



## RESIDENT SERVICES MANUAL

### South Richmond Studios

This manual is a summary of policies and procedures for on-site supportive services at South Richmond Studios.

#### *Agency Overview*

In 1988, Virginia Supportive Housing was incorporated (known then as SRO Housing of Richmond) to develop and operate single-room occupancy housing for homeless, low income, single adults in the Richmond metropolitan area. Its first SRO project, New Clay House, was opened in 1992, and was the first permanent supportive housing project in Virginia. As VSH celebrates its 30-year anniversary, we now operate 19 facilities across the state for a total of 619 units of housing with supportive services.

#### **Our Mission**

Virginia Supportive Housing's (VSH) mission is to end homelessness by providing permanent housing and supportive services. Founded in 1988, VSH was the first non-profit organization in Virginia to develop and provide permanent supportive housing for homeless single adults. Since then, VSH continues its tradition of *Making Homelessness History*.

As Virginia's largest supportive housing organization, we developed and we manage more than 650 housing units in 15 communities, and we serve hundreds of additional clients in permanent housing with private landlords.

The individuals and families we serve represent the lowest income levels in the Commonwealth—generally 30 percent or less than an area's median income. Their financial situations often are compounded by challenges such as substance abuse, mental illness and physical disabilities.

To fulfill our mission we depend on a wide variety of funding sources including individuals, corporations, foundations, governments and faith-based communities.

#### **We Deliver Results**

VSH's strong history of success reaffirms our mission and proves the effectiveness of permanent supportive housing:

- More than 95% of our residents do not return to homelessness.
- Average incomes of our residents increase by 127% within one year of becoming permanently housed.

Permanent supportive housing combines affordable housing, which usually includes rental subsidies, and individualized support services, such as counseling, case management and community connection.

The combination of stable housing and supportive services delivered through our own team of social workers empowers residents to reclaim their lives.

We also embrace the strategy of Housing First, which emphasizes access to stable housing above all other needs. Once stably housed, individuals and case workers can address the conditions that caused homelessness, such as mental illness and substance-related disorders. Many Housing Ready programs—cousins of Housing First—typically require sobriety or enrollment in treatment programs before clients can access permanent housing, thus adding barriers to ending homelessness.

### **Who We Serve**

VSH targets our services to people with the greatest need, including those who are chronically homeless, medically vulnerable or severely mentally ill. Without housing and supportive services, many most likely would die on the streets.

After moving into permanent supportive housing, formerly homeless individuals face many new challenges such as maintaining housing, improving their economic conditions, and recovering from mental health disorders, substance abuse conditions, traumatic experiences and other life challenges.

### **Our Approach Goes Far Beyond Shelter**

Our unified approach to housing and supportive services helps tenants stay housed and succeed in other areas of life.

- Residents can stay as long as they wish in the communities we develop and manage, provided they pay rent and live within the guidelines of the community.
- Our on-site case management from more than 40 social workers helps residents maintain their housing and become more independent.
- Counseling, financial literacy programs and community activities backed by 800 volunteers enhance residents' quality of life and empower them to make changes.

### **Making Homelessness History**

As an affordable housing developer, we seek innovative solutions and partnerships that have resulted in several "firsts:"

- VSH was the first in the nation to develop regionally funded, permanent supportive apartments for formerly homeless individuals. The development, Gosnold Apartments, is

an adaptive re-use of a former bottling plant and serves individuals from Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and Portsmouth.

-New Clay House opened in Richmond in 1992 as Virginia's first studio apartments with support services for 47 formerly homeless residents.

-In 2000 we launched the first affordable rental housing program in Virginia for homeless families moving from shelters and transitional housing.

-Our first mixed-income apartment community serving formerly homeless as well as low-income individuals, The Crossings, opened in Charlottesville in 2012.

VSH also created a regional public-private work group to fill a gap for services for people with severe and persistent mental illness and long periods of homelessness. To address these needs, we launched "A Place to Start" in 2007 and continue to operate it as Richmond's only housing and intensive services program for this targeted population.

