

Fourth Edition

9/98

\$23.00

T

HE RESIDENT ASSISTANT



• *Gregory Blimling* •

**Working with College Students
in Residence Halls**

Virginia Tech Services.
VT 10 0-8403-8828-4
B51844

12/28/95

01

018094



0 10000 57540 8

EDHL 2984

BLIMING
THE RESIDENT ASSISTANT 4TH ED

G455/B648 ✓

T

HE RESIDENT ASSISTANT

Fourth Edition



Working with College Students in Residence Halls

• Gregory S. Blimling •

Appalachian State University



KENDALL/HUNT PUBLISHING COMPANY

4050 Westmark Drive P.O. Box 1840 Dubuque, Iowa 52004-1840

Preface

The foundation of nearly every residence hall program across the country is the resident assistant (RA) position. These student-staff members fulfill a most difficult assignment: supervising and assisting an entire floor of undergraduate students. The resident assistant is in the vanguard of the field of student development. The daily contact the RA has with students makes it possible for the RA to have a significant impact on the development of these students. The author believes that whether or not the RA is prepared to accept this responsibility is directly related to the quantity and quality of education in preparation for the position.

This book is designed to be used as a text in courses taught to resident assistants in colleges and universities. In institutions where courses for credit are not provided, the book may be used by residence hall staff for in-service education programs. The book may also be used as a personal manual to assist RAs in doing the best possible job with a difficult assignment.

The responsibilities of RAs are similar across the country. As a result, this book provides information that should be basic to the RA positions in almost all locales, but it is expected that residence hall staff on a particular campus will add to, alter, or otherwise enhance the information in such a way as to tailor usage to the individual campus environment.

The book is divided into six parts. The first part contains chapters on the history, philosophy, and influence of residence halls on the development of students. This section also includes a discussion of the RA position. The chapters in Part Two focus on aspects of college student behavior including: patterns of student development,

adjustment problems, peer counseling, interpersonal communication, and human diversity. Behavior problems, conflict resolution and suicide are topics covered in Part Three. Part Four examines common problems encountered by the RA, including substance abuse, human sexuality, cults, and violence on campus. Part five covers two very important aspects of the RA position: the development of community in the residence hall setting and residence hall programming. The final part is directed at the personal development of the RA. The chapters in this section focus on time management, stress management, and study skills.

The Resident Assistant: Working With College Students in Residence Halls, was first published in 1981. Dr. Lawrence J. Miltenberger and I co-authored the first edition and the two revisions—1984 and 1990—that followed it. Although Dr. Miltenberger did not participate in the current revision, many of the ideas, thoughts and experiences are those that I learned from him in our working relationship and our friendship in the past twenty years.

This book has benefited from the comments and suggestions made by RAs, chief housing officers, hall directors, and others throughout the nation who have used versions of this book during the past decade. I am indebted for the assistance that I received in completing this revision particularly to Larry Miltenberger, Jan Miltenberger, Don Sanz, Kit Olson, Dale Kirkley, and Brad Reid. Their comments and review of certain elements of the book have been a tremendous help. I also wish to thank Jennifer Bird for her help as a research assistant, Lois Evans for her clerical support in completing this edition, and Jeff Goodman for his photographic work which appears throughout the book.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
Part 1: The History and Foundation of Residence Halls	1
1. The Roles of the RA	3
The RA as a Role Model	8
The RA as a Counselor	10
The RA as a Teacher	11
The RA as a Student	12
Conclusion	13
Discussion Questions and Exercises	15
2. The History of Residence Halls	19
The Origin of Residence Halls	20
Conclusion	40
Discussion Questions and Exercises	47
3. Educational Philosophies for Residence Halls	51
Philosophies for Working with Students in Residence Halls	53
Goals for Residence Hall Programs	57
Summary	63
Discussion Questions and Exercises	65

4. The Influence of Residence Halls on the Development of Students	69
Comparisons between Students Who Live in Residence Halls and Students Who Do Not	70
Ways That Residence Halls Influence Students	77
Methods of Advancing the Growth and Development of Students Living in Residence Halls	83
Summary	87
Discussion Questions and Exercises	89
Part 2: Understanding and Working with College Students	93
5. The Growth and Development of College Students	95
Biological Development	96
Psychological Development during the College Years	98
Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development	101
Cognitive Development	120
Discussion Questions and Exercises	137
6. Common Adjustment Problems in College	141
The Progression of a Student's Development in College	142
The First Year	147
The Sophomore and Junior Years	163
The Senior Year	168
Discussion Questions and Exercises	175
7. Peer Counseling	179
Complaints about Counseling	180
An Overview of Helping Skills	182
Counseling Model	192
Helping a Student Seek Professional Counseling	204
Advising	209
Discussion Questions and Exercises	211
8. Interpersonal Communication	215
Three Levels of Communication	216
Establishing Interpersonal Communication and Relationships	217

