 2051, staff in every department unanimously voted POAH as one of the top 50 places to work.

- Everyone wears "one hat" — regular team meetings are part of your role
- You can spend 10% of your work time on anything, including professional development to learn about a new role, field
- Staff are incentivized to take short self-care breaks (e.g. walking, meditating) with rewards like discounted healthcare, etc.
- POAH built calming stations where people can take short breaks to calm their minds

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP

DIGITAL BULLETIN BOARDS KEEPING RESIDENTS INFORMED AND CONNECTED

POAH installed digital bulletin boards in designated areas to help keep residents connected and informed. These digital bulletin boards share announcements, deadlines, and important dates. The boards used positive, judgment-free language and cartoon and positive affirmations. The digital bulletin boards Residents had less lease violations and felt more connected to their neighbors.

(continued)

ONE-STOP FAMILY SUPPORT

A SINGLE POINT-OF-CONTACT FOR FAMILIES

When families look for support or resources, they often have to navigate a muddled, confusing network of many providers and organizations. Inspired by similar “collective impact” models like [Impact KCK](#), POAH and community partners introduced a one-stop model to help streamline case management for families so they only had to work with one person. Partners worked together to give families more comprehensive wraparound services, and it also meant less paperwork and travel between agencies for families.

ZONE BLOCK PARTIES

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH BLOCK PARTIES

Coming out of a pandemic, Hawthorne decided to prioritize joy as a critical way to build a more resilient community. Residents stepped up to plan block parties for their zone, and POAH followed their lead by offering support and resources. The block parties helped shape a new generation of community leaders. Neighbors also got to know each other better, which helped reduce conflicts between residents. POAH and partners also set up at the block parties to share information and resource. Each party looks different, but some of the ideas that came out of the parties included:

- **Enlightened Blocks:** Special lantern installations that helped increase lighting and made people feel safe walking around after dark
- **Community Days:** Different partners offer activities at the block parties, including STI education, free mammograms, and haircuts

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT CLASSES

EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO EMPOWER FAMILIES TAKE CHARGE

The Hawthorne community set up classes and trainings to educate and empower POAH residents. These community classes helped reduce notices and reduced maintenance requests. Topics include:

- Interpreting your utility bill
- Time management and life organization
- Cleaning and organizing
- Money management

COMMUNICATING WITH DIGNITY AND BELONGING

[SEE FULL LIST OF IDEAS](#)

COMMUNITY CENTER FOR KIDS AND TEENS PREMIERE ON-SITE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

POAH built a brand new, state-of-the-art community center at Hawthorne, which includes an early learning center and Boys and Girls Club. The center expanded in 2030 because demand was so high. The program involves multiple generations, including elders, parents, and children. Kids and teens learn valuable relationship skills and education to prepare for successful futures. The additional childcare helped increase employment because more parents were able to work.

REIMAGINED COMMUNITY POLICING CHANGING HOW WE RESPOND TO CRIME

Hawthorne changed how they responded to criminal activity, focusing on creating a more transparent culture and introducing initiatives that made calling the police the last resort. POAH installed new cameras and a neighborhood watch program. They also installed IPD liaisons, similar to IPD's mental health co-responders, which freed up LEOs to handle criminal situations. Families feel safer, and they feel more comfortable calling the police when it's needed.

ONGOING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE HAWTHORNE COMMUNITY CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING AND CONVERSATIONS FOR NEIGHBORS, STAFF AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

The Hawthorne community is made up of many people with different perspectives, but those perspectives often led to misunderstandings and miscommunication. Hawthorne introduced free education and training that the whole community could participate in to understand where people were coming from, and help mediate conflict. As a result, ACES scores decreased and major conflicts decreased. Some of the trainings included:

- **Cultural humility** to understand cultural dynamics between neighbors
- **Systemic causes of poverty and simulations** to understand different circumstances and causes of poverty, barriers families face
- **Mediation and de-escalation**

OTHER IDEAS

STAFF SUPPORT

- Coffee for staff
- Maintenance team has the latest equipment and resources. People are lining up to be part of Eric's team!
- New spaces

NEW COMMUNITY SPACES

- **New sports arena** in the unused green space. Free for families. Coaches and professional athletes volunteer to help grow their skills.
- **Community garden** is back! Bigger, three locations.
- **New community and staff spaces:** Lounge area, pool table, massage space. Min. 30 min shut down for staff to make use of these spaces!
- **New pool:** Safety team and swimming classes offered for children and families.