### *Blended Management*

This is a concept designed by Lakefront SRO in Chicago, to help reduce conflicts between staff and residents as well as to help residents maintain their housing. Information will be received from the Property Manager regarding all pending legal and managerial action in relation to VSH residents, i.e. late notices, noncompliance letters, unlawful detainees, evictions, etc. Residential Services will have access to logbooks, incident reports, and management's resident files. Issues pertaining to lease or property violations, i.e. rent being late, cleanliness of a unit, etc. are shared and dealt with jointly by Property Management and Residential Services. Information derived from the Property Manager and general operations of the building can be grounds for intervention by Residential Services Staff. The Residential Services Manager will also attend periodic site-staff meetings.

Virginia Supportive Housing is primarily a housing program. The property management and residential services division work cooperatively in helping residents maintain their housing. It is essential, to help resolve any conflicts that may impede this process.

### *Service Overview*

VSH residents are not required to meet with the Residential Services staff. Participation is voluntary and at any time residents can refuse our intervention. There may be times when Residential Services staff, along with the Property Manager, in accordance with VSH's implementation of the principles of Blended Management, may be asked to intervene in certain situations, i.e. resident conflicts, grievances, or late rental payments.

Although resident services are voluntary and based on the residents' needs and requests, it is important to engage all residents a minimum of once each month.

Engagement includes the provision of services, communications about community events, and ongoing support. We know engagement in services is highly correlated with housing stability, so it is important for services staff members to have monthly contact with all residents to ensure their needs are being met. Strategies to engage residents include, but are not limited to, monthly home visits, monthly phone calls, set office hours, an updated monthly calendar of events, and posted notification of services hours and contact information. In addition, the facilitation of individual and group meetings to facilitate monthly community meetings, quarterly focus groups and annual events that provide invaluable opportunities for connecting with residents, building rapport, and establishing trusting partnerships.

Annual diversity and cultural sensitivity trainings equip all staff with the education, tools, and resources to effectively engage residents of all races, ethnic backgrounds, genders, and sexes. It is important to be sensitive to and appreciative of our residents' diverse backgrounds. Since activities are tailored to the residents' needs and interests, it is important to be sure no resident is excluded from an activity based on these factors. For example, bible study groups should be non-denominational and/or accept residents from all religious backgrounds.

### *Screenings*

Property Management as well as Residential Services interview all housing applicants for any Virginia Supportive Housing property. Information from both interviews is used, along with candidate references, in determining eligibility. When they apply, applicants must not be living in traditional housing, either alone or with friends. They must be homeless, or in immediate danger of being homeless in order to qualify.

The Property Manager will perform a criminal background check and a credit history on all housing applicants and abide by the HUD regulations set forth to follow the local housing authorities' exclusionary criteria.

The Property Manager informs Residential Services of move-in dates for all accepted applicants. At this point, all information collected during the screening is used to begin a chart on the new resident.

### *Orientation*

Shortly after move-in, the supportive services specialist will conduct an initial interview with the resident. This is to inform the resident of daily/monthly activities at their home, to collect demographic data and to explain the workings of residential services to the new resident. During this time they are given a three-page overview about the agency and residential services in particular. This "Orientation for New Residents" discusses the following topics: Confidentiality, Blended Management, Board of Directors Representation, Resident Achievement Program, Activities, Use of the Phone, Life



Skills, Food Share, Bus Tickets, and other specialized programs the agency will periodically offer.

### *Assessment and Case Management*

The role of the supportive services specialist is to support residents and engage them in a collaborative plan that maximizes their personal strengths and allows them the greatest degree of sustainable independence. If after moving in, a resident agrees to a more proactive working arrangement with Residential Services, staff will interview them in order to complete a biopsychosocial history, needs assessment and if requested, a treatment plan. This will help identify the nature of the applicants' problems, strengths, weaknesses, coping skills, pre-existing supports (family, social services, etc.), resources needed to address issues identified, and the residents motivation to enhance his/her life.

