



BEHAVIORAL ISSUES IN THE RESIDENCE HALLS

At the University of Central Florida

AO4 Needs Assessment Report

EME6607

Report Prepared by:

Diavanti Bedford

Piper Boswell

Jayanti Seiler

Date Submitted:

November 24, 2024

I. Executive Summary

The University of Central Florida (UCF) fosters a diverse student body representing a wide range of backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, religions, and lifestyles. This diversity contributes to a variety of student behaviors. There is a high volume of reported behavioral incidents that violate the UCF's Housing Community Living Guide (CLG). The CLG is designed to maintain an inclusive, safe, and respectful environment for all residents. Without the CLG and its associated standards, the community could experience compromised safety, disruptive and unsanitary conditions, and a negative impact on student academic performance. Such incidents are problematic and should be addressed. Data to complete this needs assessment was collected from staff and students through questionnaires, interviews, and surveys. These methods provided substantial data for analysis, enabling the determination that objectives were met.

The purposes for conducting the needs assessment were to (a) define (or verify) optimal student behaviors in residence halls, (b) define (or verify) actual student behaviors in residence halls, (c) determine the causes of behavior problems, and (d) formulate solutions for reducing or eliminating the behavior problems. To achieve this purpose, data and insights into the reasons behind CLG violations were gathered through questionnaires and interviews. Table 1 lists the sources used to conduct the needs assessment and the tools used to analyze them.

Questionnaires were effective tools for collecting quantifiable and qualifiable data and ensuring alignment with research objectives. Formal interviews employing questionnaires were used to elicit nuanced responses and provide clarity.

These methods provided substantial data for analysis, enabling the determination that objectives were met. The collected data was used to identify: Optimal levels of performance, actual levels of performance, discrepancies between optimal and actual performance, along with their causes, proposed solutions from various stakeholders. The results that the NA team gathered are a combination of Resident Assistant (RA) training, campus safety and security services, consequences for behavior that violates the Community Living Guide (CLG), community-building events, repercussions for unacceptable behaviors, mental health services and incentive programs, professional development opportunities and sense of community, consequences for violations and positive reinforcement strategies, and visibility of Community Living Guide (CLG).

The needs assessment team analyzed the collected data to assess the problem(s), generate recommendations, present these recommendations to stakeholders, and present the stakeholder's recommendations. This report took 3 months to prepare.

II. Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary	2
II.	Table of Contents	3
III.	Overview	4
	a. Context	4
	b. Problem Statement	4
	c. Purpose	4
	d. Rationale	5
IV.	Method	6
	a. Information Sources	7
	b. Data Gathering Tools and Techniques	7
	c. Procedure	9
	d. Constraints	9
V.	Results	10
	a. Optimals	10
	b. Actuals	11
	c. Causes	14
VI.	Recommendations	16
	a. Proposed solutions by Stakeholders	16
	b. Proposed solutions by Needs Assessment Team	20
VII.	Appendix	23
	a. Questionnaires	23
	b. Interview Questions	27

IV. Overview

Context (e.g., mission, size, location, initiating factors)

The University of Central Florida (UCF) houses approximately 7,000 student residents during the academic school year. 6,500 of these students are FTIC (first-time in college) students. This large and diverse group of students comes with many behavioral differences and challenges. These behaviors can lead to issues of compromised safety, community disruption, and affected studies. The student housing staff consists of 1 Director, 2 Associate Directors, 6 Assistant Directors, 12 Coordinators, 8 Graduate Coordinators, and 106 Resident Assistants. The mission of the Department of Housing and Residence Life is to provide residents with safe, inclusive housing communities that foster student success through innovative living and learning opportunities. UCF Housing Services -3684 Libra Dr. Orlando, Florida, 32816. We contacted and interviewed via questionnaires a varied sampling of people from this list. We utilized Extant Data Analyses/UCF Housing Behavior Reports and Student Performance Data and Assessments as well.

The Initiating Factors to conduct this assessment plan include student challenges such as the experience of living away from home for the first time, peer pressure and influence, lack of familiarity with the CLG, and the difficulties of residing with strangers, feedback, and an increase in complaints regarding student behavior. Organizational Goals and Priorities are a strategic initiative to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the DHRL Conduct Hearing process and a commitment to enhancing the fairness and timeliness of the process for all individuals involved.

Problem Statement

The problem is that there is a high volume of reported behavioral incidents that violate the UCF's Housing Community Living Guide (CLG). Such incidents are problematic and need to be addressed because they compromise student safety, result in disruptive and unsanitary conditions, and have a negative impact on student academic performance.

Purpose

This assessment is to identify why there is a high volume of reported behavioral incidents that violate the UCF's Housing Community Living Guide (CLG). Therefore, this assessment

aims to: (a) determine (or verify) optimal student behavior in residence halls, (b) determine (or verify) actual student behavior in residence halls, (c) determine causes for discrepancy between optimal and actual student behavior in residence halls, and (d) identify solutions for reducing or otherwise eliminating discrepancy between optimal and actual student behaviors based on identified causes.

Optimals: Student behavior issues are at a minimum.

Actuals: There are too many cases of student behavioral violations.

The needs assessment identified the most relevant and impactful causes through data collection and analysis. Addressing these root causes requires a multifaceted approach, including individual-level interventions and broader systemic changes. This includes;

- Targeted solutions to address these root causes and have written a recommendation to improve behavioral issues in the residence halls.
- Evaluations proving the effectiveness of current policies, procedures, and interventions.
- Evaluations of the training and support provided to staff.
- Identifying gaps in resources or services that might be contributing to the problem.

