

Scenario 1: Debt and Eviction

Sarah, a popular member, owes more than two month's rent to the coop. The coop has a policy to forbid payment plans and to begin evictions on members who owe more than two month's rent. The member has lived at the coop for over two years, and has had debts in the past, but has always paid them off. The staff followed policy by filing an eviction notice against this member, because they owe more than is allowable under a payment plan. The members of the coop are angry, and feel threatened, by the staff filing an eviction against Sarah. There is a perception that the staff have "ulterior motives" in filing this eviction, and rumors begin to circulate about who else may get evicted.

- 1. How can staff explain the decision to evict to the members in a productive way?
- 2. Should staff ask the board to change policies in some situations? Give an example, if yes.
- 3. When should staff evict despite complaints?
- 4. When should staff not evict, despite a debt beyond what is allowed in written policies?



Scenario 2: Legal Threats

Swoopy Pines Co-op is having some rocky in-house problems involving a few "toxic" members and conflicts they get involved in. The board and some members of Swoopy Pines begin a membership review of a handful of members, which staff will have to implement if the review ends in an eviction. Alex is under review, and threatens the staff and members with promises to bring a lawyer to the review, claiming that the review is illegal. Alex also encourages other members who are being reviewed to bring lawyers to their reviews. The members are under stress, and have questions about the legality of the coop's actions. The threat of lawyer involvement begins to undermine staff experience and credibility in the eyes of some members.

- 1. When is a member's legal threat actually a threat? [E.G- bringing a lawyer vs. free consulting with a group of law students]
- 2. What can your staff do to reduce legal liabilities? [E.G.- Documentation, outside facilitator, notification, appeals process]
- 3. How can staff work with the member review body to keep them "grounded" in their legal obligations during the process?
- 4. How do staff talk to the larger affected communities and groups e.g. house(s), board, members to maintain their credibility?
- 5. When should staff consult with a lawyer?



Scenario 3: Bloc Voting in their Own Interest, not the Coop's

A group of members live at PineWeevil coop, which is a part of the coop system you work for. Some of this group of members have been there for a long time, some are active as officers, and some are new. This group of members often vote as a solid bloc. Staff have contact with these members, but only a few times per week, whereas the bloc of members live together and have a strong set of informal channels for communicating within their group. This bloc of members often attempt to swing the results of a vote or meeting by stacking the attendance with their group of friends or sympathizers. The main concern of this bloc is protecting other members of the group, or pursuing a shared agenda, but not always what is in the best interests of the whole coop. Sometimes the members of this voting bloc vote for what is in the current best interests of the members in the bloc, but which also harms the coop in the long run.

- 1. Is this voting bloc a problem that staff can intervene in?
- 2. What would be an appropriate way to discuss this situation with members?
- 3. How can staff contribute to an understanding of what is in the best interest of the coop?



Scenario 4: Bad Publicity

Members give the co-op (and co-ops in general) a bad reputation, and discuss potentially illegal activity (drug use, underage drinking, vandalism) with local media, or share harmful information online (FaceBook pages, YouTube vidoes, etc). Members assume that because the coop belongs to the membership, and they are a member, that they can share their perspective on what happens in the coops, even if that information harms the coop (such as stories about underage drinking) or is confidential (such as the contents of an interview relating to a sexual harassment situation). Staff have prospective members ask them about the negative public perception of the coop, due to the stories in student papers and online, while giving tours.

- 1. Is it the job of staff or members to represent the coop?
- 2. What publicity would be considered inappropriate?
- 3. Can staff do "damage control" on inappropriate publicity?
- 4. What are ways that staff can educate members on the line between honest representation of the coop and inappropriate representation of the coop?