



# Conflict in housing co-operatives

This series discusses conflict in housing co-ops as it affects co-op communities and ultimately co-op governance

## Issue #2: Member-to-member conflict

Conflict happens when people are not getting what they want or need. A conflict can be a “blip,” a “clash,” or a “crisis.” If the co-op handles conflict well, the co-op strengthens its community. If the co-op handles it badly, it will damage (or even destroy) the co-op’s community. There may be a risk of verbal or physical violence.



### BLIP

A conflict is a **blip** when there is a mild disagreement. It passes quickly. Sometimes a blip becomes a clash.



### CLASH

A conflict becomes a **clash** when anger grows, there are repeated arguments and trust breaks down.



### CRISIS

A conflict becomes a **crisis** when it destroys or seriously damages a relationship. There may be risks of verbal or physical violence.

Adapted from *Talk It Out*, by Dr. Daniel Dana

When two members have a conflict, they need to know that there is a process to have the conflict resolved. Conflict within a co-op can involve members, board and staff. The conflict mediation process will involve these three groups at various conflict levels.

Members must understand that the co-op is not responsible for resolving member-to-member conflict. The co-op is responsible for having a process in place in order for members to resolve their conflict.



There will be conflict situations that will make it necessary for the board and staff to intervene. In these cases, they will use the co-op's by-laws and policies to assist in these conflicts. These conflicts include:

- Conflicts caused by serious abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Assault of a partner
- Drug dealing
- Harassment of members or staff
- Child abuse
- Human rights violations

**Conflict mediation will not be applied in these situations.**



## Board and manager roles in conflict mediation

### What the board can do

- To create policy for conflict mediation
- To communicate with general members about conflict mediation policies

### What staff can do

- Ensure members have information about the conflict mediation policy
- Ensure that members have information about the local conflict mediation service
- Report to the board on how members are using the mediation services

### What the board cannot do

- The board cannot mediate conflict between members

### What staff cannot do

- The staff cannot mediate conflict between members



## Conflicts can arise because members:

- spread out/encroach on other members' next door walk way/driveway
- have differing schedules
- make typical household noise that is annoying to next-door neighbours
- have children with behaviours that is annoying neighbours
- have guests with behaviours that is annoying neighbours
- gossip and bad mouth other members
- have differences in views or lifestyles that lead to belittling, denigrating or bigoted behaviour or language
- and so forth

**Members in conflict with one another must first attempt to work out the issue between themselves.**

### Members can work between themselves to resolve the conflict if they:

- understand how each personally deals with conflict
- deal honestly with their own personal and internal conflict
- let others disagree with them without feeling personally rejected
- recognize, accept and understand differences (in values, lifestyles, expectations, gender, racial origin, culture)
- have an open mind, and do not think they are always right.



**If members have attempted to work out the issues and cannot, what else can be done?**

**This is a good time to turn to mediation services.**

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