

HOUSE RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Life in a RAP house is about accountability and responsibility, not rules. Houses may write their own “Rights and Responsibilities” within the framework of the RAP House Expectations. Most of our members come from abusive environments with many, many rules. Given the chance, they will re-create the environment they know and understand – a rule based environment. We want them to grow past that and internalize a sense of responsibility by insisting on accountability.

This means that it is very important that any “rules” that are written are enforced impartially and uniformly.

- All “rules” must be voted on at the house weekly meeting and must receive a majority vote.
- They must be noted in the minutes of the meeting.
- The Secretary must then enter them in the House “Rights and Responsibility” document. They do not come into effect until they are part of that document.
- The Rights and Responsibilities must be read aloud at the first House meeting of every month by the President of the House.

The House Rights and Responsibilities are in addition to RAP’s Expectations. In case of a conflict, RAP’s Expectations take precedence.

Following is the best introduction to House Rights and Responsibilities I have seen:

“The following is a list of expectations that house members, both new and old, are expected to abide by. The keys to living together in harmony are courtesy, respect and common sense...all of which we lack from time to time. Remember, we all should be trying to live a new, better life, and our actions should reflect as much as we embark on this journey called recovery. We wouldn’t be doing our members any favors by enabling them to exhibit behaviors that are detrimental to their recovery or the recovery of others. As well as a friendly reminder, these expectations serve as the guidelines of responsibility and accountability for our members. Failure to adhere to these expectations could result in behaviors that may be considered disruptive to the household and ultimately be cause for a member to be asked to leave.”

Following is a list of areas which other houses have addressed in their Rights & Responsibilities. The first three are mandatory. The remaining are up to the house and how it wants to run.

1. Know your rights and responsibilities. Read the RAP manual and know the RAP Expectations. If you are not sure about something, ask someone who knows.
2. Houses require a “blackout” period for new house members. The purpose of this orientation period is to allow the current house members the opportunity to become acquainted with the new member, discover their personality and patterns, and helping them become acquainted with all aspects of living in this RAP House. Usually, the new member may not spend nights away from the house during this period, must be in the house by certain times and may not have overnight guests. The details such as how long the blackout period is and the times they have to be back, vary from house to house.

3. The date and time of the mandatory weekly house meeting (see RAP Expectations) and any fines assessed for missing the meeting are addressed in the House Rights & Responsibilities. For example:

“Weekly House Business Meetings are mandatory. Important decisions are made at these meetings, and your voice and vote are equally as important. Our meetings begin at ? p.m. on ?? nights. You are expected to be on time. Chronic tardiness is not acceptable. Excused absences may include after-care treatment, work, or medical emergencies only. Unexcused absences will result in a ?? fine. You may have no more than 3 unexcused absences in 6 months or you will be put on a 30 day contract.”

Following are examples of rules that other houses have found useful. A house may want to adapt, change, add or subtract from these.
4. Do not steal or “borrow without permission” anyone else’s personal belongings, such as food, toiletries, tools, etc.
5. Pick up after yourself in all common areas, such as the kitchen, bathrooms and living rooms. This includes personal items such as shoes, jackets, books, food and dishes. Leaving a mess behind for someone else to deal with is disrespectful and irresponsible.
6. Keep your bedroom sanitary at all times, and preferably clean and tidy. Remember, someone else will occupy it someday.
7. Do not keep House Property in your room. Replace items promptly after using them. Someone else may need to use them too. This includes cups and dishes, cleaning supplies, Lysol, vacuum cleaners etc.
8. Do not take House Property off the premises without approval from a majority of the house members.
9. Do not enter another member’s bedroom without their permission except in an emergency situation, while accompanied by another house member.
10. Keep shower time to a minimum. Others like hot water too.
11. House chores must be done thoroughly and in a timely manner, ?? (days of the week.) (can talk about possible fines for not doing chores.)
12. Keep noise levels at an acceptable level, especially between the hours of ?? p.m. and ?? a.m. Be aware of other member’s work/sleep schedules. “Noise” includes TV’s, stereos, voices, stomping, slamming, vacuuming etc.
13. If you damage or break something, whether it belongs to the house or another member, fix it correctly, replace it with the same item, or if it needs the attention of the house, notify the House Services Coordinator.
14. Turn off lights, heaters, TV’s, stereos, coffee pots etc. when not in use.
15. If you plan on spending the night or several nights (as in the case of vacations or camping trips etc.) away from the house, you are expected to inform the other members of your intentions, both as a courtesy and to avoid suspicion. If no one is available to notify, write a message on the message board or leave a message on the voice mail. Make sure your house responsibilities are taken care of prior to leaving, such as chores, shared expense payment, and officer duties.
16. When doing laundry do not expect others to finish what you started. You should be available to move clothes from the washer to the dryer, or arrange to have someone do it for you. Do not wash more than one load at a time if others are waiting to use the facilities.

17. Be courteous when answering the phone. Do not answer, "RAP House", for it is up to each individual to disclose that information, and do not divulge information about others without their permission. Take messages thoroughly, and write them on the message board. Do not erase others' voice mail messages before they have had a chance to hear them. (We have call waiting, so if a "beep" interrupts your conversation, either push flash to take the incoming call or check the voice messages after you are off the phone so you can inform others they had a call while you were on the phone. If others are waiting to use the phone, limit your calls to 10 minutes.)
18. You are responsible for your guests. If your guests exhibit disruptive or relapse behaviors, you will be held accountable and face the consequences for their actions, so be careful of whom you invite over. Guests will not be allowed to stay overnight for more than 3 nights a week. Be respectful of others' guests. (DV houses may not have overnight guests.)
19. When someone moves out, under any circumstances, their personal property will be stored for no more than 30 days. Every effort will be made to return property, including contacting family and contacts on application.
20. An emergency house meeting may be called when a crisis arises. All house members should be given the opportunity to attend, and should be informed of such a meeting by phone and/or message board if at all possible. Everyone's vote is important in these situations.
21. All terms and conditions of the house's lease must be adhered to. Ask to see and read the lease.
22. Written contracts will be drawn up for members exhibiting behaviors that are not conducive to recovery or the general welfare of the house. These contracts are intended to eliminate disruptive behaviors so being asked to leave doesn't become necessary.
23. Weekly house chores must be done thoroughly and in a timely manner, per chore descriptions, and checked-off by the House Coordinator. Failure to do so may result in a fine. First offense constitutes a verbal and documented warning. 2nd offense constitutes a \$10 fine. 3rd offense doubles to a \$20 fine, and a contract to remedy the behaviors will be drawn up. If a member goes 90 days without any offenses, their slate will be wiped clean as if no fines were ever issued.
24. All house members are expected to take on an equal share of the responsibilities of operating this household. This means they are expected to do their fair share of work, and uphold the duties and responsibilities of house officer positions when they are called on to do so.
25. Members may only park one vehicle on the premises. Additional vehicles will require a house vote.

I, _____, have read and understand these House Rights and Responsibilities, and agree to abide by them. Any questions I may have had have been answered and explained to me.

New House Member's signature

Date

Witness' signature

Date