A plan of care will be created that will identify the resident's goals as a foundation for initial intervention. Staff will provides assistance to residents in developing the skills necessary to address these goals as well as referring them to the appropriate community-based treatment centers. The staff and resident work together to evaluate the progress made. If needed, new or revised goals will then be established. Referrals and advocacy play a tremendous part of case management services. VSH makes a conscious effort to not duplicate pre-existing community-based services.

Topics of concern and goals for many of our residents have included: budgeting, transition from homelessness to permanent residence, self-esteem issues, substance abuse issues, mental health issues, hygiene and housekeeping concerns, employment, education, social interaction, physical health issues, job training, employment counseling, and public benefits.

The supportive services staff also provide assistance in conflict resolution and crisis intervention as it pertains to the residents.

With the exception of the move-in interview discussed earlier, and the initial applicant screening, all subsequent meetings between residents and staff will be strictly on a voluntary, mutually agreed-upon basis.

### *Resident Activities and Programs*

Residential Services continually encourage social engagement and community investment. Both staff and trained volunteers offer a wide array of services based on the specific needs and feedback for each property. We utilize data and information gathered during the community scan, annual resident surveys, monthly community meetings, and quarterly focus groups to ensure that activities are in alignment with the needs and goals of our residents. Goals for South Richmond Studios are as follows:



- 95% of all residents will remain housed at least a year
- 85% of all residents will gain access to benefits for which they are eligible (i.e. SNAP, Medicaid/health insurance, SSI/SSDI)
- 65% will experience an increase in annual income
- 10% will participate in the move on program and successfully graduate to a less intensive permanent housing setting

The 2018 annual outcomes for South Richmond Studios demonstrated the following successes:

- 97% of the residents remained housed a year or more
- 85% of the residents gained or maintained the benefits for which they are eligible
- 65% experienced an average annual income increase of \$190
- Three residents were able to successfully move on to other permanent housing vacating units that allowed us to house three additional individuals experiencing homelessness

Activities may include, but are not limited to, bingo games, birthday parties, movie nights, holiday dinners, picnics at local parks, tickets to local sports events or museums, nutrition, medication management, anger control, budgeting, GED tutoring, healthy relationships, religious activities, AA/NA meetings. Information regarding activities is posted on the bulletin board at each location.

Activities are organized in conjunction with residents' input, assistance and leadership. Staff also facilitate the development, organization and implementation of therapeutic/educational groups i.e. conflict resolution, health issues, Men's Group, Women's Group, Art Therapy Group, nutrition or cooking classes, and money management classes. When applicable, residents are encouraged to participate in the local civic association.

Current ongoing partners/activities at South Richmond Studios include:

- Monthly birthday celebratory event – dates vary based on the volunteer group's availability (current volunteer groups include students from William and Mary, students from VCU, employees from Capital One, employees from Allen Myers, and individual volunteers)
- Commonwealth Chapel – monthly community dinners
- The Heights Church – monthly community lunches
- Joni Teague – monthly haircuts
- Angela Schneider – monthly dinner and Bingo

- VSH Junior Board (Leslee Oliver) – holiday dinners and cards
- Jillian Mayers and youth group – holiday decorating each December
- All Saints Catholic School – monthly dinners
- Spring Creek Baptist Church – monthly events based on residents’ requests to include, but not limited to, Bible Study, board games, movie night, and meals
- Carice Coleman – quarterly game nights
- Planned Parenthood – monthly workshops covering a variety of topics based on feedback from residents (i.e. health relationships, STI education and prevention)
- Mount Gilead Church – weekly support groups and weekly bible studies
- Nutritionist/Dietician – monthly (exact date and time varies depending on individual’s availability)
- Anger Management Group – every Saturday
- Spread the Vote – monthly groups to help with obtaining identification cards and voter registration
- AA/NA – weekly support group every Thursday evening
- Dave Reynal – Weekly Bible Study
- Community Meetings – first Tuesday of every month
- Annual Health Fair – includes local providers and employers offering educational, health, and employment opportunities
- Annual Resident Holiday Event – an annual tradition each December to provide a holiday meal and celebratory activities to honor our residents