RESIDENT AND STAFF SUPPORT

- Resident council—made up of multiple perspectives who make key decisions.
- Restorative justice processes in place.
- **Shuttle service** for seniors to get them to the pantry, community building, etc.
- **Interpreters & translators** are part of the team for people who need that service.
- Everyone is greeted at the front door of the offices with a friendly, helpful, and positive face and message.
- **Counseling & Therapy:** Two locations offer services to families, children, adults.
- **Annual resource & career fairs**

Photovoice Activity



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Photo courtesy of Pexels, by Designecologist

This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

This activity can be completed at the beginning of a project by members of the site team. The purpose of this activity is to encourage participants to reflect on their communities' strengths and challenges and to surface their insight on the topic at hand. By responding to a prompt with both a photo and caption, participants can reflect upon the reasons, emotions or experiences that shape their perspectives.

Activity Type

Fieldwork (participants can do this on their own, outside of a group meeting).

Materials

Camera (phone camera works!).

ACTIVITY

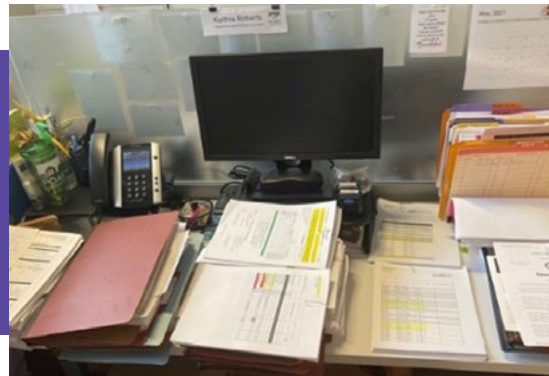
Take a Picture...

- ...of something around where you live that makes you feel most **safe** or **empowered**.
- ...of something around where you live that represents **distress**.

Please do not take photos of individuals unless you have their permission. Email or text your photo and a quick description of the photo.



This brings me happiness because my oldest daughter graduated from college!!



This makes me have major anxiety, can't get ahead.



I feel empowered knowing that I can literally create and transform spaces to fit my taste. Being able to bring my kids along, do the work alongside them and know this experience instilled something special inside them is everything.



Trash, clutter, discord, calamity, and disorder can put me on edge if not dealt with properly and in a timely fashion. I function best in clean spaces where intention lives and the vibe is right.



Flowers bring me so much joy. Getting to have the beauty of the flowers in front of my home is my happy, peaceful place.

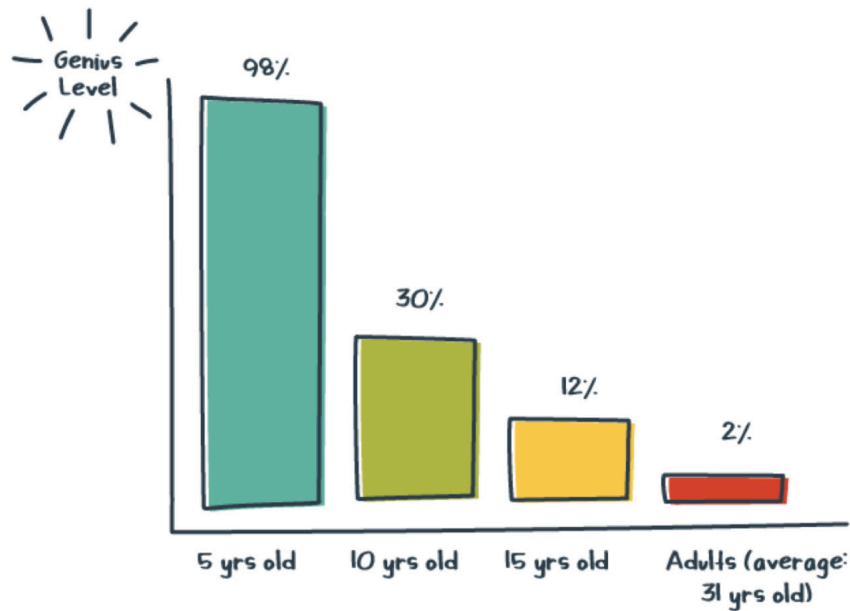


The broken window is in my bedroom. There is a rock on the windowsill that was used to break the glass. That saddens me and frightens me. I put things in perspective and focus on my blessings.



"YES, AND"

CREATIVITY IN KIDS AND ADULTS:



Creativity is Hard

In 1968, Dr. George Land created the "Imaginative Thinking NASA Test" to help hire the most creative candidates. In a multi-year study, Dr. Land had 1,600 kids enrolled in Head Start take the test. The results were surprising. As we age, our creativity tends to decline.

Types of Brainstormers

We all play different roles in ideation.



Green Light Brainstormer

Fast thinking, good at coming up with lots of ideas!



Yellow Light Brainstormer

Builds and riffs on ideas to make them stronger.



Red Light Brainstormer

Helps keep us grounded in reality, thinks through possible limitations and challenges.



