Lesson Plan for RA 1-on-1 Conversations/Meetings with Residents

The Department of Housing and Residential Life views a series of one-on-one meetings between all residents and their RAs as an effective way to address numerous competencies in the Curriculum. RAs will have at least four conversations with residents during the course of the year. In most cases, the conversations will be in a meeting that the RA sets up with the resident. In some cases, it is appropriate for the discussion to happen in a more informal setting (e.g., a lunch conversation, a stop-in while on duty, a walk to the Rec.). In most cases the conversations will be one-on-one. In some cases it is appropriate (or even desired in the case of the first conversations of the year) the conversations will be with roommate pairs, suites, apartments or other small groups.

**Timeline**
The timeline for RAs holding the meetings depends on the number of residents for which each RA is responsible. The general guideline is an RA can hold ten 15-to 30-minute long meetings per week. Therefore, an RA with 25 residents should complete the meetings within three weeks after the start date; and an RA with 45 residents should complete the meetings within five weeks after the start date.

**Goals & Guidelines**
The overall goal is that the conversations/meetings will create a regular, meaningful opportunity for RAs to try to help residents achieve the competencies from the Residential Curriculum. A guide will be provided for each meeting.

1. In these meetings RAs should demonstrate how they trust their residents' judgment, have an interest in residents' experiences, and respect their beliefs.
2. Notice that many of the prompting questions in the guides begin with, "Tell me about an experience you had..." This brings the focus of the discussion to be on the resident.
3. RAs should not be "dumping" information or directives on residents, rather they should be a partner in arriving at more complex understandings and decisions together. The RA is not the expert, only the guide.
4. RAs should take notes during each meeting. RAs will be asked to provide information to assess the effectiveness of the conversation.

**Purpose**
What an RA might say to a resident at the beginning of the first meeting in answer to the question, "Why are we meeting?"

We're going to meet four times throughout the year for us to talk about some things regarding you and your experience. It’s a chance for us to talk about some of the things you are learning and experiencing outside the classroom at Texas State. In part we’ll talk about some fairly concrete topics - like today we’re going to talk about the Roommate Agreement. But also, in part, it will be an opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences. We'll be fairly informal but I'll provide some structure for our conversations. We also think it is important that you feel connected to our community and this is one way to achieve this.

Although RAs might not state it up front, the meetings will also serve to identify any problems and begin problem-solving.

**Diverging from the guide**
There is a guide for each of the four meetings. There may be circumstances when it is appropriate for RAs to discuss other matters not outlined in the guide. For example, if an RA meets with a student who they had helped through a critical incident (e.g., alcohol related arrest, major roommate conflict, sexual assault, experience of prejudice), it might be more appropriate for the RA to use the meeting to help the student reflect on that experience. The RA should consult
with their supervisor in these instances.

**Scheduling the meetings.**

RAs, with the guidance of their supervisors, can choose the method of how to ensure that they meet with all of their residents.

Suggestions:
1) schedule the first meeting during move-in,
2) schedule meetings during corridor/floor meetings,
3) commit to having a meaningful conversation with a certain number of residents every time you are on duty.

The meetings can be held in residents' rooms, RAs' rooms, dining halls or some other space (when appropriate) as agreed upon by the RA and supervisor. As suggested above, the discussions can be in a formal setting or an informal setting. A reasonable attempt should be made to schedule every resident for meetings. Ideally it becomes part of the culture that "everyone does these meetings" much like academic advising for first year students. But, if a student refuses to meet, the only consequence would be losing the opportunity to speak with a caring student leader. The RA should notify their supervisors in these cases.

**How will we know the meetings are effective?**

We will assess the effectiveness of the meetings in four ways:
1) Each week, every RA will report the number of 1-on-1's conducted and briefly reflect on their effectiveness through a weekly report that will be completed and submitted to their RD.
2) Supervisors will talk about the meetings with their RAs in both 1-on-1’s and in staff meetings. The focus of these conversations will be to identify evidence that residents are achieving the competencies.
3) Students will be asked to reflect on the effectiveness of the 1-on-1 meetings in both the RA Evaluation and the Skyfactor (formerly EBI) (both conducted late in the first semester).

**NOTE:** RAs should be taking notes during each meeting with their residents.

**Conversation Outlines**

The outline below is detailed further within this document:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation One (Aug/Sept)</th>
<th>Conversation Two (Oct/Nov)</th>
<th>Conversation Three (Jan/Feb)</th>
<th>Conversation Four (Mar/April)</th>
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| • Meet with all residents of a room/suite/apartment  
• Initial adjustment  
• Roommate Agreement Revisited with Individual Resident | • Academic resources  
• Plans for involvement outside of the classroom  
• Personal safety  
• Preparing for breaks | • Reflection on change  
• Revisit involvement plans  
• Reflect on culture and society  
• Begin thinking about housing plans for next year | • Review experiences over the past year  
• Summer plans  
• Plans for next year |
Conversation #1

Before beginning the conversation it is important for you to realize the following is not a check-listed task for you to complete, but rather, an opportunity for you to engage your residents in conversation. These conversations reflect responsive interviewing in which you respond to the resident and then ask further questions about what they tell you instead of relying on predetermined questions (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). Because of this, "the interviewer [RA] must follow the respondent’s lead, which makes the conversation unpredictable; this requires attentive flexibility on the part of the interviewer, who needs to understand the grounding for this strategy, trust the process, and be able to adapt to potential [notions] that might arise" (p. 503).

