

# Crime Free Multi-Housing Program

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## What is the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program?

The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program (CFMHP) is an honest, direct and solution oriented crime prevention initiative designed specifically to help apartment owners, managers, residents, police and other agencies work together to keep illegal and nuisance activity off rental property. Its unique three-phase approach focuses primarily on helping owners, managers, and residents employ effective techniques that will increase safety as well as prevent and reduce crime on rental properties. The Program does not teach people who are not police officers how to do police work. It provides training in the employment of effective property management techniques, effective use of Residential Tenancy law, and encourages people to take a personal interest in what goes on in their apartment community. It teaches them their responsibilities in working with the police and neighbours to keep illegal activity off their properties.

## History

The CFMHP began in 1992 at Mesa, Arizona. It is a Problem Oriented Policing response to the many police calls to and crime associated with certain apartment communities. Block Watch was not found to be as effective as desired in these multi-housing facilities due to the lack of any long term financial interest or investment by tenants and/or the high turnover of tenants. The CFMHP was therefore developed and has proven to be a very effective crime prevention strategy, bringing in some cases 50% to 70% reduction in crime and police calls for service in problem apartment communities. After eight years Mesa is finding this Program is having an overall positive impact on crime prevention in the city as a whole.

Because of the Program's effectiveness, its popularity soon spread into other areas of the United States with similar results. The New Westminster Police Service brought the Program to Canada in 1994 where similar positive results were again achieved. Seeing the effectiveness of the CFMHP, other British Columbia police departments/detachments, including Abbotsford, have made commitments to work with their local apartment communities with the goal of partnering together to fight and reduce crime. As the partners in this Program work together, its success continues to repeat itself in every participating community. A British Columbia Crime Free Multi-Housing Committee is now in place under the umbrella of the B.C. Crime Prevention Association which seeks to assist communities and their police in developing and operating effective CFMH Programs.

## Problem

Many criminals live in rental housing, and many of these in rental apartments. Although crime can occur on rental property for a number of reasons, it is usually allowed to come to the property through



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criminal residents and their “friends”. All too often police and apartment owners and managers are frustrated with each other expecting that the other should do something more to deal with crime on rental property. For example managers may think the police should increase area patrols or not release criminals from jail so quickly and easily. Police may think owners and managers should employ more stringent applicant screening and eviction processes.

Police officers can find themselves returning over and over to certain apartment buildings dealing with the same criminals and similar types of criminal and nuisance behaviour. Further, besides criminal and nuisance complaints that police are mandated to deal with, there are times when police calls are civil in nature and therefore unnecessarily use up valuable police resources. Often police resources are taxed to the limit or even being reduced making it virtually impossible for police to increase patrols to apartment communities. Owners, managers and residents require other alternatives.

## Goals of the CFMHP

- Train apartment owners, managers and residents, in simple terms to know what they can do *now*, fairly and legally, to solve the problem of illegal and nuisance activity on their rental properties.
- Help owners and managers to know how and when to use the civil process as an effective means of preventing, reducing and eliminating crime and nuisance activity.
- Facilitate a co-operative effort and positive relationship between apartment owners, managers, residents, police and other agencies in keeping illegal and nuisance activity off rental properties.
- Create a safer and more habitable environment in which law-abiding residents may live through a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to crime and nuisance behaviour.
- Reduction of police calls for service in apartment communities in order to free up police resources for other matters.

(Note: “Crime Free” does not mean those participating expect crime to be entirely eliminated, but that an apartment community will not tolerate criminal behaviour on the part of its residents, their guests or others, and will seek to create as great a crime free environment as possible.)

## Proven Benefits

For owners and managers:

- a more stable and satisfied resident base
- increased demand for suites by desirable residents
- lower maintenance and repair costs
- improved property values
- improved safety for owners, managers and residents



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- appreciative neighbours
- more time for routine management as opposed to crisis management
- decrease in civil liability

For residents:

- a safer and more pleasant place to live
- owners and managers who care
- longer term residency
- a “community” environment where neighbours help and care for one another
- an increased sense of personal ownership

For police:

- reduced calls for service to apartment communities
- time for more relevant police duties
- co-operation and better relationships with owners, managers and residents for the purposes of crime prevention, detection and enforcement

## Three Key Elements of the CFMHP

### Phase I – Management Training

Beginning with an eight-hour workshop, managers receive further education regarding how to effectively manage their properties and use present legislation to help stop the spread of illegal and nuisance activity on rental property.

### Phase II – Property Security Assessment

The apartment building and property are assessed by police and changes and/or improvements recommended. Apartments must meet the minimum security requirements of the CFMHP to become fully certified in the Program (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

### Phase III – Resident Training

Beginning with a Safety Social, residents learn to work with the owners, managers, police and other residents to be the eyes and ears for their apartment community.

Successful completion of these three phases results in an apartment community becoming fully certified in the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program. The property can then post an attractive sign showing that they have joined the Program. Further, management is given copyright permission to use the Crime Free logo in advertising, etc. Regular audits and annual re-certification ensure the crime prevention goal and that the certified apartment community continues to meet the requirements of the Program.



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## The “Crime Free Addendum”

As part of the management training, participating managers learn how to incorporate the “Crime Free Addendum” both in the application process and thereafter. The Addendum is attached to a quality tenancy agreement and every applicant tenant must sign it before they can occupy a suite in a participating apartment community. By signing it the tenant agrees that neither she/he nor her/his family or guests will engage in criminal behaviour on the rental property. Contravention of this Addendum is grounds for eviction under the rules of the Residential Tenancy Act. Used properly, this process helps screen out undesirable applicants and provides legal (civil) grounds for managers to evict problem residents. Although the main goal is to keep crime off rental property by not allowing criminal applicants in as residents in the first place, the Addendum also provides managers further grounds for eviction later in case such applicants happen to slip through the strict screening process. The Addendum has been very effective and has been approved as legitimate by the Residential Tenancy Office.