This assessment aims to inform the creation of a safer and more conducive living environment for all students residing in UCF's residence halls.

Table 1 lists sources used to conduct the needs assessment, and the tools used to analyze them. Surveys, Interviews, and questionnaires were used along with Behavioral Reports and Extant data, Student Perception Feedback Surveys, and Subject Matter Analysis, Research and literature. Surveys were effective tools for collecting quantifiable and qualifiable data and ensuring alignment with research objectives. Evaluations were standardized using rubrics and checklists. Formal interviews employing questionnaires elicited nuanced responses and provided clarity. These methods provided substantial data for analysis, enabling the determination that objectives were met.

Rationale

A comprehensive needs assessment is essential to move beyond reactive measures and implement proactive, data-driven strategies that address the root causes of behavioral issues. By investing in this assessment, UCF demonstrates its dedication to creating a residential community that fosters personal growth, respect, and responsibility.

The insights gained will empower the university to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively to cultivate a thriving and inclusive residential experience for all students.

V. Method

Table 1 lists the information sources, types of information, data-gathering tools, and techniques used to collect the data for this needs assessment. These data were used to gather information about the optimal and actual levels of performance, causes for any discrepancies between them, and proposed solutions derived from various sources. Finally, the analyzed data demonstrated the problems to be addressed. An overview of the procedures and constraints is included to provide a realistic view of our assessment process, although given more time we would have been able to review Training materials/ curriculum outlines/ previous evaluations.

Information was collected from 65 people with informal interviews, questionnaires, and student conduct reports. Informal interviews (OACS) were conducted with housing staff and resident assistants (RA), informal interviews were conducted with 2 housing staff members and 1 resident assistant, 10 student behavior reports were reviewed, and questionnaires were given to 35 Resident Assistants, 7 professional housing staff members, and 20 students.

Table 1. Information Sources, Types, Data Gathering Tools, and Techniques

Information Source	Optimals	Actuals	Causes	Solutions	Tool and Techniques
Housing Staff and Resident Assistant (RA)	x	x	x	x	Informal Interviews
Students	x	x	x	x	Extent Data Analysis, UCF Housing Behavior Reports
Students		x	x	x	Performance Data and Assessments
Students		x	x	x	Questionnaires
Resident Assistants		x	x	x	Questionnaires

Professional Housing Staff	x	x	x	x	Questionnaires
----------------------------	---	---	---	---	----------------

Table 1 lists the data gathered, the sources that provided the data, the method of data collection, and the type of information provided.

Information Sources, Data Gathering Tools, and Techniques

As listed in Table 1, the following sources were used to gather needs assessment data on the optimal and actual number of people that are having difficulty administering discipline and resolving conduct issues in the residence halls. Causes for any discrepancies between optimals, actuals, and potential solutions for eliminating and/or reducing the problem have been addressed.

Information Sources

Currently listed under Table 1, Column 1;

1. Housing Staff and Resident Assistant Informal Interviews
2. Extant Data Analyses/ UCF Housing Behavior Reports (Students)
3. Student Performance Data and Assessments
4. Student, Resident Assistant, Professional Housing Staff Questionnaires

Tools and Techniques

1. Housing Staff and Resident Assistant (RA) Interviews:

- Conducted one-on-one recorded interviews with a housing staff member and RA to gain deeper insights into their experiences and challenges related to enforcing student conduct.
- Included questions about specific scenarios they have encountered, how they handled them, and what additional training or support would have been helpful.
- We utilized an interview form with questions to ensure that all interviews are conducted consistently. Interviews were conducted one-on-one.

2. Extant Data Analyses/UCF Housing Behavior Reports:

- Reports on behavioral issues from UCF staff were used to gather optimal data and probable causes.

- Pre-existing information was collected from several sources that was used to obtain optimal and actual performance outcomes for students. Extant data sources include student perception feedback surveys and staff surveys.

3. Student Performance Data and Assessments:

- Student Performance Data and Assessments were conducted and analyzed for trends and themes in behavioral issues that might produce safety hazards and failure for students to gain the skills they need in their classes to be successful in the job market.

4. Student Questionnaires, Resident Assistant Questionnaires, Professional Housing Staff Questionnaires:

- A structured set of questions are designed to gather information from the various individuals (students/staff) to determine the optimal, actuals, causes, and solutions. They were created to collect specific information on our topic, such as opinions, experiences, or behaviors and are aimed at a target audience/specific group of respondents to gather relevant data.
- A mix of close-ended questions and open-ended questions that aim to collect information from the respondents.
- Administer questionnaires to students, resident assistants and professional housing staff to gather their perspectives on the current situation with student behavior.
- These questionnaires allow housing staff to determine obstacles to help identify the source of the behavioral issues.
- Administer questionnaires to gather their perspectives on the current situation with student behavior.
- Question the staff about the relevance of the training, its effectiveness in preparing them for real-life situations, and specific areas where they feel unprepared.
- The goal is that these surveys will highlight the need for housing staff to reduce behavioral issues in the residence halls.

Timeline

Table 2 shows the proposed tasks, lead team members, and completion dates.