### *Employment and Training Program*

Our Employment and Training Program seeks to identify the strengths and interest of the resident and match them with cooperating business. Staff act as both job coach and mentor, assisting residents each step of the way. Participating residents work on interview skills, proper dress, resume writing and improving communication skills, on their way to successful employment. At all times, the individual receiving employment supports is the central driving force in the development of options and decisions. For qualifying residents, referrals are made to DRS (Department of Rehabilitative Services), who will then take responsibility for the training and placement, and the role of VSH staff is then as a consultant or liaison. If a resident does not have a qualifying condition, then staff will perform a job history, assess interests and abilities and develop a plan based on this assessment. Once a job is secured staff will follow up



regularly with the resident to ensure adequate job performance and maximize the potential for a prolonged and successful work experience.

### *Recovery Program*

For some residents, recovery from drug or alcohol addiction is a long and difficult process and they find that they need extra support. Supportive Services has developed an innovative new Recovery Program for all our residents. This program seeks to identify high-risk substance abusers and engages them in a supportive program. Program participants fill out a special intake form unique to this program that looks specifically at their recovery history. The program includes both individual and group meetings that provide extra support and accountability along their path to recovery. Existing community supports are maintained, and additional supports in-house are created that reflect the needs and wishes of program participants and also maximize the chance for successful sobriety. Existing community supports are defined as but not limited to, AA/NA meetings, other support group meetings, counseling sessions, or therapeutic aftercare treatment. Staff monitor resident participation in community services and act as an agent of accountability as well as an encourager. By design, program goals vary widely from resident to resident based on numerous factors ranging from type of supports available, to length of sobriety. Referrals are made to more intensive treatment, either inpatient or outpatient as needed, and staff follow and monitor participants' progress through all stages of this program.

### *Literacy and Skills Program*

In cooperation with other agencies, Residential Services staff engage appropriate residents in a literacy program, as a step toward maximizing self-sufficiency. We feel this issue, long overlooked, is essential to successful independence of our residents. We market the program during resident orientations but also periodically through the year in the newsletter and during community meetings. Several area agencies have successfully worked with our residents in the past. On occasion, residents who for one reason or another are unable to utilize community resources have been paired with volunteers, also with great success.

Residents looking to expand their computer skills can now begin training at each location. Computers and training software are available to all residents wanting to refine their skills in the most common applications including Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, Access, as well as Windows 95, Windows 98, the internet and browser software. These programs are free and available to all residents to use at their leisure. If residents want more intensive training beyond what is offered, staff will refer to community based programs for continuing education. As with all of our programs, residents take an active role in the direction and make up of services.

### *Networking*

In order to stay abreast of changes within the area resource network and to maintain good working relationships, networking is expected of the Residential Services division. Networking includes attending area meetings pertinent to our residents. These include specialized workgroups made up of other professionals in the field and are as follows:

- Case Conferencing (works to significantly increase emergency, low barrier shelter for single adults)
- Housing Warriors Workgroup (works to identify, develop and coordinate substance abuse programs that improve the availability services and fill unmet needs for the homeless population in the Metro Richmond area)
- Mental Health Workgroup, (works to coordinate procedural responses between medical providers, county and city assistance programs and homeless provider care)
- Local COC meetings (seeks to identify local and national trends in service provision and provide strategic implementation of effective services)
- Homeless Service Providers meeting, (works to update and provide support to individuals and agencies providing services to the homeless community)
- Case management meeting (seeks to coordinate care between residents and existing community based services)

Residential Services staff also work toward bridging the gap between the residents who seek assistance and the community agencies that provide the services. This direction serves two functions. It prevents duplication of services with other agencies and it encourages residents to build support systems outside of, and independent of, those supports provided by VSH. Residential Services staff also advocate for change for homeless, indigent, and low-income persons through social and legislative avenues.

Staff have at their disposal a resource guide for their catchment area outlining resources available for all residents. Residents will have access to the resources manual, which is reviewed and updated as needed and formally once a year.

### *Transportation*

Virginia Supportive Housing has agency vehicles that may be used when needed to support our residents' housing stability. Vehicles are also used to transport residents to annual social engagement events for the December annual holiday celebration and individually organized social outings. Common activities that may require use of the agency vehicle include transportation to medical or housing appointments, picking up prescriptions, transportation to the voting polls, and scheduled trips to the grocery store and/or post office.

