Doctrines (guiding principles & program doctrines)

Orpe Human Rights Advocates — "Restoring Dignity" Shelter & Rapid Re-housing Programs (Maryland). Each doctrine includes a short rationale and 2–3 practical implementation

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1. Human-Rights & Dignity First

Rationale: Everyone has an inherent right to safe housing, privacy, and respect. Programs must treat housing as a human right, not a charity favor.**Implementation:**

- All client interactions use person-first language; intake forms reflect client-chosen names/pronouns.

- No involuntary disclosure of status; confidentiality policies enforced (see doctrine 10).

- Client feedback and complaints systems with guaranteed response timelines.

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2. Housing First (Low-Barrier Access)

Rationale: Stable housing is the foundation for recovery, employment, health. Prioritize rapid placement over preconditions.**Implementation:**

- No sobriety, treatment, or employment preconditions for shelter or RRH placement.

- Streamlined referral-to-placement timelines (e.g., target 7–14 days from referral to housing).

- Flexible funding for move-in costs, short-term rent, and basic furnishings.

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3. Trauma-Informed & Healing-Centered Care

Rationale: Many clients have experienced complex trauma; services must avoid re-traumatization and support resilience.
Implementation:

- Trauma-informed training mandatory for all staff and volunteers (annual refreshers).

- Environment design that supports privacy, safety, calming spaces (quiet rooms, private lockers).

- Intake and case planning that ask "what happened to you?" not "what's wrong with you?"

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4. Person-Centered & Client Choice

Rationale: Clients are experts in their own lives; programs must support autonomy and informed choice.
Implementation:

- Individualized housing plans co-created with clients, including client-set goals.

- Option menus for services (e.g., voluntarily-available case management, employment, counseling).

- Exit planning begun at intake and regularly reviewed.

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5. Equity, Non-Discrimination & Cultural Humility

Rationale: Services must actively remove systemic barriers and respect diverse identities.
Implementation:

- Explicit non-discrimination clause (race, gender identity, disability, immigration status, religion, etc.).

- Cultural humility training and hiring practices that reflect community demographics.

- Language access: interpretation and translated materials available on request.

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6. Harm-Reduction & Practical Support

Rationale: Reduce immediate harms to stabilize clients and enable progress toward long-term goals.
Implementation:

- Provide or refer to syringe services, overdose prevention education, harm-reduction supplies where legal.

- Medication stabilization coordination (MOUD referrals) without requiring program exit.

- Safe storage options for possessions and medications.

7. Rapid Re-housing as Time-Limited, Flexible Support

Rationale: Combine housing placement with short-to-medium-term financial and casework supports to return clients to stability.
Implementation:

- Flexible subsidy durations (3–12 months) based on barrier assessment.

- Landlord engagement strategy (guarantee funds, rapid response for repairs).

- Post-placement follow-up cadence (e.g., weekly first month, biweekly next two months, then monthly).

8. Integrated, Holistic Services & Cross-Sector Partnerships

Rationale: Housing stability often requires health, employment, legal, and benefit interventions.
Implementation:

- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with behavioral health, primary care, workforce development, legal aid.

- Co-located or mobile service days (health clinic days at shelter).

- Warm-handoffs rather than passive referrals.

9. Data-Driven, Client-Centered Measurement

Rationale: Use outcomes to improve programs while protecting privacy.
Implementation:

- Track core metrics: days to housing placement, housing retention at 3/6/12 months, exits to permanent housing, client-reported quality of life.

- Use consented client surveys and incorporate qualitative feedback into program changes.

- Maintain a data governance policy for access, retention, and de-identification.

10. Confidentiality, Safety, & Legal Rights Protection

Rationale: Protecting personal information and legal rights builds trust and reduces risk.
Implementation:

- Clear consent forms for data sharing, with opt-out options and plain-language explanations.

- Eviction prevention services and legal referrals; fund emergency legal assistance for tenancy defense.

- Safety planning for domestic violence survivors (confidential location, coordinated entry exemptions).

11. Community Integration & Anti-Stigmatization

Rationale: Successful exits depend on social inclusion and public understanding.
Implementation:

- Community education campaigns and landlord outreach to counter stigma.

- Volunteer & mentorship programs that promote connection without patronizing.

- Host community forums that include formerly unhoused people as leaders.

12. Workforce Development & Economic Mobility

Rationale: Long-term housing stability is tied to sustainable income and skills.
Implementation:

- Offer or refer to vocational training, resume/ID assistance, and employment coaching.

- Partner with employers offering living-wage entry points and on-the-job training.

- Financial literacy and benefits counseling integrated into case plans.

13. Sustainability, Ethical Stewardship & Fiscal Transparency

Rationale: Responsible use of funds ensures continuity and community trust.
Implementation:

- Budget transparency for stakeholders and funders; periodic public reports.

- Diversified funding plan (federal, state, local, philanthropy, earned income).

- Use restricted funds for intended purposes and maintain internal audit processes.

