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**Self-Determination Housing of Pennsylvania**  
A Program of Inglis Community Services



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## Special Issue

Welcome back to SDHP's advocacy newsletter. Since it is a new year, this issue is focused on seeking out fresh perspectives. Remember, the simplest form of advocacy is to just share this newsletter with someone you think could use this information!

And if you were forwarded this email, please [consider subscribing](#).

*Estimated Reading Time: 5 Minutes.*

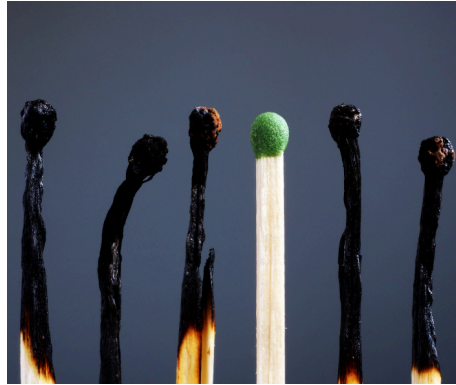
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## Are you at risk of burning out?

In this line of work, we give a lot of ourselves. We are on the front lines of a housing crisis, playing musical chairs with the limited resources in our community. We are short-staffed, underpaid, and overworked. On top of all that, we are in the darkest days of winter, covered in snow and cold, and possibly trying to maintain our New Year's Resolution. Knowing all of that, ask yourself these questions:

- Are you struggling to focus or feel motivated to do your job?
- Do you still get any satisfaction from what you are doing?
- Are you struggling more to interact with clients/coworkers?
- Are you sick more often than usual?

If any of these questions describe you, you may be experiencing burn out. The main characteristics of burnout include feeling exhausted, resenting your job, and feeling less capable at work. Burnout starts small and builds over time, so be sure to check



The solution could just be to find new job, but it is not the only option. Here are some other ways to address burnout symptoms:

- Communicate with human resources or your supervisor about how you're feeling and come up with actionable steps in order to feel as though you have more control over what you're doing.
- Be intentional with taking breaks throughout the day whether that be going for a walk during your lunch break or taking a few minutes to do some stretching or yoga, practice mindful thinking.
- Focus on your overall well-being such as getting enough sleep, nourishing your body with what you eat, and taking time to get healthy movement.

If left unaddressed, burnout can cause long-term health effects such as high blood pressure or higher risk of type 2 diabetes, alienation from work-related activities, emotional exhaustion, and reduced performance. As noted, while burnout does stem from work stress, it can easily carry over into your personal life, and negatively impact all facets of your life. If you do feel you may be experiencing burnout, please reach out to someone for help, and take necessary steps to take care of yourself.

For more information, please refer to these articles:

- [Job burnout: How to spot it and take action](#) (Mayo Clinic)
- [How to Recognize Burnout Symptoms](#) (Very Well Mind)

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## **Unlocking Potential: *The Power of Lived Experience in Disability Housing Initiatives***

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A profound shift occurs in the worlds of housing and disability when individuals with lived experiences can actively participate in resident advisory boards. This engagement can be transformative in shaping policies with empathy and insight.

A resident advisory board made up of individuals with lived experience is a key ingredient in inclusive decision-making. The diverse needs within the disability community are authentically represented, and policies are crafted with an understanding that goes beyond funding sources and legislation. The result is a housing initiative that resonates with the people it aims to serve.

For instance, the advisory board's direct engagement can spotlight the necessity for affordable housing units equipped with specialized features, addressing the specific needs of residents with disabilities. This inclusivity becomes the cornerstone of a housing ecosystem that values and caters to the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities.

### **Empowerment, Advocacy, and Active Participation**

The engagement of individuals with lived experience isn't just a seat at the table; it's a platform for empowerment and advocacy. Members of the advisory board, having navigated challenges firsthand, become advocates for their own rights. Their active participation not only influences immediate changes but also contributes to a broader movement advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities.

Consider a scenario where the advisory board actively advocates for increased funding for supportive services, resulting in improved accessibility and community

*"I have something meaningful to offer."*

~ A member of a Pennsylvania Lived Experience Advisory Board

Lived experience provides a unique lens for evaluating existing housing policies and suggesting improvements. The advisory board becomes a feedback loop, contributing to a culture of continuous improvement. Regular feedback sessions with members who have firsthand experience in navigating challenges in the housing systems ensure that policies are not static but adaptive.

In a practical example, regular feedback sessions with the advisory board may identify challenges in accessing services and transportation needs and recommend adjustments for continuous improvement.

### **Influencing Systemic Change Through Advocacy**

Members of the advisory board extend their influence beyond the immediate housing environment, becoming advocates for systemic change at the state level. Their voices echo through legislative corridors, leading to the introduction of new legislation that prioritizes accessible and affordable housing for individuals with disabilities.

[The Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness](#) has a successful Lived Experience Advisory Board, and they say this: *"We listen to those with lived experience, and we use the lessons we've learned and the data we've collected to educate legislators and the greater community on best practices and policies that contribute to preventing and ending homelessness and creating affordable housing and stability."*

Another inspiring example of learning from individuals with lived experience is the [Western CoC's Youth Advisory Board](#). Not only are the youth members of the board supported and empowered by the Continuum of Care (CoC) and their fellow board members, but they are also advocating for and inspiring authentic, needed change.

Lived experience encourages a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnected nature of social, economic, and health factors. The advisory board becomes a proponent of integrated support programs that address not only housing needs but also encompass employment opportunities, healthcare access, and social inclusion.

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acknowledging and amplifying the voices of those who have navigated the challenges themselves. Resident advisory boards, enriched by lived experiences, emerge as the cornerstone of a future where every individual, regardless of ability, finds a place they can truly call home.

## County Spotlight: *Poverty Simulations*

Click here to share one of your programs with us for a county spotlight!



**“YOU NEVER REALLY KNOW A MAN UNTIL YOU STAND IN HIS SHOES AND WALK AROUND IN THEM.”  
– HARPER LEE, TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD**

The [Pennsylvania Northeast Area Health Education Center \(AHEC\)](#) creates poverty simulations as a springboard to mirror poverty, the day-to-day struggles of those we serve, and the overwhelming tasks and decisions people face when there are limited resources. This type of shared experience shifts what we know from statistics about our communities and turns it into realities.

During a poverty simulation, participants are given a limited budget and must make decisions about how to allocate their resources for basic necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare. This simulation can be an eye-opening experience for those who have never experienced poverty and can help individuals better understand and gain some insight into the overwhelming, hopeless, frustrating experience to those who live in it.

Locate the PA Area Health Education Center in your region [on their website](#) and consider attending any poverty simulations that may be happening near you.

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If you have an idea for an impactful presentation, please apply to be part of our Accessible Housing conference.

The 2024 Conference will take place on June 11th and 12th in Harrisburg. Our Request for Presentations will remain open until end of day February 26.

[Submit Your Presentation Here.](#)



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