



## Transferable Skills for Live-in Campus Housing Professionals

---

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on campus housing and residence life departments around the globe. Industry observers believe an unprecedented number of furloughs, layoffs, and in some cases, permanent reductions in force are possible for these departments. This belief comes from potential impacts on operational budgets due to shifts from the in-person/residential experience to virtual delivery. We believe live-in staff may be most vulnerable as a result of these types of changes.

The purpose of this document is to provide a tangible and shareable resource that clearly illustrates the expansive role of live-in staff. It is also designed to delineate the vast skills and competencies that uniquely situate these professionals to be re-deployed to critical roles on campus during this time of crisis; and more generally, if a prolonged virtual arrangement is required due to ongoing campus health and safety concerns as a result of COVID-19.

### The Expansive Role of the Live-In Professional

For decades, professional staff who live in college and university campus housing facilities have been critical to the fabric of student success. Not only have they served as invaluable front-line responders to a broad range of issues and crises when students need help the most, but they are experienced educators and allies that provide students with essential programming, advice, advocacy, and care as they navigate their on-campus experience. Live-in professionals are important architects of the vital communities in which students learn and grow as individuals, scholars, and citizens.

Live-in professionals working in campus housing programs are highly educated and prepare rigorously for their roles, most frequently by completing a postgraduate degree program in student affairs administration, educational leadership, counseling, or other related disciplines. In 2019-20, 84% of Association of College and University Housing Officers - International (ACUHO-I) member institutions who submitted data through our proprietary assessment instrument, the [Campus Housing Index](#), reported their entry-level or advancing staff have obtained a Master's degree. In addition to practicum and assistantship experiences that help live-in professionals gain the necessary applied skills needed to work in the field, they are also equipped with foundational coursework in cognitive and social development theory, organizational behavior, legal issues, helping skills, research methods, and intercultural engagement.

Colleges and universities have long relied on live-in professionals as valuable partners in a broad range of cross-campus programs, services, and initiatives. As quintessential generalists who have unique day-to-day relationships with their students and know-how of the inner workings of their institutions, housing staff are frequently called upon to share information and insight with their colleagues to help steer larger support and advocacy efforts. The real testament to their versatility, however, are the numerous ways in which they have been engaged in complementary capacities as academic advisors, classroom instructors, crisis management and care team members, orientation and admission facilitators, conduct officers, and inclusion and equity educators - among many others. It is no wonder the career paths of accomplished senior student affairs leaders often begin in campus housing and residence life, and many readily acknowledge how their work continues to be shaped by what they learned and experienced as live-in staff. From their very first day on the job, housing professionals must rapidly accumulate and

evolve a comprehensive set of skills and competencies in order to be successful in their roles. For that reason, campus offices actively recruit live-in staff to fill mid- and senior-level position openings, and it is commonplace for housing professionals to move upward and onward into jobs in student advocacy, alumni affairs, Title IX and compliance, student activities and unions, scholars programs, and academic administration. They also serve on presidential committees and cabinets as trusted advisors on issues of critical importance for student retention and success, such as student health and wellbeing and [meaningful engagement that supports degree completion](#).

While live-in professional roles in campus housing have long been an integral part of the college and university experience, the intensity of their work has accelerated exponentially in recent years. As the challenges facing college and university students have become more complex, so have the roles and responsibilities of those professionals. Staff who live in are often the very first members of the campus community to observe and act when students experience mental health and medical issues, academic struggles, strife in their personal and family lives, criminal activity, incidents of sexual and physical violence - and many other emergent circumstances that critically impact students' safety and well-being. Live-in staff also offer important interventional and case management work to ensure students receive the long term help and support they need to be successful in their academic, social, and occupational pursuits.

The unpredictability of the COVID-19 public health crisis and the deep impacts of the countless and pervasive incidents of social injustice occurring around the globe have fundamentally changed the ways in which our entire society lives and operates. The world is a much different place than it was just a few months ago, and live-in professionals are working exhaustively to determine how to support and nurture students who are returning to campus housing programs. They will have to innovate and shift gears quickly to offer students opportunities to engage with one another, to readily access help with a wide variety of needs, and to feel connected and confident in a new kind of community that will require a significant level of intentional physical distance between its members - an idea that is patently converse to the living environments that colleges and universities have perpetuated throughout their histories.

As campuses make historic shifts in their operations to continue their missions in a significantly altered political, social, and financial landscape, the roles of live-in professionals within their housing programs will undoubtedly keep changing. However, there is much opportunity for them to offer assistance to their colleges and universities that can help keep students safe and secure and bolster their retention and persistence. With college and university administrations prioritizing community health and wellness in the wake of a global pandemic, live-in staff can be trained and utilized as local agents for functions like contact tracing, symptom checking and reporting, and critical incident assessment and triage. There will be an ongoing need to educate staff, students, and stakeholders regarding critical public health measures, and housing professionals are well-situated and equipped to provide the necessary training, remediation, and enforcement of policies and processes to ensure campuses can re-open, and remain open, safely.

There are also institutional priorities outside of COVID-19 specific activity in need of staffing and for which live-in professionals are particularly well-suited. These priorities include, but are not limited to: providing structured outreach to students (both residential and non-residential) whose success is at risk because of a new (online) learning modality; partnering with other student services areas to focus on developing community among student affinity groups, such as Greek organizations, student government, first-generation, underrepresented, and international students, etc.; facilitating/advising small groups of first-year students to create connections between student cohorts and between students and campus administration; and temporarily filling critical positions that are vacant due to hiring freezes.