Empathy	219
Interpersonal Relationships and the RA	220
Discussion Questions and Exercises	223
Part 3: Confrontation and Crisis Management	227
9. Behavior Problems, Confrontation, and Counseling	229
Types of University Policies	230
Disciplinary Counseling Model	234
Confrontation Skills	242
How to Confront an Intoxicated Person	245
Tips on Disciplinary Counseling	248
Discussion Questions and Exercises	251
10. Conflict Resolution	255
Defining Conflict Situations	256
Management Model for Roommate Conflicts	257
Analyzing Conflict Situations	260
Discussion Questions and Exercises	265
11. Suicide Intervention	269
Causes of Suicide	270
Symptoms of Suicidal Behavior	271
Interviewing Potentially Suicidal Students	274
Discussion Questions and Exercises	281
12. Crimes and Victimization in Residence Halls	285
Battered Women	287
Rape	290
Other Crimes on Campus	301
Discussion Questions and Exercises	307
Part 4: Information on Contemporary Social Issues Confronting College Students	311
13. Substance Abuse	313
Food Abuse	314
Alcohol Abuse	317
Drug Abuse	336
Discussion Questions and Exercises	357

14. Sexuality	361
Contraceptives	363
Pregnancy	368
Abortion	370
Homosexuality	373
Aids	374
Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)	377
Healthy Relationships	386
Discussion Questions and Exercises	389
15. Cult Activities on College Campuses	393
Defining Religious Cults	394
Cults Recruiting on College Campuses	394
The Conversion Process	396
Reasons for Joining Cults	399
Ways That Cults Harm the Individual and Society	400
Avoiding Cult Involvement	400
Symptoms of Cult Involvement	401
Intervention Methods	402
Discussion Questions and Exercises	405
16. Cultural Diversity: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation	409
Race and Ethnocentrism	410
Gender and Sexism	425
Sexual Orientation	431
Discussion Questions and Exercises	439
Part 5: Educational Outreach	443
17. Educational Programming	445
Purposes of Programming	446
Goals of Programming	447
Traditional Programming Model	449
How to Program	452
Conclusion	465
Discussion Questions and Exercises	467

18. Community Development	471
Defining Community in the Residence Halls	472
Elements of a Community	473
How to Establish a Community	476
Conclusion	478
Discussion Questions and Exercises	481
Part 6: RA Survival Skills	485
19. Time Management	487
Learning to Manage Your Time	488
Predictable Time	489
Discretionary Time	491
Other-Imposed Time	495
Conclusion	496
Discussion Questions and Exercises	497
20. Study Skills	501
Learning How to Study	502
Preparing Yourself to Study	502
Basic Skills in Acquiring Information	510
The Studying Process	513
Test Taking	515
Discussion Questions and Exercises	521
21. Stress Management	525
Sources of Stress	526
Fight or Flight	527
Coping with Stress	528
Burn-out	532
Conclusion	533
Discussion Questions and Exercises	535
Bibliography: References and Selected Readings	539
Index	565

Part One

The History and Foundation of Residence Halls



Chapter 1

The Roles of the RA



Chapter 2

The History of Residence Halls



Chapter 3

Educational Philosophies for Residence Halls



Chapter 4

*The Influence of Residence Halls
on the Development of Students*

Chapter 1

The Roles of the RA



You have probably heard the expression “overworked and underpaid” many times. If it ever applied to a job, that job is the Resident Assistant, or an RA, as this person is commonly known. If you are now at the stage where you are contemplating becoming an RA primarily because of the financial assistance it may offer, understand that the job simply does not pay enough. You can earn more money and spend much less time doing any number of part-time jobs in college. Most RAs receive minimal remuneration, usually equal to a single room and a meal contract for the year. This simply is not enough for all the work that you will be expected to do.

What is perhaps more important is that an RA’s experience in college is uniquely different from that of other students. As an RA, you cannot always be a part of group activities in the living unit. Some students in the unit will ostracize you because of the authority that you represent. You will be intentionally left out of some group discussions and often not invited to share in the “inside information.” Many tasks within the building will be required of you, and some will force you to reorder your personal priorities. You will be among the first students back to school in the fall of the year and among the last to leave in the spring. The same will be true of each vacation period.

Other students and the student affairs staff will place great demands on both your personal time and study time. Many activities with which you want to involve yourself must take second place to duty nights, working at the information desk, or advising students in the living unit. Even your friendship patterns will be somewhat defined by the residents that you are assigned to advise. You assume all of these demands, requirements, and expectations when you accept the responsibility of being a resident assistant. It is not an easy job. Think very carefully before you accept it.

Though the responsibilities are very great and the demands that will be placed on you throughout the academic year may be even greater, you also will benefit from this experience. The RA fills a unique role as a teacher and a leader that few students are privileged to experience. No other group of students receives the training, assistance, and attention that you will as a resident assistant. This is an opportunity to grow, to learn, and to experience responsibility in a work situation.