## The Managers’ Training Workshop

Consists of:

- Training in general crime prevention concepts.
- Information about the Residential Tenancy Act and Office and other related laws.
- Training in the screening of applicant residents.
- Information regarding the roles of police, owners, managers, residents etc. and how all parties can work together in crime prevention and detection.
- Information about Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and minimum security requirements for certification in the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program.
- Information on detection of illegal drug activity and how managers can work with police in its prevention and detection
- Training in how to work with the police to involve residents in crime prevention and detection.

## Responsibilities of Those Participating

Of managers and owners:

- take the initiative to provide leadership in creating a safe and habitable living environment for residents
- perform proper applicant screening
- ensure effective use of rental agreements (including use of the “Crime Free Addendum”)
- prepare and maintain the property so as not to attract crime



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- learn how to detect illegal and nuisance activity, and to address it immediately and appropriately
- arrange for prompt eviction of criminally active residents and guests
- learn how to effectively work with the police and other agencies
- provide effective and consistent ongoing management
- encourage residents in areas of crime prevention

Of apartment residents:

- live respectfully of other residents; do not engage in criminal or nuisance behaviour
- employ crime and safety prevention
- become familiar with neighbours
- report suspicious, criminal and/or nuisance activity to police and/or manager

Of the CFMHP Co-ordinator:

- build and market the Program
- be familiar with laws relating to rental property
- clarify responsibilities and legal parameters of police, managers, owners and residents
- provide education, training and resources to owners, managers and residents as well as police personnel
- act as an ongoing resource to apartment owners, managers, police personnel, etc.

Of other police personnel:

- become familiar with and, wherever possible, explain the benefits of the CFMHP to managers, owners and residents
- work with the CFMHP co-ordinator, participating owners and managers, and other agencies as a team
- notify the CFMHP co-ordinator when there has been police attendance and evidence of criminal behaviour at a certified and/or participating apartment community (e.g. Pass on copy of file)

## Implementation

The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program commenced operation in Abbotsford in March 1998. Interest has grown rapidly with many owners, managers and residents demonstrating a sincere desire to work with the police in reducing crime on rental property. Both the Abbotsford Police Department and participating apartment communities are reaping the noted benefits of this Program. Your participation with us in this endeavour would be welcomed. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Constable Pat Patterson at the Abbotsford Police Department, Community Policing Section, telephone 604-864-4823.



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## The “Displacement” Myth

Underlying many people’s reluctance to get involved in pushing crime out of a neighbourhood is the belief that nothing can be achieved unless the police “lock up all the criminals”. Many people believe that moving criminal activity out of one house, one apartment, or one area does not really have any effect on crime reduction in a community. They feel that displacement of criminals will only “stir the problem around” by causing the people to move somewhere else and start up again. These very assumptions are what keep many from understanding the profound impact of an involved community.

We may like to believe that the total elimination of crime would occur if we simply “locked up all the criminals”. But simply “locking up all the criminals” does not eliminate crime and nuisance behaviour. Not only that, but this option is just not practically available to us. Police and citizens are therefore forced to work with other alternatives. Make no mistake - when citizens and police push crime out of one area, displacement does occur. Perpetual and hard core criminals will move out of one property and into another. But when displacement occurs, many believe that it has little, if any effect on crime in the community as a whole.

First, contrary to common belief there is some recent criminological evidence indicating that some criminals do cease their illegal activity when they get displaced. Second, even if they did continue illegal activity it has been shown that displacement of criminals from one location to another often has a long term positive impact on the immediate area they had initially “worked” in. Third, there is a short-term impact on the community as a whole as it generally takes these criminals some time to set up or re-organise their crime network. They may continue their criminal activity but, at the very least, there will be a temporary interruption, and they certainly won’t be doing it in the area they once had. But the issue is greater than that.

Many people see drug dealers, career criminals, and violent offenders as large rocks that cannot be moved – and so they try to just ignore or put up with them. But criminals are not rocks. In fact, they are like plants – weeds to be exact. Just like a weed they root, grow, and choke out healthier plants. Unlike weeds, we are not able to simply douse the criminal with poison and kill him/her. However, one of the other ways to remove a weed and keep it from negatively affecting its surroundings is to keep uprooting it.

As an example, when drug dealers are allowed to continue in one place, the children in the area receive longer exposure to role models they should not see. Friends of the dealers, who have not yet chosen a life of illegal drug activity, see their friends making money and paying little, if any, price for their illegal activity – and they consider getting into the business themselves. The neighbours in the surrounding area who have the resources to move out do so, leaving behind a neighbourhood that is increasingly vulnerable to criminal activity.



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If the drug dealers are forced to move out, the opposite happens. Children see bad role models paying prices; dealers' friends are less enthusiastic about following their peers into the business; and the long-term area residents decide to stay in the neighbourhood, thus creating a positive environment that is increasingly resistant to criminal activity.

Can evicting criminals and drug dealers, or preventing them from renting in the first place, solve the whole problem? No, it cannot. But it can make a profound difference by slowing the growth of the problem and can even begin to turn it around. The bottom line is – if we do nothing, the problem will only get worse; if we take action, we can reduce and control it.



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