Task	Lead	Start Date	End Date
Review Existing Materials	Piper	9/12/24	9/22/24

Develop Questionnaires	Piper	9/12/24	9/22/24
Develop Contact List for interviews withing UCF	Diavanti	9/12/24	9/22/24
Interview clients	Diavanti	10/20/24	11/5/24
Conduct Questionnaires	Jayanti	10/20/24	11/5/24
Questions	Jayanti	10/20/24	11/7/24
Quantify Results/Identify Needs & Priorities	Piper	11/8/24	11/9/24
Develop final report with NA	Piper, Jayanti, Diavanti	11/10/24	11/20/24
Communicate Findings to DHRL	Diavanti	11/23/24	11/23/24

Table 2 shows the planned timeline and team lead for each portion of the NA procedure.

Constraints

Diavanti Bedford, the Assistant Director for Housing and Residence Life at UCF, is a member of the assessment team. He has complete access to extant data and is a subject matter expert allowing the team to have few constraints with access to students, staff, and data.

Constraints to consider during the NA process are the engagement of students and staff when answering the survey questions as well as their answering the questions honestly and accurately. Finding an adequate number of willing participants to complete the surveys and asking the correct questions to acquire the information needed to solve the proposed problems are also constraints to consider.

Given more time to review training materials, curriculum outlines, previous evaluations, and the opportunity to conduct more data collection, a more accurate NA may be provided. Unfortunately, time was exceeded before the team was able to rank the recommendations. This will be a priority in the future.

Budget

Table 3 indicates the proposed budget for the needs assessment described in this plan. Students and staff were provided with pizza and beverages to show appreciation for their time and effort. This table shows the complete budget for this NA organized by cost.

Item Description	Item Number	Unit Cost	Total Cost/extension
Large cheese pizzas	5	\$ 11.34	\$ 56.70
Soda, Coke, diet coke, Sprite (case)	4	\$ 5.99	\$ 23.96
Ice (bags)	4	\$ 2.49	\$ 59.66
Paper plates (pkg)	1	\$ 12.99	\$ 12.99
Napkins (pkg)	1	\$ 5.99	\$ 5.99
Cookies (box)	3	\$ 4.99	\$ 14.97
Handheld Recorder for interviews	1	\$ 85.90	\$ 85.90
Copies of a questionnaire	65	\$ 1.12	\$ 72.80
Fuel	30 gallons	\$ 3.22	\$ 96.60
Mailing/Envelopes	65	\$ 0.90	\$ 58.50
Stamps	65	\$ 0.73	\$ 47.45
Total Estimated Budget			\$ 535.52

Table 3 indicates the proposed budget for the needs assessment described in this plan.

VI. Results

Results are as presented below to (a) determine (or verify) optimal behavioral incidents, (b) determine (or verify) actual behavioral incidents, (c) determine causes for discrepancy between optimals and actuals, and (d) formulate solutions for reducing or otherwise eliminating discrepancy between optimal and actual behavioral incidents.

Optimals

An analysis of behavioral incidents in UCF's residence halls revealed resident assistant (RA) training, campus safety and security, consequences for behavior violates the Community Living Guide (CLG), community-building events, repercussions and unacceptable behaviors, mental health services and incentive programs, professional development opportunities and sense of community, consequences for violations and positive reinforcement strategies, visibility of Community Living Guide (CLG) are all ideal optimals. These actuals are taking place.

Actuals

Resident Assistant (RA) Training

An analysis of behavioral incidents in UCF's residence halls revealed that RAs need some more significant training to enhance their ability to handle incidents effectively. RAs try to handle situations promptly and independently, but there are times when they seemed overwhelmed, especially during larger incidents. RAs say residents don't take them seriously and they face disrespect, especially when it comes to roommate agreement violations. These were findings taken from questionnaires given to professional housing staff and resident assistants (RAs).

Campus safety and security services

Safety for residents is an issue according to student resident questionnaires. The analysis revealed that campus safety and security services would be able to ensure that they are visible and approachable within housing areas, which can help deter negative behavior and increase residents' sense of protection. Also, residents feel disrespected, particularly during late-night parties that can get out of hand. A student said, "Yes, I've witnessed a couple of incidents, like loud parties and arguments in the common areas. One time, I saw a fight break out between two residents, which made me feel uncomfortable and worried about safety. An anonymous reporting option would definitely make me feel more secure about speaking up."

From the information we gathered from the 20 students in questionnaires, it seemed like a lot of behavioral issues stem from a lack of awareness about boundaries and respect for others. Some students might be new to living in a community, and people don't realize how their actions affect others. Students and RAs notice more issues on weekends, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. During midterms and finals, stress levels go up, and that can lead to more arguments or frustration among residents. The most common incidents housing staff encounter include noise complaints, alcohol-related disturbances, and conflicts between roommates. Parties can often lead to a mix of these issues. Some residents said they think the consequences are generally appropriate, but there's often a disconnect between the severity of the behavior and the penalties.

