



Saginaw Valley State University

Office of Residential Life

Roommate Conflict Policy

The Office of Residential Life at Saginaw Valley State University welcomes you to your new home! We want you to enjoy your time living on campus as you begin, or continue, your academic journey. For many of you, living on campus is the first time you will share your living space. Life on campus can be an exciting and rewarding experience, but it can also be trying at times. Learning to live with someone else - especially someone who may have different habits, likes, and dislikes - can be challenging. This will not only be a time for you to learn about your new roommate(s), but also a time for you to learn about yourselves. It is important that you reflect on your own behaviors and how these actions may positively or negatively impact others.

The experience of having a roommate and making new friends can be a fundamental part of each student's college education. It is a learning experience that will allow you to share your own experiences and gain insights from others as you form friendships and bonds in your community. The roommate experience can be successful and enjoyable, but it will take effort, compromise, and understanding on the part of all roommates.

In order to develop a healthy roommate relationship, it is vital that you begin communicating right away. This guide is designed to help you do just that. The Office of Residential Life offers a wide variety of resources and activities to support your success while living on campus.

Education:

When you move onto campus, it is imperative to introduce yourself to your new roommates and open the lines of communication from the very beginning. After you have had some time to unpack and get to know your roommates, all freshman residents will take part in an interactive and educational event called #Communication. You will attend this event with your roommates and other residents living in your facility. At #Communication, you will learn many tips and tricks to effectively communicate with your roommates. This event will help you start to think about what is important to you while living with your roommates and how you will communicate with your roommates.

Resources:

Communication Tips Guide: A guide which will help you have a successful conversation with your roommates.

Resident Assistant (RA): A fellow student who is trained to help you navigate living on campus. They ensure the safety and security of your facility, provide you with resources, organize events, and help build a meaningful community amongst all of the residents.

Resident Director (RD): a full time professional staff member who supervises RAs and manages the overall operations for one living facility on campus.

Resident Student Handbook: A comprehensive guide to living on campus that includes University Housing Policies, Procedures, and Prohibited/Monitored Items. All residents must adhere to the policies and procedures found in the Resident Student Handbook as agreed upon by their signature on their Housing Contract.

Roommate Agreement: A comprehensive document designed to help roommates get to know each other and to start opening the lines of communication on topics that are important for successful roommate relationships. This is a written document that will be filled out by roommates with the help of an RA. For first year residents, the document will be delivered and explained to residents three weeks into the semester and has to be completed, with the help of their RA, by the sixth week of the fall semester. Second year residents and beyond will receive a roommate agreement during the first few weeks of school in the fall semester. RAs are available to facilitate Roommate Agreement conversations, however second year residents and beyond can complete them without the help of an RA if they so choose. Roommate Agreements for second year residents and beyond will be required if there are conflicts in the unit that cannot be solved without the help of an RA.

Roommate Bill of Rights: A list of minimum expectations for each resident which will ensure that each individual's rights are respected. The Roommate Bill of Rights reminds residents that the enjoyment of life in a residence hall will depend, to a large extent, on the thoughtful consideration demonstrated by roommates.

Saginaw Valley State University Student Code of Conduct: A comprehensive guide to attending SVSU. Admission to Saginaw Valley State University obligates each student to abide by regulations for acceptable student behavior. All students are expected to conduct themselves as responsible members of the university community and to respect the rights of their fellow citizens.

Understanding Your Role:

Residential Life understands that conflicts will arise throughout the year while residents are living on campus. A stressful living environment can affect a student's college performance. The Office of Residential Life is proactive in our approach to roommate conflicts and will help resolve the conflict through mediation and the use of the Roommate Agreement. When students are unable to amicably resolve conflicts on their own, Residential Life staff may step in to help residents find a resolution. The staff may require the roommates to participate in a conflict resolution meeting, or staff may make a determination without the input of the residents as to how to resolve the conflict. It is imperative that all parties involved understand their role and their responsibilities as it relates to conflict.

The Resident Role:

As a resident, you are required to actively communicate with your roommates if there is a conflict. Below are some things you can do to help the situation.

- Talk to your roommate to discuss your concern directly and respectfully. If the issue concerns items already agreed upon in the Roommate Agreement, be sure to address what was agreed upon. Remember, your roommate may not know that they are doing something that bothers you unless you talk with them openly and honestly.
- Seek help from your Resident Assistant if the conflict persists. Your RA is trained and available to assist in the mediation process, and conflicts can often be resolved at this point. All students will be expected to communicate and compromise during the mediation process.
- Remember that conflict can take time to solve. Sometimes, it will take days or even weeks to come to an agreeable resolution. Remain positive, open-minded, and commit to the agreement.