### *Residential Services Budget*

There is an annual budget for Residential Services for resident activities, bus tickets, prescriptions, conferences and training, office supplies, telephone, pager and postage, and vehicles repairs and maintenance. The Residential Services Manager is responsible for ensuring that expenses do not exceed the budgeted amount and reporting any budget variances to the agency accountant as they occur. Staff are responsible for maintaining proper records at each site and to reconcile the budget each month.

Residential Services staff can also access petty cash for immediate and eligible needs under \$100. Each disbursement of petty cash must be documented and logged accordingly. Receipts that show proof of purchase must accompany entry logged. Staff secures and maintains the petty cash and a corresponding receipts for all expenditures at each site and are reconciled each month.

Supportive services are an essential part of our communities. The services and referrals we provide are the key to our residents' success in maintaining housing. For this reason, we raise a minimum of two years of funding for each property during the development stage. We also include these key positions in our annual agency budget and ensure that we solicit grant funding and donations to financially support the positions ongoing.

The budget for South Richmond Studios includes four key services positions:

1. Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (80% FTE)
2. Supportive Services Specialist and HOPWA specialist (20% FTE)
3. Supportive Services Specialist (50% FTE)
4. Clinical Programs Director (25% FTE)

To financially support these positions, we rely on funding from the following areas:

- HOPWA
- Revenue from Medicaid reimbursements
- Community foundation grants – i.e. United Way, Bon Secours, Nunnally Foundation, Jenkins Foundation, Altria, Gwathmey, Bank of America)

### *Record Keeping*

Documentation is completed in various forms: paper files, excel spreadsheets, electronic health record, and an electronic data base. Documentation includes progress notes, a care plan, quarterly progress reports, data entry sheets, intake forms, needs assessment, discharge summary. All pertinent data entry forms must be submitted for entry into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). A complete set of forms are located in the appendix. Demographic data used to track program efficiency and for marketing purposes will be tracked also at each site and turned into the Residential Services Manager when requested. These criteria include but are not limited to, grant-funded program participation, site demographic or income breakdowns, move out data, and employment data. As the agency grows, the tracking and documentation needs will evolve, and staff will be advised as to the manner and degree in which to complete any new responsibilities. Significant interactions (not casual conversation) are documented on the progress note in Lauris, the electronic health record. In addition to paperwork required by VSH, residents will occasionally ask that copies of certain documents be kept in their files, (i.e. insurance information, important personal correspondence).

### *Confidentiality*

Resident confidentiality is a critical component toward maintaining the integrity of service provision at VSH. In each office there will be a locked cabinet to secure the resident's files. All files will be maintained for a minimum of seven years after the resident leaves. Staff are the only people with a key to the cabinet, and thus, have access to the resident files.

To further protect the confidentiality of our residents, staff are expected to have a release of information form on file from any agency or individual requesting information about our residents. Staff will not discuss any information pertaining to the residents with anyone, unless written permission has been given. Information will not be disclosed to other VSH staff unless it pertains to their safety, building rules and/or lease agreement, or grievances. Staff will always inform the resident if they must break confidentiality and the reasons for doing so, i.e. suicidal/homicidal thoughts/plans or threats to hurt others. Questions regarding confidentiality should be directed to the Residential Services Manager.

### *Grant Reporting*

A significant portion of the budget for the Resident Achievement Program is derived from grants. Staff have the responsibility of verifying the information given by residents to determine eligibility.



Upon acceptance of the grant, the agency is responsible for tracking resident participation and outcomes as well as completing quarterly and/or year-end reports to the grant-administering agency. The Residential Services Manager is responsible for the timely completion of the grant report and other residential services staff may be asked to participate in the compilation of that report as needed. Expenditures will be tracked and reported according to the specifics outlined in each grant.