Consequences for behavior that violates the Community Living Guide (CLG)

Questionnaires with the 7 professional housing staff revealed that there's often a disconnect between the severity of the behavior and the penalties. Accountability is lacking and needs to be enforced according to staff and RAs. Consequences for behavior that violates the Community Living Guide (CLG) are needed. Many students have a basic

understanding of the CLG, but they don't think everyone fully grasps the details. There's a need for more engaging educational opportunities to ensure residents know what is expected of them according to professional housing staff. One of the main challenges is the reluctance of students to take the Community Living Guide (CLG) seriously, especially when they perceive it as overly strict or unnecessary. Technically the community living guide does not require a roommate agreement so RAs cannot say it is mandatory and there are no repercussions when it is not completed. Residents can continue to refuse to do the agreement. Additionally, student staff (RAs) feel hesitant to enforce rules among peers, which can complicate their roles and lead to inconsistencies in enforcement. Many students may not read the CLG thoroughly or might forget about it after orientation. More regular reminders and discussions are needed to help reinforce its importance. The roommate agreement is not mandatory when residents refuse to talk to each other as well as staff being part of the problem.

Community-building events

A few of the 7 professional housing staff revealed in their questionnaires that they need more community-building events, like potlucks, where residents can interact in a fun and relaxed setting. They need more interaction that focuses on community engagement and development and trivia or game nights with prizes and content that is focused on the CLG. Other community-building initiatives like workshops on effective communication, diversity awareness events, and peer-led discussions are needed to promote a more positive living environment.

Repercussions for unacceptable behaviors

Professional housing staff said they need to monitor incident reports and have open lines of communication with RAs and student staff to better understand the climate. Overall, while there are positive interactions and a sense of community, they need to address pockets of disrespect.

They need to add more specific repercussions for unacceptable behaviors and for not doing the roommate agreement. They need more training focused on empowerment in confrontational situations, how to have educational and productive conversations with students, and how to feel more comfortable enforcing rules.

Mental health services and incentive programs

In their questionnaires, 7 staff and 10 RAs expressed the need for mental health services being readily available and promoted within the housing community. Access to on-site counseling resources for students involved in conflicts would allow them to address

underlying issues more effectively, they said. Data collected revealed that students are experiencing stress or other challenges that are contributing to behavioral incidents. While staff receive some training, they still sometimes feel overwhelmed when dealing with serious incidents. A housing staff mentioned that they make sure to refer students and staff to counseling and offer them space to share how they are feeling. According to professional housing staff, allowing space for free discussion and feedback for community coordinators, or DHRL leadership is needed.

Professional development opportunities and sense of community

Additionally, professional housing staff need a centralized database of resources for students to help RAs guide residents to appropriate support services. They said increased professional development opportunities for staff, such as training in mental health awareness and crisis management, would enhance their ability to support student staff effectively. Regular feedback from leadership is needed. There is a need for a more caring living environment. Data collected determined that they need incentive programs that reward students for maintaining a clean and safe living environment, such as community recognition awards or small prizes for dorms that exhibit positive behavior.

In our surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, we gathered comments that regular social and educational events that encourage positive interactions among residents, helping to build a sense of community and reduce isolation, which can lead to behavioral issues are needed. Workshops on communication and conflict resolution are needed to foster respect and understanding between RAs and student residents.

Consequences for violations and positive reinforcement strategies

Questionnaires and interviews revealed that student behavior must be proactively addressed, and necessary support is needed before issues escalate. Because they concurred that the overall living environment in the residence halls is a mix of friendly and chaotic, and while many residents are respectful and welcoming, there are times when noise and disruptions make it hard to study or relax. Residents admitted that they are stressed and afraid of repercussions if they report issues they see. The information collected creates a tense atmosphere that can make some residents reluctant to engage with others or participate in hall events. It also affects their ability to focus on academics. One staff member said, “The university could provide more resources, like workshops on alcohol awareness and healthy relationships. Also, having trained mediators available for conflict resolution could help students navigate disputes without escalating tensions.” According to the questionnaires, consequences for violations, coupled with positive

reinforcement strategies, such as rewards for good behavior or community participation are needed.

Visibility of Community Living Guide (CLG)

Regular updates on housing policies and reminders in the Community Living Guide (CLG) are needed. One staff member said, "Regularly scheduled meetings or online webinars that go over the CLG and expectations could be beneficial. Additionally, creating engaging materials, like videos or infographics, could help make the information more accessible and memorable." The Community Living Guide is a solid framework for setting expectations, but its effectiveness largely depends on how well residents understand and engage with it. Regular reminders and discussions about its importance are needed. One housing staff member said, "I believe the Community Living Guide could benefit from clearer language and examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Additionally, more proactive enforcement measures, like regular check-ins and community discussions, could help reinforce its importance." Another said, "I recommend simplifying the language in the Community Living Guide to make it more accessible. Additionally, implementing a tiered response system for incidents could help in tailoring consequences to the severity and context of the behavior."

Repercussions for unacceptable behaviors that don't violate the CLG

To foster a more comprehensive understanding of the residential climate, professional housing staff have indicated the necessity of monitoring incident reports and maintaining open communication with Resident Assistants and student staff. While the overall residential climate is characterized by positive interactions and a sense of community, isolated instances of disrespect necessitate focused attention. To address this, it is recommended that more specific repercussions be implemented for unacceptable behaviors and for instances of non-compliance with the roommate agreement. Additionally, professional housing staff would benefit from supplementary training focused on empowerment in confrontational situations, techniques for facilitating educational and productive conversations with students, and strategies for enhancing comfort levels in enforcing rules.