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14. Continuous Improvement & Participatory Governance

Rationale: Programs must learn and adapt with client input and evidence.
Implementation:

- Regular program reviews with client advisory council (compensated participation).

- Pilot innovations with clear evaluation plans and scale-up criteria.

- Annual public impact report including lessons learned.

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15. Ethical Exit & Aftercare (Post-Placement Support)

Rationale: Exits are not the end — follow-up preserves gains and prevents returns to homelessness.
Implementation:

- 6–12 month aftercare checks; rapid re-engagement protocols if risk reappears.

- Crisis funds for minor emergencies (one-time rental arrears, essential repairs).

- Peer support networks and tenant peer navigators.

Quick samples you can copy/paste into policy or a grant narrative

Mission clause: "Orpe Human Rights Advocates restores dignity by providing trauma-informed, rights-based shelter and rapid re-housing services that place housing first, respect client choice, and remove barriers to long-term stability."

Core policy line: "All clients shall receive low-barrier access to shelter and housing services regardless of substance use, criminal history, immigration status, or ability to pay. Services prioritize safety, confidentiality, and client choice."

Outcome goal (SMART): "Within 12 months, 80% of rapid re-housing households will remain stably housed at 6 months post-exit."

ORPE HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES**

Restoring Dignity Shelter & Rapid Re-Housing Programs

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Program Policy Manual

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Branding Statement

Orpe Human Rights Advocates (OHRA) is a Maryland-based human rights organization dedicated to advancing dignity, safety, and justice for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Our brand represents compassion, integrity, empowerment, and accountability.

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Mission Statement

To restore human dignity by providing safe shelter, rapid re-housing, and holistic support services rooted in human rights, equity, and trauma-informed care, empowering individuals and families to achieve lasting housing stability and meaningful independence.

Table of Contents

Section	Content
1. Introduction & Purpose	Overview of program purpose and framework
2. Program Doctrines & Guiding Principles	Human Rights & Dignity, Housing First, Trauma-Informed Care, Client Choice, Equity, Harm Reduction, RRH Doctrine, Integrated Services, Data-Driven Practices, Confidentiality, Community

	Integration, Workforce Development, Stewardship, Continuous Improvement, Ethical Exit
3. Program Structure	Shelter operations, RRH structure, capacity, facilities, services
4. Client Rights & Responsibilities	Rights, responsibilities, grievance protections
5. Intake, Admission & Exit Policies	Intake procedures, admission criteria, discharge processes
6. Safety & Risk Management	Emergency procedures, risk mitigation, incident reporting
7. Staffing & Training Requirements	Training mandates, supervision, performance review
8. Data Management & Confidentiality	Data security, consent, privacy standards
9. Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting	Outcome tracking, evaluation schedule, reporting protocols
10. Appendices	Definitions, Code of Conduct, Forms, Templates

ORPE HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES

PROGRAM POLICY MANUAL

Restoring Dignity: Shelter & Rapid Re-Housing Programs (Maryland)

1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Orpe Human Rights Advocates (OHRA) operates the **Restoring Dignity Shelter and Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) Programs** in Maryland with the purpose of reducing homelessness, restoring human dignity, and supporting individuals and families toward permanent, stable,

and safe housing. This Program Policy Manual establishes the doctrines, policies, operating standards, and service expectations for all staff, volunteers, contractors, and partners.

The manual provides consistent direction for program implementation, ensures compliance with local, state, and federal requirements, and reflects OHRA's commitment to human rights, equity, and trauma-informed service delivery.

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2. PROGRAM DOCTRINES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following doctrines serve as the foundation for all shelter and rapid re-housing operations.

#---

2.1 Human Rights & Dignity First

OHRA affirms that housing is a human right. Every client is treated with respect, privacy, and dignity regardless of background or circumstance. **Policy Applications:**

- Use of person-first language across all written and verbal communications.

- Protection of client autonomy and choice in service planning.

- Creation of safe, clean, and dignified living environments.

#---

2.2 Housing First, Low-Barrier Access

OHRA removes preconditions such as sobriety, income, or employment from shelter admission or RRH eligibility. **Policy Applications:**

- Clients may enter services without mandatory treatment requirements.

- Intake processes prioritize speed while ensuring safety.

- Staff assist clients in securing permanent housing within the shortest feasible timeframe.

#---

2.3 Trauma-Informed & Healing-Centered Care

All services acknowledge the role of trauma in clients' lives and avoid re-traumatization.
Policy Applications:

- Mandatory training for all staff in trauma-informed care.

- Use of calming, private spaces within the shelter setting.

- Strength-based interviewing during intake and case management.

#---

2.4 Person-Centered Planning & Client Choice

Clients direct their own goals and service plans. **Policy Applications:**

- Individualized Housing Stabilization Plans (HSPs).

- Voluntary service participation; no punitive discharge for non-engagement.

- Inclusion of clients in all major decisions regarding their placement or supports.

#---

2.5 Equity, Non-Discrimination & Cultural Humility

OHRA ensures fair, culturally competent services for all. **Policy Applications:**

- Mandatory cultural humility and anti-bias training.

