

ALLIANCE FOR HOUSING INTERNAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY

Conflicts are normal and sometimes even healthy for an organization. There are a variety of reasons why a conflict can occur and if you hope to resolve the conflict, it is helpful to understand why it exists. People should feel free to respectfully express differences of opinion and constructively address and resolve them.

However, there will be times when a complaint cannot be resolved without some formal dispute resolution process. While most conflicts can and should be resolved informally, some are complex and difficult and require additional procedures in order to ensure all involved find a resolution.

The purpose of the Alliance for Housing Internal Dispute Resolution Policy is to provide an opportunity to resolve internally disputes arising out of issues concerning membership and the policies and procedures adopted by the Alliance for Housing. Governance and administrative duties and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and Alliance for Housing staff members are not subject to the Internal Dispute Resolution policy.

Alliance for Housing members should strive to resolve all conflicts in a respectful and fair manner. At a minimum, the parties should meet at least once to try and resolve the conflict. Such informal meetings are essential in determining whether to proceed to the next steps of the Internal Dispute Resolution process.

Should informal meetings fail to produce a resolution that is satisfactory to all parties, the next step is for the parties to participate in a formal Shared Decision-Making process. Effective decision-making and problem solving will be the product of the staff, board and members working cooperatively together using the best available and accurate information.

Shared Decision-Making Process: The first step in this process requires that the complainant and the Board of Directors identify and clarify the issue. Included in this step is an evaluation of which member organizations or groups are impacted or affected by the issue. Once identified, representatives of these member organizations or groups will be invited to participate in the Shared Decision-Making process. Another essential aspect of the shared decision-making process is for the parties to obtain all necessary information, facts and data about the issue in dispute.

- 1) **Identification and Clarification of the Issue.**
- 2) **Gather Opinions and Facts about the Issue.**
 - Raise questions of each other about the issue and value all information, advice, and assistance.
 - Distinguish opinions from facts.
- 3) **Develop Alternative Solutions to the Issue.**
 - Develop possible solutions to the issue.
 - Respect the proposals or possible solutions that have been offered.
- 4) **Identify the Consequences of Each Alternative Solution to the Issue.**

- 5) **Make the Decision.**
 - Make the choice or decision that has the least amount of potential negative effects or consequences on the affected organizations or on the individuals served by the organization.
 - The decision should be the one that is best for all concerned and for the affected organization.
- 6) **Evaluate the Outcomes of the Decision.**
 - The responsible parties should check to see that the decision was carried out properly.
 - If necessary, the parties should go back to one of the earlier steps in the shared decision-making process and possibly change the decision if the outcome of the original decision is not satisfactory.

If the parties fail to reach consensus during the Shared Decision-Making process, the Alliance for Housing will comply with the following process for facilitating resolution of the dispute:

If a decision cannot be reached, the problem, issue, or concern will be submitted to voluntary negotiation or mediation within 30 days. This process involves voluntary action to continue discussion with the help and assistance of an outside third person or persons (professional consultants or other community members mutually agreed upon by the Alliance membership and the Board of Directors).

If a decision cannot be reached following the voluntary negotiation or mediation, the Alliance for Housing will submit the problem, issue, or concern to mandatory (binding) negotiation arbitration. A professional, accredited third party mediator will have the authority to hear both sides of the dispute, gather any information, analyze and interpret all information, and make a decision that the disagreeing groups or individual will be obligated to follow. A decision reached through mediation will be final.

Regardless of whether the parties have been able to resolve their differences through informal meetings, at no point is litigation appropriate to resolve internal Alliance for Housing disputes. Litigation is an expensive and time-consuming process, and is a wholly unnecessary means to decide internal Alliance for Housing matters. Alliance for Housing members agree to exhaust all internal remedies prior to seeking recourse through the courts, and may be prevented from filing a lawsuit before complying fully with the Internal Dispute Resolution process.