Educational Skills RAs Need

To fulfill the educational mission of residence halls, you as an RA need to acquire knowledge and skills in the following eight areas:

Skills

Scope

Conceptual Application

This means a basic understanding of human development, including the concepts and strategies necessary to help students in their development and growth toward adulthood.

Counseling

These include listening, referring people for additional help, empathizing, and helping others resolve problems.

Basic Information

These include knowledge of the services and procedures on your campus, rules and policies of the residence halls, and knowledge of how to survive academically and socially on your campus.

Administrative

These include good organization, paperwork management, time management, and follow-through on projects started or assigned.

Teaching

Two types are required: educational programming skills and effective role-modeling skills. More traditional kinds of teaching skills may also be called upon as one may become an instructor for other RAs or for students.

Leadership

The leadership skills RAs need include how to set objectives, how to motivate others, and how to support others in becoming a leader.

Crisis Management

This is the ability to view a crisis situation and control it effectively. It requires self-confidence, remaining calm, assisting other individuals, directing resources, and knowing resources available to assist. It also involves good judgment, practice, and often good human relation skills.

Human Relationship

This includes an understanding of oneself and others and specific knowledge about such areas as motivation, sexuality, and behavioral problems. It requires the ability to react freely and communicate with others in a personal way that invites others to want to know you.

Expectations of the RA

From campus to campus the responsibilities of RAs vary. Following are responsibilities common to most resident assistants throughout the country:

Administrative Details

1. Prepares necessary reports and records.
2. Assists with public relations by being able to explain residence hall programs and staff duties to faculty, guests, parents, and students.
3. Assists with room checks as required by hall operations.
4. Assists with communications among staff members, students, and residence program leaders.
5. Keeps residence hall director informed of major plans developed by students.
6. Maintains a good liaison relation with housekeeping personnel.
7. Regularly staffs the hall information desk.

Helping to Provide Control

1. Sets an example by adhering to rules and regulations of the college or university.
2. Knows the institution's and residence hall's regulations.
3. Knows the rationale for institution's rules and regulations.
4. Assists students in knowing what is expected of them in the college or university.
5. Explains the reasons for given rules and regulations.
6. Encourages students to confront other students with violations.
7. Assists in individual growth toward accountability.
8. Knows and interprets the institution's philosophy of discipline.
9. Reports behavioral infractions according to determined policies.
10. Supports or does not openly disagree with the institution's regulations.

Parts adapted from Greenleaf, Elizabeth A. (1967), *Undergraduate Students as Members of the Residence Hall Staff* (Washington, D.C.: NAWDAC).

Helping to Establish a Healthy Residence Hall Environment

1. Helps students develop a respect for each other's rights and freedoms.
2. Helps students develop a respect for private and institutional property.
3. Encourages residents to attend residence hall and institutional programs.
4. Encourages faculty to visit his or her floor to talk informally with students.
5. Knows and communicates well with the residents.
6. Is tolerant of different life-styles.
7. Encourages an atmosphere conducive to study.

Assisting Individual Student Needs

1. Becomes aware of individual student goals, abilities, and potential for achievement.
2. Becomes aware of social isolates and helps them make friends and become a part of the campus community.
3. Becomes aware of attitudes and behavior patterns of the residents in his or her floor.
4. Knows resources in the campus community to help students.
5. Refers students for help when they need it.
6. Becomes aware of adjustment problems new students experience.
7. Makes himself or herself available for casual contacts and develops a pattern of available times for students to visit.
8. Applies good listening and counseling skills.
9. Applies good interpersonal skills.
10. Becomes aware of his or her own strengths and weaknesses (is self-aware).
11. Shows concern for people and their problems.
12. Follows up with students who have had a problem to see the results and to learn whether other assistance should be given.
13. Assists students with class scheduling.
14. Assists students in developing effective study habits.

Hall Government Programs

1. Encourages students' responsibility for their own residence hall programs.
2. Helps students to get involved with university clubs and organizations.
3. Provides creative suggestions for hall programs.
4. Initiates activities and programs on his or her floor.
5. Supports hall programs by personal attendance.

Providing Information and Referrals for Students

1. Keeps current on information about sexually transmitted diseases.
2. Keeps current on information about suicide prevention techniques and referral services.
3. Keeps current on information about university services and programs.
4. Keeps current on information about alcohol and drug education programs and behavior indicating the need for referral.
5. Keeps current on information about issues of student wellness and healthy lifestyle behaviors.
6. Keeps current on information about relationship violence, acquaintance rape, and about appropriate referral services.

The RA as a Role Model

No matter what responsibilities you are assigned as an RA on your campus, there are four basic roles that you will assume. The first and perhaps the most influential role you have as an RA is as a role model. When you are placed in a living unit within a residence hall as a staff person, the very fact that you hold this position says to every student that you possess certain characteristics that the university respects and considers important. New freshmen view you as a model to emulate. This is one of the reasons for providing undergraduate RAs in undergraduate residence halls.

At one time, graduate students were used as RAs for undergraduate halls because it was thought that these older students would be able