The Resident Assistant Role:

At some point, certain conflicts may need help from other parties in order to be solved. If you are experiencing a conflict that you are unable to solve on your own, contact your RA. Below is an explanation of the role and limitations that an RA will play in any conflict:

- The RA is a neutral third party who will help you navigate conversations related to conflict.
- The RA will not take sides but will actively listen to concerns.
- The RA will help you brainstorm solutions but will not create solutions for you. The residents of the room must enact the solutions so the outcome must come from the residents.
- The RA does not have the authority to relocate any resident.

The Parent/Guardian Role:

Parents/guardians are instrumental in providing support and assistance to the student. Here are some things that parents/guardian can do to help the situation:

- It is important that you listen to your student. You can serve as a sounding board for them, providing both support and perspective. Encourage your student to talk directly, but respectfully, to their roommate about their concerns.
- Remind your student that any conflict has two sides. Encourage your student to consider why their roommate might see the situation from a different point of view.
- Encourage your student to remember that roommate conflicts take time and effort to work through. Living with someone requires ongoing communication. Realistically speaking, a one-time meeting cannot solve all past and future problems.
- Assure your student that having a roommate conflict is not a rare occurrence. Many students go through hard times with their roommates, and most are able to resolve their differences in a way that meets everyone's needs.
- Allow your student to resolve their own roommate problems. Doing so will leave them better prepared to resolve problems on their own in the future.
- Encourage your student to whole-heartedly pursue other means of conflict resolution before requesting a new room. Often, students can successfully work through roommate problems. Additionally, the process of working through a roommate conflict provides them the opportunity to build valuable lifelong skills. An immediate room change would result in your student losing out on the benefits the opportunity offers.

- It could become easy to get upset and angry with your student's roommates. It is imperative that you do not demonstrate this to your student. All of the residents in the unit deserve an opportunity to communicate their side of the story without outside judgement. Remember that there are two sides to every story and somewhere in the middle lies the truth.

Contacting Residential Life As A Parent:

- Consider Residential Life staff to be allies. We also want students to have the best possible experience.
- Talk to your student first before you call Residential Life yourself. Your student may not appreciate you calling Residential Life without their knowledge.
- Before calling Residential Life, familiarize yourself with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Simply put, in context of a roommate conflict, FERPA does not allow Residence Life Staff to discuss specific details of a student's conflict with their parent/guardian. However, the Residential Life staff will be happy to review with you the overall process in which we help residents work through conflicts. Your student is your information source if you want conflict specifics, so talk to them. Just keep in mind, they only have one side of the story.

The Process:

Any conflict will take time and effort to resolve. All conflicts will be required to go through the following process.

Step 1: Talk With Your Roommates

When a conflict occurs, it is best to attempt to work it out amongst yourselves. Be open and honest about the issues. Refer to your Roommate Agreement and the communication tips guide for help navigating this conversation. Work together to create solutions that abide by the Roommate Bill of Rights and give everyone time to enact those solutions.

Step 2: Talk To Your RA

If you have talked with your roommate(s) and the conflict is ongoing, contact your RA. Your RA will meet with all parties involved and bring everyone together to mediate the conflict. The RA will use the roommate agreement and help you make changes to the Roommate Agreement that address the conflict.

Step 3: Talk To Your RD

If you are still experiencing issues, talk with your RA about setting up a meeting with your RD. It is best to include your RA in this step as they have probably already shared the conflict with their RD and will be a helpful resource to you. The RD will work with you and all parties involved to mediate the conflict. The RD will refer back to the Roommate Agreement and create new solutions.

Step 4: Relocation

If all else fails, you can work with your RD to find a new place to live. The RD will offer possible new locations for you to live. The RD will expect that you meet with the residents of your new room before officially moving. It is imperative that you find a new room assignment that will be a good fit for you because you not be able to move again. This process could take time, especially if we are at capacity. We do not release students from their contracts based on roommate conflicts, so the RD will work to find the best possible location for you.

Special Notes

The RD supervises and manages the Roommate Conflict Process. The RD has discretion to skip certain steps of this process if issues of safety, security, or mental health are at risk. Roommate conflicts will be processed through SVSU's conduct system if any there are multiple ongoing conflicts within the unit that have been processed by the RD or if there are any violations of the Student Code of Conduct or Resident Student Handbook.

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