Causes

This section of the needs assessment report identifies causes of the behavioral incidents in UCF's residence halls and the discrepancies between optimal and actual performance. These causes and discrepancies are;

1. Lack of Comprehensive RA Training:

- **Cause:** RAs are not adequately equipped to handle the range and complexity of incidents they encounter. They need more training in conflict resolution, mediation, mental health awareness, and de-escalation techniques.
- **Evidence:** RAs feel overwhelmed, residents don't take them seriously, and inconsistencies in enforcement arise.

2. Insufficient Campus Safety and Security Presence:

- **Cause:** Lack of visible and approachable security personnel contributes to a sense of insecurity among residents, particularly during weekends and late-night hours.
- **Evidence:** Students report feeling unsafe and uncomfortable due to incidents like fights and out-of-control parties.

3. Ineffective Communication and Enforcement of the CLG:

- **Cause:** The CLG is not effectively communicated or enforced. Students either don't fully understand it, don't take it seriously, or forget about it after orientation. The lack of mandatory roommate agreements further hinders conflict resolution.
- **Evidence:** Disconnect between the severity of behavioral violations and consequences, reluctance to complete roommate agreements, and inconsistencies in enforcement by RAs.

4. Lack of Community Building and Proactive Support:

- **Cause:** Insufficient community-building initiatives and proactive support systems fail to foster a sense of belonging and address residents' mental health needs.
- **Evidence:** Need for more community events, readily available mental health services, and a centralized database of resources for students.

5. Inadequate Resources and Support for Housing Staff:

- **Cause:** Housing staff lack adequate resources, training, and support to effectively address student behavioral issues and support RAs.
- **Evidence:** Staff feel overwhelmed when dealing with serious incidents, express a need for more professional development opportunities, and desire a more centralized database of resources.

6. Lack of Positive Reinforcement and Proactive Strategies:

- **Cause:** Over-reliance on consequences and a lack of positive reinforcement strategies create a tense atmosphere where residents are afraid to report issues.

- **Evidence:** Residents admit to being stressed and hesitant to report problems. Staff suggest the need for positive reinforcement strategies and proactive support to address student behavior before issues escalate.

Prioritized Causes:

This section of the needs assessment report identifies prioritized causes of the behavioral incidents in UCF's residence halls. These prioritized causes are;

1. Lack of Comprehensive RA Training
2. Ineffective Communication and Enforcement of the CLG
3. Students are easily influenced by other students who encourage them to participate in behavioral violations.
4. Lack of Community Building and Proactive Support

VII. Recommendations

The high volume of behavioral incidents in UCF's residence halls poses significant challenges to the university's mission of fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment.

These incidents not only disrupt the residential community but can negatively impact student well-being, academic success, and university experience. Addressing this issue is imperative to ensure the safety and security of all residents, promote a positive living environment, and uphold UCF's commitment to student success.

Proposed Solutions by Stakeholders:

Addressing the high volume of behavioral incidents that violate the Community Living Guide (CLG) in UCF University Housing requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some recommendations from our stakeholders that could help mitigate these issues:

Training for RAs and housing staff

Our recommendations begin with what we can do to help our Resident Assistants (RAs).

Providing training for RAs and housing staff on conflict resolution, mental health first aid, and crisis management can enhance their ability to handle incidents effectively. RAs can receive specialized training focused on active listening and cultural competency. This

would prepare them to handle incidents more effectively and foster a supportive community.

RAs usually try to handle situations promptly and independently, but there are moments when they seem overwhelmed, especially during larger incidents. RAs say residents don't take them seriously and they face disrespect, especially when it comes to roommate agreement violations.

We think additional support or training could help them manage better. There could be events held where the students can get to know their RAs and therefore relate to them better. We also think increasing the presence of RAs during weekends could help, as well as implementing stricter policies on noise levels after certain hours.

More regular check-ins could also create accountability among residents. Regular feedback sessions would also help RAs share challenges and solutions with each other. The University could offer ongoing training workshops and create a mentorship program where experienced RAs can guide newer staff. Additional training can also be offered in terms of on-call protocols and common calls and how to respond to them. This would be beneficial amongst both grads and RA staff.

Campus safety and security services

We recommend working closely with campus safety services to ensure that they are visible and approachable within housing areas, which can help deter negative behavior and increase residents' sense of protection.

It would be prudent to increase security presence and improve lighting in common areas to deter negative behaviors and ensure students feel safe in their living environment.

However, there are moments when some behaviors from a few residents make others feel disrespected, particularly during late-night parties that can get out of hand. A student said, "Yes, I've witnessed a couple of incidents, like loud parties and arguments in the common areas. One time, I saw a fight break out between two residents, which made me feel uncomfortable and worried about safety. An anonymous reporting option would definitely make me feel more secure about speaking up." From the information we gathered, it seemed like a lot of behavioral issues stem from a lack of awareness about boundaries and respect for others. Some students might be new to living in a community, and people don't realize how their actions affect others. We recommend a more restorative approach to promote understanding and accountability. Also, implementing additional security measures, surveillance cameras, or a 24/7 security presence, can deter problematic behavior.

Community Living Guide (CLG) expectations of behavior

One of the main challenges is the reluctance of students to take the Community Living Guide (CLG) seriously, especially when they perceive it as overly strict or unnecessary.

Technically the community living guide does not require a roommate agreement so RAs cannot say it is mandatory and there are no repercussions when it is not completed. Residents can continue to refuse to do the agreement.

