

Texas State Technical College

# Student Housing Handbook

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# TSTC STUDENT HOUSING HANDBOOK

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# **TSTC STUDENT HOUSING HANDBOOK**

The Housing staff is always available to assist you whenever you have questions or concerns.  
Welcome aboard!

## **Housing Mission Statement**

The Housing Department supports the mission of the College and the Auxiliary Enterprises Division by providing comfortable and affordable housing for students to help them achieve their educational objectives in a safe, secure and healthy environment. The Housing Department also facilitates students' intellectual, personal and social development by providing an opportunity for democratic living where residents learn about themselves, other people and life in general.

## **Statement of Non-Discrimination**

Occupancy of student housing is on a first-come, first-served basis without regard to sex, color, religion, gender, national origin, genetic information, disability or veteran status.

Welcome to TSTC Housing. Your home away from home!

We are pleased to offer an on-campus residential experience that will provide you with a safe, comfortable and convenient living environment as you strive to reach your educational goals. While staying focused on your academic success must always be your top priority, we challenge you to take full advantage of the many opportunities you will be provided throughout your residential experience to learn more about yourself, others and independent living. A variety of student life activities and events will be offered each semester to encourage social interaction among residents and broaden your personal development. As you begin your housing experience, take time to carefully review this TSTC Student Housing Handbook. It contains important information about policies, procedures, services and community standards established to create a safe, enjoyable and memorable housing experience for all residents.

## **Ethical Practice**

The Housing Department is committed to maintaining an environment built on high standards of conduct that conform to the college's policies and ethical practices. Housing staff recognize that in order to gain and foster student trust, they must be perceived as trustworthy public servants. Therefore, the Housing Department staff commits to being responsible, truthful, fair, honest and law-abiding in their interactions with tenants.

## **Housing Eligibility**

Individuals residing in single-student residences must be enrolled at Texas State Technical College to be eligible to live in college housing.

At some locations, TSTC requires that all new students who are under the age of 21 on the first day of classes for which they enroll must live on campus for a minimum of two semesters. Policy exemptions will be considered for students who:

- Live with parents/legal guardians and commute: or
- Are married or have dependents: or
- Have a doctor's exemption for medical circumstances which cannot be accommodated: or
- Have completed two semesters (18 college credit hours).

Some locations may require that a meal plan be purchased by residents.

**Harlingen: Students under the age of 21 entering Housing for the first time, will be required to obtain a meal plan for the first TWO semesters living in Housing.**

Special circumstances justifying an exemption will be considered by and should be directed to the Housing Office. Please submit an application for enrollment to TSTC before applying for housing. For more specific information regarding student housing, please contact the Housing Office. Please contact the appropriate Housing Office for criteria and/or exemptions. Family housing is available at some TSTC locations.

## **HOUSING APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **Application**

Anyone who wishes to live on campus will need to complete a housing application and return it, along with any required deposit and application fee, to the appropriate office. Housing assignments will not be made or reserved until the receipt of the deposit or special arrangements have been made. (See Deposit)

### **Housing Application Requirements**

To apply for housing at TSTC, prospective residents must submit the following:

- Housing Application.
- Criminal Background Check Waiver and Release Form with a color copy of driver's license or state identification. A passport or military ID may also be submitted.
- Any required deposit.
- Nonrefundable application fee of \$30 (Starting September 1, 2020).

Cleaning fees may be applied at some locations and must be submitted with the deposit.

At the time of application, students should notify the Housing Office of a roommate of choice. After assignments are made, requests will be honored when possible.

Upon receipt of the complete application, a criminal background check will be done. Prospective residents will be notified by mail if they are not eligible for housing based on results.

Occupants of single-student residences must vacate their room or apartment upon withdrawal or graduation from TSTC.

### **Check-In Process**

Check in at the Housing Office to receive your keys and important housing information. Residents will be asked to sign a lease agreement/contract and any applicable documentation.

### **Assignments**

Every attempt is made to accommodate student preferences for housing assignments through the application information provided by all students when they apply for housing. It is our practice to attempt to assign students with similar interests and lifestyles to the same residence. Priorities for housing assignments are based on the date the deposit and application are received. The housing contract/lease agreement is for a space and does not guarantee assignment to a particular type of facility or room.

It is sometimes necessary to consolidate housing assignments to reduce the costs of operation. Dependent on the demand for space, we will consolidate and close apartments, sections, floors or buildings when the need arises. Each student who is affected will be notified to make arrangements to move without charge. We will make every effort to reassign the student to an acceptable space. Any costs that may be incurred by such moves (telephone, cable television, internet, etc.) should be discussed with management upon receipt of consolidation notice.

