

## FactSheet#3:SupportingInclusiveCommunities

### A Guidefor Residential ServiceProviders on Your Role in the Neighborhood

When you open a “group home” in a residential area, you are not just a service provider —you are a neighbor. How your home operates day to day affects how the people living in your home are welcomed, and how the broader community views group homes. Being a good neighbor can help build trust and establish good will – which may be needed if concerns do arise.

#### Tips for Being a Good Neighbor:

##### 1. Be Proactive

- o Introduce yourself to nearby neighbors or neighborhood associations.
- o Invite residents to introduce themselves to neighbors as well, and support residents in getting to know their neighbors when desired.
- o Share your agency’s website and mission, which will help address neighbors’ natural curiosity and better understand what you do.
- o Talk to residents and guardians in advance to help them prepare for questions that neighbors may ask them. How would they like to respond? What information about themselves (e.g. hobbies, family/friends, etc.) would they like neighbors to know about them?

##### 2. When Neighbors Ask Questions

- o If you are approached, introduce yourself. Be cautious about sharing information about the person’s support needs.
- o If a neighbor has a concern, share contact information for your agency and leadership staff (not shift staff).
- o Politely let neighbors know that there are privacy restrictions that may prevent you from answering some of their questions.

##### 3. Educate Your Staff

- o Ensure they understand that their actions affect the relationship between residents and neighbors.
- o Educate your staff on what inclusion is, and what their role is in fostering inclusive communities
- o Train staff to be respectful of noise, parking rules, and to avoid hanging around outside during shifts.
- o Provide guidance on how to respond professionally to neighbor questions or complaints, including managing them up to leadership.

#### 4. Maintain your Property

- o Keep up with yard work, snow removal, garbage, etc.
- o Make your home look welcoming and inviting. Homes that appear well-cared-for help reduce stigma and concerns.

#### 5. Respond to Concerns Promptly

- o Take neighborhood feedback seriously, even if it's not related to care.
- o Let neighbors know when you've made changes in response to concerns (e.g., a new parking plan or adjusted staffing schedule).

### Legal & Ethical Responsibilities:

- You must follow **all local ordinances** (e.g., occupancy, fire safety, and noise). Different cities have different rules, so familiarize yourself with the rules of the city the home is located in.
- **Disability Rights Laws** (Americans with Disabilities Act, MN's Olmstead Plan, Fair Housing Act, etc.) prohibit discrimination and require that residents be treated equally and fairly. Contact guardians and/or case managers if you believe discrimination is occurring.
- You must maintain **confidentiality** about residents' diagnoses, histories, or care plans—even when neighbors are concerned. Only share broad information or seek guardian and/or case manager approval to share more.
- If an incident occurs that a neighbor witnesses, follow up with them. Some incidents may be traumatic to observe and prompt questions you will want to address.
- Ensure that your home complies with all areas of licensing, maltreatment reporting, Positive Support Rule, etc. Licensing reviews and investigation reports that reflect your company's compliance with rules will provide evidence to neighbors that your organization is doing things correctly.

### Resources for Providers:

- [DHS Licensing Lookup](#) – Check licensing and compliance records
- **Dakota County AFC Team** – Can support you with provider questions and training
- **MDH Assisted Living Unit** – 651-201-4200 or [health.assistedliving@state.mn.us](mailto:health.assistedliving@state.mn.us)
- **MAARC (Adult Abuse Reporting)** – 1-844-880-1574

### Remember - You're Not Alone:

You're part of a broader system of care. Work in partnership with counties, cities, families, and the community to ensure the individuals you serve can thrive in a safe, inclusive, and welcoming home environment.