Additionally, student staff (RAs) feel hesitant to enforce rules among peers, which can complicate their roles and lead to inconsistencies in enforcement. We recommend implementing comprehensive orientation sessions for new residents that thoroughly explain the CLG, expectations for behavior, and the consequences of violations. This can help set a positive tone from the outset. There could be more education. Many students may not read the CLG thoroughly or might forget about it after orientation. More regular reminders and discussions would help reinforce its importance. We recommend simplifying the language in the Community Living Guide to make it more accessible. Additionally, implementing a tiered response system for incidents to help in tailoring consequences to the severity and context of the behavior. We recommend making the roommate agreement mandatory so that it is not so hard to address issues, such as, when residents refuse to talk to each other and us.

Restorative approach and system of accountability

The consequences are generally appropriate, but there's often a disconnect between the severity of the behavior and the penalties. Sometimes, a more restorative approach could be more effective in promoting understanding and accountability.

We would like to develop a system of accountability that includes clear guidelines and consequences for behavior that violates the CLG. This could involve restorative justice practices that focus on repairing harm and promoting dialogue among affected parties. Many students have a basic understanding, but we don't think everyone fully grasps the details. There's a need for more engaging educational opportunities to ensure residents know what is expected of them. We would also like to introduce an anonymous reporting mechanism for residents to report incidents or concerns without fear of retribution. This could encourage more students to come forward about issues affecting them.

Events and initiatives

Implementing community-building activities, such as team-building workshops or cultural events, could foster better relationships among residents. Additionally, educational programs on topics like substance use awareness and healthy communication would

promote a more respectful atmosphere. Organizing regular social events and workshops encouraging positive resident interactions could be promising.

These could include team-building exercises, academic support groups, and cultural exchange activities to strengthen community bonds. We would love to see more community-building events, like potlucks, where residents can interact in a fun and relaxed setting. More interaction that focuses on community engagement and development and trivia or game nights with prizes and content that is focused on the CLG is recommended. We recommend creating incentive programs that reward students for maintaining a clean and safe living environment, such as community recognition awards or small prizes for dorms that exhibit positive behavior. Executing these recommendations would be incredible for us we feel, as this would create a more respectful and supportive housing environment that enhances student safety and academic performance. Workshops on communication and conflict resolution could also help foster respect and understanding. Community-building initiatives like workshops on effective communication, diversity awareness events, and peer-led discussions could promote a more positive living environment. Additionally, establishing a 'community ambassador' program could empower residents to actively maintain a respectful community.

Surveys and feedback sessions

We recommend conducting biannual surveys to gather resident feedback on community living conditions and incidents. Then, use this data to identify patterns and areas that need improvement, adapting strategies accordingly.

We could conduct regular surveys and feedback sessions to gauge student sentiment and behavior. Additionally, we monitor incident reports and have open lines of communication with RAs and student staff to better understand the climate. Overall, while there are positive interactions and a sense of community, we need to address pockets of disrespect. We want to add more specific repercussions for certain unacceptable behaviors and for not doing the roommate agreement. We need more training focused on empowerment in confrontational situations, how to have educational and productive conversations with students, and how to feel more comfortable enforcing rules.

Mental health services

In addition, ensure that mental health services are readily available and promoted within the housing community.

Providing easy access to counseling can help address underlying issues contributing to behavioral incidents. More training on conflict resolution and mental health awareness would be incredibly helpful. Access to on-site counseling resources for students involved

in conflicts would also allow us to address underlying issues more effectively. Access to mental health professionals for immediate consultation during incidents would be valuable. Additionally, having a centralized database of resources for students could help RAs guide residents to appropriate support services. Increased professional development opportunities for staff, such as training in mental health awareness and crisis management, would enhance our ability to support student staff effectively. Regular feedback from leadership can also help us refine our approaches. Establish peer mentorship or support programs where trained students can guide and assist their peers, creating a more caring living environment.

Proposed Solutions by Needs Assessment Team:

To effectively address the high volume of behavioral incidents in UCF's housing, the NA Assessment Team offers the following recommendations.

Regular social and educational events

First and foremost, we recommend facilitating regular community meetings where residents can discuss concerns, share experiences, and collectively develop strategies to improve living conditions. This encourages accountability and a sense of ownership.

In our surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, we heard comments that led us to recommend organizing regular social and educational events that encourage positive interactions among residents, helping to build a sense of community and reduce isolation, which can lead to behavioral issues. These incidents can really harm the sense of community. Workshops on communication and conflict resolution could also help foster respect and understanding.

Behavioral intervention teams

The NA Team also recommends establishing behavioral intervention teams that include housing staff, mental health professionals, and academic advisors to proactively address student behavior and provide necessary support before issues escalate. Because they concurred that the overall living environment in the residence halls is a mix of friendly and chaotic, and while many residents are respectful and welcoming, there are times when noise and disruptions make it hard to study or relax, we recommend creating peer-led support initiatives that encourage students to look out for one another, fostering a culture of accountability and support within the community. Implementing anonymous feedback channels for residents to report issues or concerns without fear of repercussions would be useful as well. This can help identify patterns and specific areas needing attention.

Providing training for Resident Assistants (RAs) and housing staff on conflict resolution, mental health first aid, and crisis management can enhance their ability to handle incidents effectively. The information collected creates a tense atmosphere that can make some residents reluctant to engage with others or participate in hall events. It also affects their ability to focus on academics; “The university could provide more resources, like workshops on alcohol awareness and healthy relationships. Also, having trained mediators available for conflict resolution could help students navigate disputes without escalating tensions.” We recommend developing a structured system of consequences for violations, coupled with positive reinforcement strategies, such as rewards for good behavior or community participation.