Room changes may be requested at the beginning of each semester. The moving period will be posted and any room changes should take place during that period only. Should special situations arise after that

period, you will need to see the residence manager or the director. Room changes WILL NOT be made on the basis of religious, ethnic or similar differences with roommates.

TSTC reserves the right to deny access to housing or reassign students when it is considered to be in the best interest of the institution. There will be no charge for moves initiated by the institution for disciplinary matters; however, the student does risk forfeiture of the security deposit. (See Discipline, Deposit)

### **Bacterial Meningitis Vaccination**

Texas Education Code 51.9192 requires all first-time freshmen and transfer students of a Texas institution of higher education to have a vaccination against bacterial meningitis. The following documentation must be provided prior to move-in:

1. Certification from a physician evidencing that the student has been vaccinated.
2. An affidavit or a certificate from a physician stating that the vaccination would be injurious to the health and well-being of the student or stating that the vaccination has been declined for reasons of conscience. The approved form for an exemption can be found at <https://corequestjc.dshs.texas.gov/>.

If students are over the age of 18, they can complete the form themselves, listing themselves as the parent or legal guardian. Students are strongly encouraged to visit with their primary care physician or area health clinic as soon as possible to receive the appropriate vaccinations.

### **Cancellation of Contract/Lease Agreement**

The housing lease agreement is a binding document and students are expected to fulfill the obligations. The terms by which a lease may be terminated by the resident are identified in the agreement and students will need to be familiar with them. Any request for cancellation of a lease agreement will need to be in writing to the management of the assigned residence.

### **Deposit**

The security deposit is to accompany the student's application for housing or be paid at the appropriate time during the application process in order to receive a housing assignment reservation. The refundable portion of the deposit is only returned when the student has followed the proper check-out procedure, paid all debts and fulfilled the lease agreement. Cleaning fees may be applied at some locations and must be submitted with the deposit.

### **Eligibility**

Only those persons enrolled at TSTC will be allowed to reside in facilities designated for students. If at any point a resident discontinues enrollment at TSTC, they will be required to vacate the premises designated specifically for students.

### **Evictions**

Students may be evicted from housing when they fail to meet enrollment requirements, when they fail to make financial payments, or as a result of disciplinary action. If you have a question regarding evictions, contact the Housing Office on your campus.

### **Fees**

The costs of damages and/or cleaning charges may not be covered by the terms of your lease agreement. Any additional charges will be assessed to the student. If you have a question regarding charges, contact the Housing Office on your campus.

### **Housing Acceptance Notification**

Students are notified by mail and/or email of acceptance into college housing. Important information about the check-in process is provided in the letter of acceptance, as well as the room assignment.

Prospective residents will be notified by mail or in person if they are not eligible for housing based on results of the criminal background check. Those deemed "not eligible" will have their deposits refunded and may appeal the decision to the appropriate housing representative.

### **Insect Problems**

Residents who discover insect problems should report them to a housing official immediately.

### **Maintenance**

Maintenance problems are to be reported to a Resident Assistant (RA)/Community Assistant (CA) or to the appropriate office as soon as possible. In emergency situations and after hours, you will need to contact a RA/CA to address maintenance needs. After-hours maintenance will be done only for emergencies. If you are unable to report emergency needs to your RA/CA, contact the TSTC Security/Police Department.

### **Mandatory Housing Orientation/Meetings**

All housing residents, both new and returning, are required to attend any required housing orientations/meetings. Residents who fail to attend orientations/meetings may face penalties, fines, mandatory make-up meetings or disciplinary actions.

### **Move/Check-Out**

All students who are not enrolled for the following semester should properly check out of their space at least 24 hours after their last final but no later than 5 p.m. on the last day of the semester. Properly checking out consists of removing all trash and personal items from the assigned space, cleaning, returning all keys to the appropriate office and completing all necessary paperwork. Items left in a room or apartment once the student has checked out will be considered abandoned and will be disposed of at the resident's expense.

Failure to move out by the designated time will result in additional fees. Moving out prior to the end of one's lease does not constitute a cancellation of the lease. (See Cancellation of Lease Agreement)

Students who fail to turn in keys and do not plan to return to Housing the following semester, will forfeit their deposit. Students must notify the Housing Office, in advance, if they do not plan to return the following semester.

Failure to check-out properly by not following the established procedures will result in either a forfeiture of the housing deposit or disciplinary action.

### **Refunds**

The Housing Office will submit clearance documents to the Business Office for refund processing, if applicable. Clearances take 10-15 days for processing, after which a refund check is sent to the student's permanent address or is put on their Higher One Card.

Pro-rated fees are assessed after the 30th school day. The unused portion of advanced rents will be refunded.

Refunds are processed using TSTC's Colleague system, which electronically pro-rates rent based on date of vacancy. Refunds will not be made during the last 30 school days of the semester.