### *Program Evaluation*

Program evaluation includes monthly, quarterly, and annual outcomes from Property Management and Supportive Services departments. Systems used to collect data include property management software (OneSite), client records (Lauris), and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). In addition, there may be outcomes tracked in an excel spreadsheet that will need to be reported. The supportive services specialist will document feedback and results from residents at the monthly community meetings and from the annual satisfaction survey. Outcomes and feedback inform programmatic operations and service delivery to ensure services are tailored to each properties' needs.

### *Training*

Staff are encouraged to attend all conference/training sessions that will be beneficial to their work with the residents. Occasionally training opportunities will arise that are declared mandatory. Staff should make every effort to attend these trainings.

There is a budget for attending training/conferences to support staff development and remain up to date on latest trends and best practices in the field. To attend a training/conference that requires a fee, all staff must fill out a request form and have it approved by their assigned Manager prior to the event. If approved, a check request form will be forwarded for disbursement.

Onboarding trainings and annual refreshers are required and include, but are not limited to, housing first model, human rights, confidentiality, grievance procedures, reporting requirements, documentation, emergency preparedness, person centeredness, behavioral interventions such as verbal de-escalation and mental health first aid, medication education and compliance, cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed care and motivational interviewing. There may also be additional trainings allowed and/or required in a specialty area for those supportive services specialists working in properties that serve a specialized disability, such as HOPWA or TBI.