Mental health support

Strengthen ties with campus counseling services to provide accessible mental health support for students experiencing stress or other challenges that may contribute to behavioral incidents. While staff receive some training, they sometimes feel overwhelmed when dealing with serious incidents.

More comprehensive training on conflict resolution and mental health support would help them feel more prepared to handle various situations effectively.

Clarifying the Community Living Guide (CLG)

Furthermore, it would be advantageous to consistently convey updates to housing policies and circulate reminders regarding the Community Living Guide (CLG) through various channels like newsletters, social media, and bulletin boards. This would help to maintain awareness and adherence to these standards. Although the Community Living Guide provides a strong foundation for establishing expectations, its efficacy is largely contingent on the residents' comprehension and engagement with its content.

Therefore, consistent reminders and discussions emphasizing its significance could improve its effectiveness in cultivating a positive residential environment. A housing staff member commented, "I believe the Community Living Guide could be improved with clearer language and examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Moreover, more proactive enforcement measures, such as regular check-ins and community dialogues, could help to reinforce its importance." Another staff member proposed, "I recommend simplifying the language in the Community Living Guide to make it more accessible. Surveys and feedback sessions. To enhance our comprehension of the residential environment, we propose the implementation of annual surveys to collect resident feedback on community living conditions and incidents. This data will enable us

to discern recurring issues and areas for enhancement, thereby facilitating the refinement of existing strategies.

Training for RAs and housing staff

Our initial recommendations pertain to enhancing the support and resources available to our Resident Assistants (RAs). It is proposed that comprehensive training be provided to RAs and housing staff, encompassing conflict resolution strategies, mental health first aid, and crisis management techniques. This training would equip them to navigate and de-escalate incidents effectively. Furthermore, specialized training for RAs, focusing on active listening and cultural competency, would foster a more inclusive and supportive residential community. Observations indicate that while RAs generally manage situations promptly and independently, they may encounter challenges during complex or large-scale incidents. Reportedly, some RAs perceive a lack of respect from residents, particularly concerning roommate agreement violations. To address this, we suggest implementing additional support mechanisms and training opportunities. Organizing events that facilitate positive interactions between RAs and residents could enhance rapport and mutual understanding.

Increasing RA presence during weekends and establishing stricter noise policies during designated quiet hours may also contribute to a more conducive living environment. Furthermore, implementing regular check-ins with residents could foster a sense of accountability and facilitate early intervention in potential conflicts. Regular feedback sessions among RAs would enable the exchange of insights and strategies for addressing common challenges. The University could further support RAs through ongoing training workshops and a mentorship program, pairing experienced RAs with newer staff members. Offering additional training on on-call protocols and common incident response procedures would benefit both graduate and undergraduate RAs.

Revamp Sanctions

While the current consequences are generally considered appropriate, there appears to be a misalignment between the severity of behavioral infractions and the corresponding sanctions. In certain instances, a restorative approach, which emphasizes understanding and accountability, may be more effective. It is recommended that a comprehensive accountability system be developed, encompassing clear guidelines and consequences for violations of the Community Living Guide (CLG). This system could incorporate restorative justice practices, which prioritize repairing harm and facilitating dialogue

among involved parties. Collaboration with other campus departments could aid in the development of sanctions that are restorative in nature.

Feedback

Finally, conducting anonymous surveys to gauge student sentiment and experiences can identify underlying issues and areas for improvement in housing policies. According to housing/professional staff, allowing space for free discussion and feedback for community coordinators, or DHRL leadership would be useful.

With more time to conduct supplementary interviews and observations in addition to hearing from more students, staff, and housing professionals, we could have perhaps made more detailed recommendations. Although, we are confident that implementing these several recommendations can help create a safer, more respectful living environment, ultimately supporting students' academic success and well-being.

VIII. Appendix (e.g., data collection instruments)

Data Collection Instruments

The appendix includes the instruments used to collect needs assessment data from students, RAs and professional staff. This Microsoft Form Questionnaire has a structured set of questions designed to gather information from various individuals (students/staff) to determine the optimal, actual, causes, and solutions.

They were created to collect specific information on our topic, such as opinions, experiences, or behaviors and are aimed at a target audience/ specific group of respondents to gather relevant data. These tools have proved invaluable for collecting data systematically and efficiently.

Questionnaires

Questions for Students

Link to student questionnaire:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&FormId=FS-TuzjvukKR_PPFnV3R8RuGWi6IK_NDkwOkJ3j6jFpUQ0VFS1ZYNVlzSzBBVEZVNIQ3T1pWRDU4QS4u

General

- How would you describe the overall living environment in your residence hall?
- Do you feel safe and respected in your residence hall? Why or why not?
- Have you personally experienced or witnessed any behavioral incidents in your residence hall? If so, can you describe them?
- How do you think these behavioral incidents affect the overall community in the residence halls?
- Do you feel comfortable reporting behavioral incidents? If not, why?

Specific to potential causes of behavioral issues

- What do you think are the main reasons behind behavioral issues in the residence halls?
- Do you think alcohol or drug use contributes to behavioral problems?
- Are there any specific times of day, week, or year when you notice more behavioral issues?
- Do you believe there is enough awareness and education about the Community Living Guide and expectations for behavior?
- Do you feel like the RA's and other staff effectively address behavioral issues when they arise?