"YES, AND"



BRAINSTORM BOOSTER

Idea Improv | 20 minutes

ACTIVITY

"Yes and..." is a technique in improv that suggests that an actor accepts what the other actor in the scene has stated, then expands on that line of thinking.

Let's try it to build on some ideas!

Instructions

- In your group, pick out the concrete ideas.
- As a group, choose one idea that the group will build on. Write it down.
- Go around the group. Each person will add or change something to the idea.
- Start every build by saying: "yes, and..."
- Build on as many ideas as you can in 20 minutes.

Example

What if there was a food truck that delivers meals?

Yes, and...

It's a food truck that delivers meals to families after school!

Yes, and...

They offer late night meals on the weekends to pay for families' meals during the week!

Exercise:

Newspaper of the Future



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Purpose

- Kick-off brainstorming by using this exercise to imagine a shared vision for the future
- Help a team or community articulate their common objectives, by exploring what it might look and feel like to arrive at the shared vision
- Begin to identify specific ideas that could be further developed in brainstorming
- This exercise can be utilized before the "Yes, And" activity

Tips for Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Abandon the plan if necessary:** Be responsive to the needs and desires of participants. Prioritize the group over the agenda.
- **Practice transparency:** Explain the purpose and plan for the session. Set clear expectations. Articulate what comes next.
- **Offer choice:** Offer participants choice wherever possible, such as meeting time/location, use of camera or chat (virtual) or whether to split into breakouts or remain as a group.
- **Give room:** If difficult feedback or painful emotions arise in the discussion, allow room for expression. Avoid minimizing the experience or proposing solutions that may bypass it.

Topic: Organizational Support for Staff Burnout

Instructions: Imagine that 30 years from now our organization is a national model for trauma-informed housing. What have we accomplished? What does housing look like since the organization started prioritizing organizational support for staff burnout?

The Housing Post

TRAUMA-INFORMED HOUSING

Vol. 1 / No. 1

December 2051

HEADLINE:

SUBHEADLINE:

Whose lives have changed as a result of our organization's work? How have their lives changed?

BODY:

What ideas made this 30-year vision possible? What does trauma-informed housing look like?
How did/does the organization prevent burnout for staff? What happened?

CONSIDER:

- How does leadership **interact** with staff? How do staff **interact** with staff?
- How do **spaces** offer respite and support for staff experiencing burnout?
- What **daily tasks, roles and responsibilities changed**? What resources do staff have now?
- What does it feel like to **go to work** at this place?



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Prototype Exercise Guide



This tool was developed by POAH in partnership with Design Impact as part of a larger effort to make housing more trauma-informed. To learn more about POAH's work and see how this exercise might fit into your own organization's efforts to become more trauma-informed, visit POAH's Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit at: traumainformedhousing.poah.org

Purpose

This activity can be done after brainstorming, when all ideas from the group have been surfaced. The purpose of this activity is to help the group move from a big idea to an actionable next step. At the end of this workshop, participant will identify concrete next steps to test their ideas.

Activity Type

Roaming Small Group Discussion (this activity works best in person, can be adapted for virtual setting).

Materials

- Large Post-it Pads
- Small Post-it Notes
- Dot stickers
- Sharpie markers
- Pens
- Print outs of ideas, including title + description

Fundamentals of Prototyping

- Test to learn
- Make it quick and inexpensive
- Test low-resolution and scaled-down
- Act experimentally and fail fast

Setting Up Your Space

Use large post-it pads to create a “station” for each of your ideas. On each post-it pad write/print:

- The title of your idea
- A brief description of your idea
- The question you are trying to answer through your idea, i.e. “How might we redefine leadership to give residents and staff more control over their day-to-day experience?”



ACTIVITY

Picking Your Idea

Review on your own:

Invite participants to visit each idea station to read over the ideas on their own. Use sticky note to add:

- **Your Assumptions:** What basic questions do we need to answer through our test?
- **Your Prototype Ideas:** What could we do to answer these questions?

Discuss as a group:

As a group, check out all the suggestions for prototype ideas. Use dots or stickers to decide on the most important key questions we have to answer and how you might want to test them. Spend about 15 minutes per station/idea.

- What is/are the most important key questions we have to answer?
- Which test(s) are our favorite?

Pick your top ideas:

Then, vote on the two ideas you’d like to test first.

- Which idea(s) can we realistically test in 4-6 weeks?
- Which ones feel urgent?



ACTIVITY

Designing Your Test

With your group, outline your test. Assign a notetaker!

Use a worksheet or large post-it pad to take notes:

1. **What** are you testing?
2. **Where** are you testing it?
3. **When** will it happen?
4. **How** will you measure it?
5. What do decision-makers **need to know** to invest more resources into this idea?
6. **Who** needs to implement this idea? Who should test the idea?
7. How will you **encourage people to try** your idea?





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