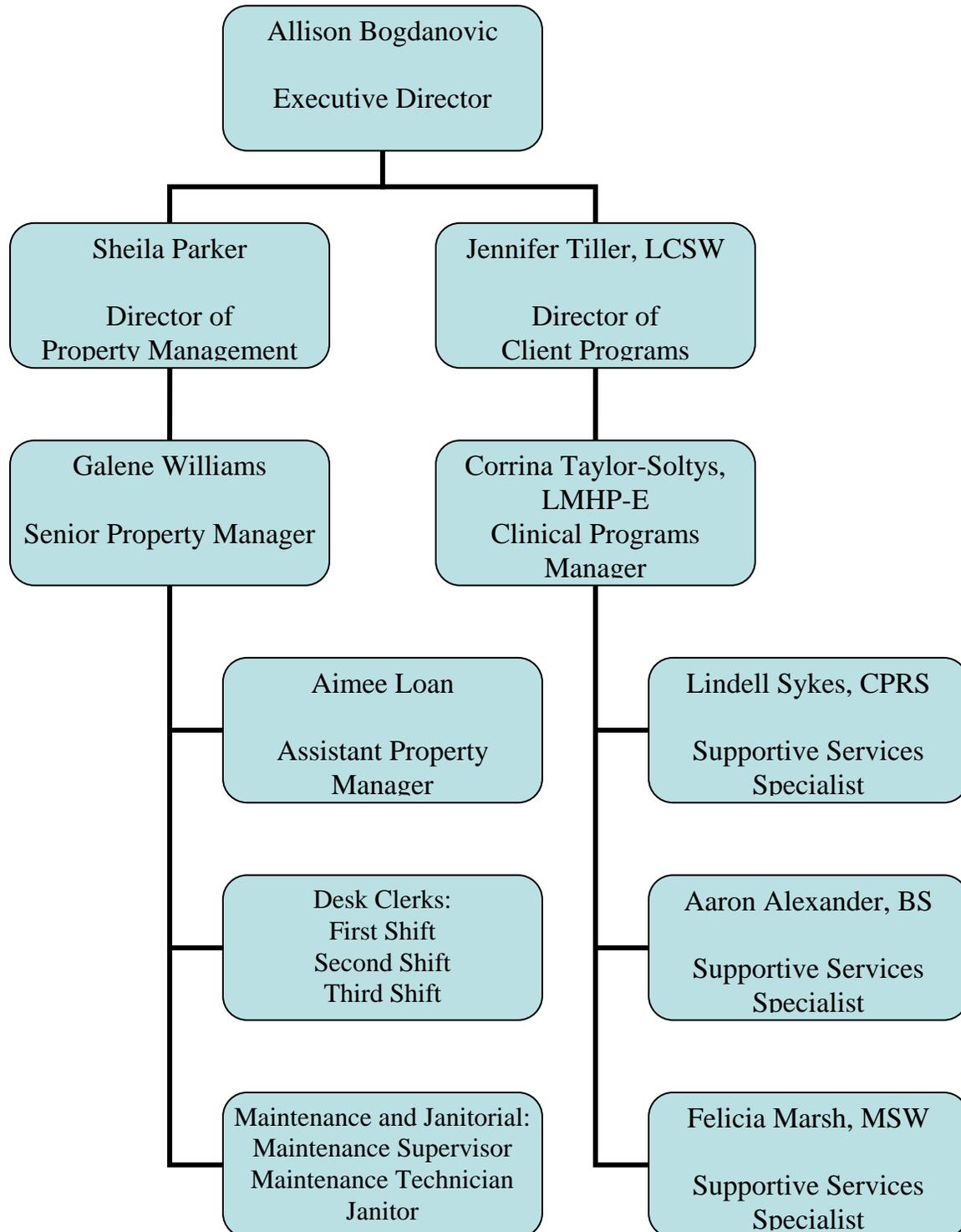
### *Staffing and Supervision*

Staffing in the properties fall within two departments, property management and supportive services. Property management staff are recruited and screened by the regional director and property manager. Property management staffs each property with 24-hour front desk coverage/security, maintenance technician(s), assistant and/or senior property manager, and a resident monitor who lives on site. Supportive services are provided by one or two full-time staff at each property depending on that specific community's needs. Supportive services specialists report to a team leader for their region who reports to the Clinical Programs Manager or Associate Director depending on the region who both report to the regional director for supportive services.

All supportive services staff will have a bachelor or master's degree in a human services plus a year or more of experience or a degree in another field with five or more years of relevant experience. Staff will meet at least monthly, and as needed, with the team leader and/or clinical programs manager for supervision. In addition, there will be agency-wide quarterly and annual meetings with the executive director.

VSH utilizes the job description duties and responsibilities, program outcomes, ongoing supervision, and the annual performance review process to measure the success of each supportive services specialist and other services staff. Key metrics include feedback from the residents about their satisfaction with services, organizing and facilitating monthly resident meetings, accessing supervision appropriately, supporting teammates when needed, and meeting data entry and reporting requirements. As part of the annual performance review process, staff engage in self-evaluation and provide feedback on their supervisor's performance. The annual performance review is electronic and includes software that allows staff and supervisors both private and public message boards for recognizing daily achievements or issues that may arise and a scheduling component for developing agendas and requesting meetings. This provides a written record that the supervisor can utilize during the annual formal review to summarize that year's performance. Ongoing supervision meetings involve the supportive services specialist meeting one on one with their assigned supervisor to discuss resident needs and progress, review documentation, and highlight performance concerns and successes. In addition, the staff have monthly team meetings with their peers and team leader for additional education, guidance, and support. Metrics are on a 5-tiered scale and founded in our agency's values of teamwork, compassion, respect, and integrity. Please see the employee handbook for additional information on the performance appraisal process.

Staffing at South Richmond Studios is as follows:





### *Volunteers*

Virginia Supportive Housing encourages the use of our community resources and volunteers to enhance services and support property management. Volunteer opportunities are available in areas such as mentoring, tutoring, budgeting, nutrition, healthy relationships, medication education, GED tutoring and other areas as identified by residents.

### *Interns*

VSH fosters a safe environment for growth and development and utilizes our expertise in the areas of delivering human services to vulnerable citizens by accepting and supervising student interns. Students may be bachelor or masters level and will provide between 14-21 hours of service per week to be overseen by the supportive specialist on site. Reports and supervision will be provided to all students by a qualified supervisor.

Student interns are expected to adhere to the same ethical and professional guidelines as paid staff. Residents have the right to refuse services offered by interns in favor of full time staff without consequence.

### *Board Interaction*

Agency Board members participate in committees that regularly interact with program staff. Currently, the Program Committee interacts most directly with Residential Services. The purpose of this committee is to ensure that services to our residents are provided effectively and according to the agency's mission. Staff coordinate meetings, arrange for resident participation, and report back to the board. Staff may be asked to participate in or present at a board meeting annually about their specific assigned program area.