Regarding solutions and improvements

- What changes or improvements do you think could be made to reduce behavioral issues in the residence halls?
- What types of programs or initiatives would you like to see implemented to promote a more positive and respectful living environment?
- Do you have any suggestions for how the university can better support students in making responsible choices and resolving conflicts peacefully?
- How can the university improve communication and education about the Community Living Guide and expectations for behavior?

Questions for Resident Assistants

Link to Resident Assistant questionnaire:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&FormId=FS->

General

- How would you describe the overall effectiveness of the current Community Living Guide in maintaining a positive living environment?
- What are the most common types of behavioral incidents you encounter in your role?
- Do you feel adequately equipped and supported to address behavioral issues? Why or why not?
- Have you observed any patterns or trends in behavioral incidents (e.g., related to specific locations, times, or groups of students)?

Specific to enforcement and challenges:

- What are the biggest challenges you face when enforcing the Community Living Guide?
- Do you feel that the consequences for violating the Community Living Guide are appropriate and effective?
- Do you believe students understand the Community Living Guide and the expectations for behavior?
- How do you handle situations where you witness a behavioral incident but are unsure how to respond?
- Do you feel comfortable addressing behavioral issues with students from diverse backgrounds?

Regarding training and support:

- What type of training have you received on conflict resolution, de-escalation, and addressing behavioral issues?
- Do you feel that the training you received adequately prepared you for your role?
- What additional training or support would you find helpful in addressing behavioral issues?
- Do you feel comfortable seeking guidance or support from your supervisor or other staff members when dealing with challenging situations?

Regarding solutions and improvements:

- What changes or improvements do you think could be made to the Community Living Guide or its enforcement?
- What additional resources or support would you need to address behavioral issues more effectively?
- How can the university better support student staff in their role of enforcing the Community Living Guide?
- What types of programs or initiatives do you think would be helpful in preventing behavioral issues and promoting a more positive living environment?

Questions for Professional Housing Staff

Link to Housing/Professional Staff questionnaire:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&FormId=FS-TuzjvukKR_PPFnV3R8RuGWi6iK_NDkwOkJ3j6jFpUNFFQNDBGVhDSly2MFg5WTJOV05FWVMySS4u&Token=4117b5157bc548f89c9cc75e21b19ff6

General:

- From your perspective, how effectively does the current Community Living Guide address behavioral issues in the residence halls?
- What are the most usual challenges student staff face when enforcing the Community Living Guide?
- How do you assess the overall climate and culture within the residence halls in terms of student behavior and respect for community standards?
- Have you noticed any trends or patterns in the types of behavioral incidents or the times/locations where they occur?

Specific to supervision and support:

- How do you currently train and support student staff in enforcing the Community Living Guide and addressing behavioral issues?
- Do you believe the current training and support are adequate? If not, what improvements would you suggest?
- How do you evaluate the performance of student staff in handling behavioral incidents?
- What challenges do you face in supervising student staff and ensuring consistent enforcement of the Community Living Guide?

Regarding communication and collaboration:

- How effectively do you communicate expectations and policies related to student behavior to both student staff and residents?
- How do you collaborate with other departments or stakeholders (e.g., Counseling and Psychological Services, Student Conduct) to address behavioral issues?
- How do you gather and utilize feedback from student staff and residents to improve the residential experience and address behavioral concerns?

Regarding solutions and improvements:

- What changes or improvements would you recommend to the Community Living Guide or its enforcement procedures?
- What additional resources or support do you believe would be beneficial for student staff in addressing behavioral issues?
- How can the university better support professional staff in their role of supervising and training student staff?
- What types of programs or initiatives do you think would be effective in preventing behavioral issues and fostering a positive community environment?

Interviews:

The following interview questions were conducted one-on-one and recorded.

Thank you for letting us take time with you to conduct this interview. Our time together should take _____. The data that I collect in this interview will be anonymous. That means you will not be identified in any way by your comments. The comment will be used in aggregate form to identify behavioral and safety issues in the residence hall. Specific comments may be quoted in reporting the data if they are particularly illustrative, however the respondent will not be identified and any identifying information will be removed from the quotation. Even though we are recording the interviews, the audio recording is for our use only to make sure we don't miss anything. When we are done transcribing our conversation, we will destroy the audio recording.

1. We will mention a topic to you.
2. Please rate the topic first as to how important the topic is to your job (1= not important at all; 5= critical)
3. Then please rate your own self-assessment regarding your current level of knowledge about the topic. (1= I do not know very much about this subject; 5= I am an expert in this subject)

4. Last, for each topic, if you want to add any comments, please feel free to do so.

Topics:

1. Safety issues in the residence halls.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

2. Making sure Conduct Hearing Officers know about any changes in policies, procedures, or laws.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

3. DHRL Conduct Hearing Officers are aware of behavioral issues.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

4. Plans to fix any imbalances in behavior and conduct.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

5. Conduct Hearing Officer cases regarding student conduct in the residence halls.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

6. Getting feedback on how you are doing.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

7. Time it takes to finish a case.

- a. Importance ranking: _____

- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

8. Manageable workload regarding student conduct.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

9. Resources or technology to get job done.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____

10. Training and support.

- a. Importance ranking: _____
- b. Self-assessment ranking: _____
- c. Comments: _____