Initial Adjustment Possible Probes:
- It would help me to know a little bit about you. Tell me about what brought you here.
- What did you expect it to be like being a college student here? Has anything surprised you about Texas State?
- Talk to me about your transition to college life. Was there anything that you've experienced so far that you think will help you during your time at Texas State?

Roommate Agreement Revisited with Individual Resident Possible Probes:
- Tell me a little bit about your roommate agreement. How did you come to a decision with your roommate(s) about how you would interact with one another?
  - RA should bring roommate agreement to meeting to cover it with the resident (if available)
    - RA should go through the agreement with the resident to ensure that they are in agreement with what is written.
- Do you think you'll have any issues adjusting to living with another person?
- How can I help you in this adjustment?

Plans for Involvement Outside the Classroom Possible Probes:
- You mentioned before that you really enjoyed (an activity mentioned during the initial adjustment portion of the interview that led the resident to Texas State). Are you planning on becoming involved in that at all here?
- What were you involved in during high school/home/other? Would you be interested in getting involved in any of those activities at Texas State?
- What other interests outside your major would you like to experience? How can I help you get involved?
Conversation #2

In order to get the most out of each interview, it is important to build on the previous conversation in order to inform the second. Before you begin your second one-on-one, you should consult your notes from the previous conversation and refresh your memory about the particular resident.

You should begin your one-on-one by asking any pertinent follow up questions and then transitioning into the new topics for the next interview (e.g. Ask how the student is adjusting to living with a roommate if the resident expressed that as a concern during the first interview).

Also, while it is important to let the resident make sense of their own experiences, you should also be knowledgeable of the possible resources available for any particular issue or problem the student may be facing.

Academic Transition/Resources Possible Probes:

- Is there anything about your academic experience so far at Texas State that has surprised you? Something you didn't expect? How have your expectations for college matched up with what you've experienced so far?
- Are you getting the help you think you need to make informed decisions about your classes and your chosen major?

Socially Responsible/Safe Decisions Possible Probes:

- Have you faced any difficult decisions since coming to Texas State? Academically? Socially?
- How have you addressed behavior by others that you found to be either irresponsible or unsafe?
- What is the process you use to make safe, responsible decisions?
- Have you felt pressure to make decisions you felt were unsafe?

Community Standards Possible Probes:

- Did your experience with the discussion on community standards help to make you feel more a part of this community?
- How do you think that discussion has influenced the people in this corridor/on this floor/in your apartment building?
- Is there anything about the community standards we've set up that you would like to revisit at some point?
Conversation #3

In this one-on-one, there is the possibility that your resident will be talking about issues and relationships that are very personal. It is important for you to keep from offering advice (unless it is warranted) and instead help the student to make sense of the situation. Even if the student asks for advice, you should try to refocus the conversation so that the student is working through the issue by asking you questions about how they understand or see the problem. If necessary, you should point them to an appropriate office or department to seek support.

Discussing a student's culture and society can be a difficult subject to navigate depending on the student's ability to define their own culture and place in society. We recommend you have a conversation with your supervisor about additional resources that you could suggest to your resident if they have additional questions or want to learn more about different areas of culture and society. The prompts listed below are designed to allow you to be able to help the student discuss times and experiences in which their perceptions of self, culture, and society have been challenged by others.

Since you will once again be revisiting some topics discussed during an earlier interview, you should take the time to read through your notes so you can talk about how they wanted things to be in terms of their on-campus involvement and how it has actually worked out. Remember that as a Resident Assistant, you cannot promise confidentiality in these conversations.

Reflection on Changes Possible Prompts:
- How have your relationships (with friends or family) changed since you've come to Texas State? What does that mean for you?
- Do you think anything has changed about you since coming to college? What?
- How have you navigated the changes you’ve experienced so far?

Revisit Involvement Plans Possible Prompts:
- I remember you saying something about (a club or group the student was interested in) during our first conversation at the beginning of the year, did you ever get involved in it? How has that experience been?
- Has getting involved on campus been what you expected? How has it been different? The same?
- How are you able to manage your class schedule and your involvement in other things? Has it been easy? Hard?

Challenge to Reflect on Culture/Society Possible Prompts:
- How have your views on social or cultural issues changed since coming to Texas State? Have they changed at all? Why do you think that is?
- Is there anything you'd like to challenge yourself or other students about regarding perceptions of other cultures? Your own culture?
- Have there been any programs or events on campus that have exposed you to different ideas about culture and society? What were they?

Housing Plans Possible Prompts:
- Have you thought about your housing situation for next year? If so, are you aware of the resources that are available to help you make better decisions?
Conversation #4

During the fourth one-on-one, you should have a conversation with the student to help reflect upon their time at Texas State and how they have transformed while living in the hall/apartment. The goal is for you to gather information to understand the student’s experience in the hall/apartment.

You will also ask them to think about their future plans and if they intend to return to Texas State. To better understand student retention, we hope that the student will provide information on why they are or why they are not returning to Texas State.

Identify Strengths and Areas for Improvement Possible Prompts:
• What were some of the highlights of this year? Why?
• What were some of your personal successes? Why?
• What were some of your struggles this year? Why?
• What are things you can do in the future, or things you’ve already started that would help you with the areas in which you struggle?

Future Thinking
• What are your plans for the summer? For fall?
  o If you are not returning to Texas State next year, what is preventing you from returning?