- Language access and interpretation services.

- Equal access for all individuals regardless of race, gender identity, disability, religion, or immigration status.

#---

2.6 Harm Reduction

The program supports safety and wellbeing through practical steps that reduce harm.
Policy Applications:

- Safe medication storage and overdose prevention education.

- Non-punitive responses to substance use.

- Partnerships with health providers for harm-reduction resources.

#---

2.7 Flexible, Time-Limited Rapid Re-Housing Support

RRH serves as a bridge to permanent stability. **Policy Applications:**

- Tailored rental subsidies (3–12 months).

- Landlord engagement strategies.

- Regular follow-up after housing placement.

#---

2.8 Holistic, Integrated Services

Housing stability is reinforced through cross-sector collaboration. **Policy Applications:**

- MOUs with behavioral health, legal aid, and workforce agencies.

- Warm handoffs for all referrals.

- Onsite or mobile supportive services.

#---

2.9 Data-Driven Service Improvement

OHRA uses data ethically to improve outcomes. **Policy Applications:**

- Tracking of key outcomes (retention, exits to housing, client satisfaction).

- Annual program evaluation.

- Data minimization and secure storage practices.

#---

2.10 Confidentiality, Safety & Legal Rights Protection

Client safety and privacy are central to all operations. **Policy Applications:**

- Compliance with HIPAA-equivalent confidentiality standards.

- Domestic violence safety planning.

- Access to legal referrals and eviction prevention support.

#---

2.11 Community Integration & Anti-Stigma Practices

OHRA fosters community inclusion and combats stereotypes. **Policy Applications:**

- Community education and advocacy.

- Inclusion of lived-experience individuals as program advisors.

- Employer and landlord outreach.

#---

2.12 Workforce Development & Economic Mobility

Clients are supported in achieving financial independence. **Policy Applications:**

- Access to vocational training and employment coaching.

- Resume, credentialing, and ID support.

- Benefits counseling and financial literacy.

#---

2.13 Sustainability, Stewardship & Fiscal Transparency

OHRA responsibly manages resources. **Policy Applications:**

- Periodic internal audits.

- Transparent reporting to funders.

- Diversified funding strategies.

#---

2.14 Continuous Improvement & Participatory Governance

Programs evolve through feedback and evaluation. **Policy Applications:**

- Client Advisory Council.

- Annual staff training and performance review cycle.

- Review and revision of policies annually.

#---

2.15 Ethical Exit & Aftercare

OHRA ensures clients are supported after exit. **Policy Applications:**

- Follow-up at 3, 6, and 12 months.

- Emergency crisis fund for short-term needs.

- Peer support linkages.

3. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

#---

3.1 Shelter Program Overview

- **Capacity:** 20 beds; family and single-adult accommodations.

- **Facilities:** Commercial kitchen, ADA-accessible bathrooms, private meeting rooms.

- **Services:** Case management, meals, hygiene supplies, vocational training, safety planning.

#---

3.2 Rapid Re-Housing Program Overview

- Short-term financial assistance for rent, deposits, and utilities.

- Intensive case management support.

- Landlord mediation and tenancy education.

4. CLIENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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4.1 Rights

All clients have the right to:

- Safe, dignified, and nondiscriminatory services.

- Confidential handling of personal information.

- Participate actively in service planning.

- File grievances without retaliation.

#---

4.2 Responsibilities

Clients are expected to:

- Respect staff, other residents, and program property.

- Participate in safety protocols (fire drills, emergency procedures).

- Engage in scheduled meetings for housing stability planning.

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5. INTAKE, ADMISSION & EXIT POLICIES

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5.1 Intake

- Conducted respectfully using trauma-informed interviewing.

- Includes needs assessment, safety screening, and service orientation.

#---

5.2 Admission Criteria

- Homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

- Willing to participate in non-punitive safety expectations.

#---

5.3 Discharge / Exit

- Planned exits: entry into stable housing.

- Neutral exits: voluntary departure.

- Involuntary exits: only when safety of others is at risk.

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6. SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

- Emergency procedures posted and trained.

- Incident reporting system.

- Safety protocols for DV survivors.

- Prohibition of weapons, violence, and harassment.

---

7. STAFFING & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- Orientation training for new staff.

- Mandatory trauma-informed, harm-reduction, and cultural humility training.

- Annual performance review.

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8. DATA MANAGEMENT & CONFIDENTIALITY

- Secure digital and physical file storage.

- Client data shared only with consent.

- Compliance with contractual and legal requirements.

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9. MONITORING, EVALUATION & REPORTING

- Monthly internal data review.

- Quarterly stakeholder reports.

- Annual evaluation measuring outcomes and client satisfaction.

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10. APPENDICES

- A: Definitions & Glossary.

- B: Code of Conduct.

- C: Grievance Procedure.

- D: Sample Housing Stabilization Plan.

- E: Safety Plan Template.

End of Manual**