

1. Purpose

This Conference Policy sets out the procedure for meeting with residents, applicants, DHCD, and vendors. The term “staff” will identify any person employed by Norton Housing Authority (NHA); the term “other individual or individual” will identify any resident, applicant, DHCD representative or outside vendor. This Policy is meant to set a general format to ensure a quality environment for staff and other individuals while meeting about housing authority business. This Policy will address expectations for staff and other individuals and layout options to ensure that each meeting experience is productive and the outcome is positive for both parties.

2. Conference Types

Conferences come in many different forms. A conference can be a brief informal interaction on the telephone or at the office window. Another type of conference involves a formal written request to meet at the NHA office for a specific circumstance such as a construction conference, auditor conference, rent re-determination conference, a lease violation conference, applicant conference or any minor incident with a resident, applicant or an outside vendor that requires discussion for full comprehension.

3. Informal Conference Format

Telephone Conference: During telephone communication, whether NHA calls an individual or an individual calls NHA, telephone conferences can be recorded by NHA only when:

1. NHA staff receives explicit permission to record the conversation from the person on the line, prior to recording.
2. Phone calls that are recorded will be retained by NHA.

Office Window Conference: During a brief simple interaction with a resident, applicant, DHCD, outside vendor or other individual, a single staff member can interact independently if they remain comfortable with the interaction. At the request of our staff or an individual, any interaction that is of an urgent nature, whether the discussion involves the scope of a construction project, an auditable procedure, a regulation, lease requirement or any situation that is in depth or gains an uncomfortable momentum, staff or individual(s) can request that the meeting be interrupted briefly, until a second staff member or an additional party, is available to be present at the conference.

4. Formal Conference Format

During a staff scheduled office conference with a resident or applicant, standard protocol, included in our letters, allows for the individual to bring along another party to the conference. NHA requires staff to follow this procedure for conference attendance:

Resident/Applicant Conferences: A second staff member is required to be readily available for all formal conferences. It is at the NHA staff's option to have a second staff member attend a conference.

Outside Vendors or DHCD Conferences: A second staff member is required to be readily available for all formal conferences. The staff member hosting the meeting will have the option to request another NHA staff member attend a conference.

5. Productive Options

- A. Sign-In: During conferences, all individuals will be asked to sign-in on a standard Conference Sign-In Sheet to have a record of names and contact information for any individual involved in a conference at NHA. Please see Attachment A.
- B. Concern/Request Form: During conferences if confusion prevails, each party will be offered a standard Concern/Request Form to specifically outline their needs. The form will be presented to the appropriate authority to determine if the concern or request can be met and the availability of resources to meet any concern or request. Please see Attachment B.
- C. Complaint Form: This form is available for either party of a conference to make a specific complaint about one or more individuals involved in a conference. The Complaint Form will be given to the appropriate person for review and any action that needs to be taken to resolve the situation. Please see Attachment C.

6. Grievance

A party, involved in any type of conference, can file a grievance in accordance with the NHA Policy, except a vendor. The Grievance Policy does not apply to a vendor. The Grievance Procedure is an administrative hearing process available to an existing resident or household member of the Norton Housing Authority (NHA). A grievance is defined as: (1) an allegation that NHA or an NHA employee has acted or failed to act in accordance with any statute, regulation or rule regarding the conditions of tenancy or the program and the alleged action or failure to act has adversely affected the status, rights, duties or welfare of the grievant and/or a household member; (2) an allegation that NHA or an NHA employee has acted or failed to act in accordance with any statute, regulation, or rule regarding the program and that the alleged action or failure to act has adversely affected the status, rights, duties, or welfare of the grievant or a household member; or (3) an appeal by a data subject pursuant to 760 CMR 8.00(4): The meaning of a statute, regulation or rule shall not be the subject of a grievance. A dispute between a tenant and another tenant or household member, in which NHA is not involved, shall not be the subject of a grievance. A grievance shall not be filed by a tenant on behalf of another tenant or any household member of another tenant. Please See Attachment D.

7. Conclusion

It is our intention to ensure that a pleasant experience is achieved in the normal course of business at NHA, by both staff and other individuals, for the purposes of this policy, by properly addressing each other with respect and courtesy in words, tone, and voice level.

This policy was accepted by the Board of Commissioners on August 15, 2017.

Board Member