## Essential Competencies & Skills

Adaptability and community-building are perhaps more important than ever before as campus administrators make plans and implement them for the upcoming year. Housing professionals have much to offer philosophically and experientially, and can do so through a lens that is compassionate and student-centered. Examining the competencies established by ACUHO-I's own Body of Knowledge, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), and NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the transferable skills and practices they can contribute across multiple functional areas is lengthy and diverse. The following are the ways in which live-in staff have traditionally engaged throughout campus, and can be leveraged within the current environment:

### Crisis Management and Response

- On-call and emergency response for student issues in campus housing. Depending on their reporting structure, professionals may also be responsible for campus-wide, off-campus, and facility-related calls
- Front-line response and triage of critical incidents; serve as a primary conduit for emergency personnel
- Working with impacted communities post-incident
- Intensive case management of ongoing student issues (documentation, early intervention, policy and process enforcement, referral to campus resources and qualified professionals for support, etc.)
- Community education and communication
- Communication and partnership with families of students

### Student Wellness, Health & Advocacy

- Participation in division- or campus-wide care teams
- Active and passive student programming and outreach
- Assisting with facilitation of training and skill-building for paraprofessional supervisees and/or peers (i.e. helping and conversation skills, alcohol and drug education, basic mental health issue identification, suicide intervention and prevention, etc.)

### Student Behavior & Conduct

- Case management and document maintenance, often using a conduct management technology platform or module for reporting
- Hearing facilitation, either as the primary officer or as an advisor to student or administrative hearing boards and courts
- Adjudication of cases
- Policy and process enforcement
- Assignment and monitoring of sanctions
- Coaching and advising of students involved in the process

### Human Resources

- Paraprofessional and professional staff supervision
- Ongoing training and development of staff teams and individual employees
- Facilitation of recruitment, selection, hiring, and placement processes
- Disciplinary and corrective action for staff (i.e. documentation, behavioral and conduct plans, contract creation and accountability, etc.)

- Employee coaching and goal setting
- Ongoing professional development exercises
- Mentoring staff towards future positions (i.e. resident assistant to graduate assistant; graduate assistant to resident director/residential coordinator; etc.)
- Participation in division or campus positional search processes

### Diversity/Inclusion

- Dialogue and allyship training and facilitation, especially for students and student employees
- Active and passive program construction and facilitation
- Partnership work with diversity/inclusion/multicultural offices on campus and wider community organizations

### Leadership Development & Advising

- Direct advising for student organizations within residence life and housing (community councils, residence hall associations, National Residence Hall Honorary chapters) and campus-wide (student government, fraternity and sorority life, multicultural and affinity groups, etc.)
- Partnership work with campus offices; providing administrative and/or developmental support associated with programs in campus dining, fraternity/sorority life, student activities/student union, career services, honoraries, etc., that impact students living in campus housing
- Providing intentional peer development and engagement strategies
- Understanding and communicating governance structures to students and various constituents

### Admissions & Orientation

- Facilitating admissions tours for students and their families visiting campus housing facilities
- Active participation in orientation programs, including student and family education, social and educational program sessions, recruitment and selection of student facilitators and leaders, management and staffing of orientation housing arrangements
- Skills necessary to communicate university and housing policy to students and their parents

### Academic Partnerships

- Entry-level academic advising in partnership with department and division chairs and leadership
- Faculty partnership building (student issue resolution, program planning and facilitation, etc.)
- Construction and management of living-learning communities, first-year interest groups, second-year transition programs, etc.)
- Administrative and programmatic oversight of residential colleges
- Instruction of entry-level student coursework (especially those related to leadership development, diversity/inclusion)
- Curricular and learning development for student experiences and programs

### Facilities & Operations

- Management of student housing assignments; depending on department structure this might be a sole responsibility of live-in/live-on staff, or in conjunction with a housing assignments office (often using a technology-based student management platform/module)
- Key/key-card/ID management for students and staff

- General facilities management of campus housing buildings (i.e. issue assessment and follow-up, regular communication with facilities and housekeeping staff, call-outs/on-call services for after-hours emergencies or crises, documentation, etc.)
- Involvement in safety and security functions (i.e. building access, fire evacuations and emergency drills; interactions with security staff and campus police; etc.)
- Supervision of building housekeeping and/or maintenance staff
- Marketing/communication for campus housing events
- Active participation in capital projects or renovations planning, management, and messaging
- Oversight of conferences and camps utilizing campus housing facilities, including staffing, on-call responsibilities, programming, assignments
- Event, conference, and meeting planning/management/facilitation at a number of levels of scale
- Employee union experience and management with localized staff
- Individual and community damage billing oversight and follow-up

### Finance & Fiscal Responsibility

- Oversight and management of programmatic and student organization budgets/accounts (forecasting, tracking, reconciliation)
- Finance training and education for staff and students
- Participation in department and division budget processes

**Live-in professionals have always been essential to the success of students and the workings of the residential campus. In the current times, the value of their skills, competencies, and experience has been amplified.**

**For more information on the work of campus housing professionals during COVID-19 and additional resources, visit: [acuho-i.org/covid19](https://acuho-i.org/covid19).**