A portion of the housing deposit may be withheld to defray the costs of apartment repair, replacement of lost items where tenant's liability is obvious, cleaning of the dorm or for any other charges owed to TSTC [i.e. parking fees, loan payments, etc.) .

### **Reserve/Release**

It is assumed that until the terms of the lease agreement have been satisfied, the student reserves the space for the following semester. Once the terms of the lease agreement have been met, the student will be notified and required to complete a reserve/release notification. Failure to do so will result in the space NOT being reserved and assigned to another student.

Students who notify the office that they are releasing their space but fail to return their keys and/or reasonably appear to have moved out will forfeit their deposit and be subjected to additional charges. (i.e. cleaning, removal of excess items, etc.)

### **Room Changes**

Residents wishing to make any type of room change must contact the Housing Office. Moves made during the middle of terms will have no charge. Any room change after that period will be accompanied by a \$50 moving fee, if honored. TSTC reserves the right to deny any move not considered in the best interest of TSTC as well as the automatic reassignment of students when deemed necessary. (See Assignment, Discipline)

## **PAYMENT INFORMATION**

### **Single Student Housing**

Single residents without dependents must check with the Housing Office for payment deadlines.

### **Family Housing and Brazos Community**

The housing deposit and first month's rent are due at or before move-in. Rent is paid at the cashier's window on the first day of the month. A 5 percent late fee is assessed if rent is paid more than five business days late. Grants, loans and scholarships may be used for rent. At the college's option and without notice to residents, any funds left from student loans, scholarships, etc., may be used to pay rent in advance.

## **STUDENT HOUSING POLICIES**

It is our belief that the residential life experience is an important part of your educational process. The living environment at TSTC gives students the opportunities for social interaction, interpersonal relationships and cultural activities. We want to foster a living/ learning environment where students can develop qualities of self-discipline and responsibility and that will enlarge their educational experience through new ideas and cultural diversity.

This portion of the Student Housing Handbook is designed to provide you with an introduction to residence life at TSTC. You will find information regarding staff, programs and expectations, as well as the policies that govern students who live on campus. You will need to familiarize yourself with these rules and regulations as you are expected to abide by them. It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the rules and regulations that govern residence life.

**The TSTC housing policies apply to all residence facilities at TSTC. Any student having signed a contract/lease agreement is expected to abide by these policies. Violations will result in disciplinary action.**

### **Appliances**

Residents of the campus facilities are responsible for the condition and cleaning of the appliances. Appliances should be in working and new condition. Students are not allowed to install appliances such as washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, or open-faced electrical or heating appliances such as hot plates, broilers, space heaters or immersion heaters. Oscillating and box fans may be used. Stereos and televisions are permitted. We ask that you observe quiet-hour regulations when using these items. (See Quiet Hours)

### **Alcohol**

TSTC has a zero tolerance drug and alcohol policy. TSTC prohibits the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages on college premises, including college housing, except for the Brazos Community (Waco). In addition to college housing residences and facilities, alcoholic beverages are prohibited in parking lots, picnic areas, stairways and areas surrounding the residence halls/apartments. All college policies and local state laws with respect to the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages will be enforced. Individuals in violation will be subject to college discipline and/or civil charges, even if the resident is of legal age. Residents who return to housing and appear to be intoxicated will be subject to disciplinary action. Determination of this is left to the discretion of Housing Office & College Police. Empty alcohol containers are considered evidence of consumption & may subject residents to housing disciplinary procedures.

### **Automobiles & Motorcycles**

Students are to follow all federal, state and campus statutes pertaining to the operation of any and all vehicles. Any damage caused by any unlawful activities will be charged to the offender's account. No repair work of any kind is to be done in the parking areas. Should a vehicle become inoperable, students should notify the necessary staff to make the necessary arrangements. No vehicle may be left on jacks, logs, blocks, etc. Inoperable vehicles may be towed at the owner's expense.

### **Behavior**

Residents are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with acceptable standards of good behavior. The TSTC Code of Student Conduct found in the TSTC Catalog and all housing rules and regulations in this handbook are strictly enforced. Residents and their guests must respect all college officials and other residents by refraining from loud, obnoxious, offensive or unlawful behavior. The use of foul language is in poor taste and unacceptable on campus and in college housing. Wrestling, scuffling and other types of horseplay in residences are prohibited. Disorderly conduct, such as harassment, and inconsiderate behavior, such as consuming roommate's food and using their appliances without permission, are considered housing offenses. All offenses will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For more information, see the "Disciplinary Action" section of this handbook.

### **Between Semesters Occupancy**

Single student housing rental rates are based on days of occupancy when TSTC is in session. Students may occupy their space during breaks lasting less than one calendar week as long as the space does not require maintenance. Students should leave no later than 24 hours after their last final in the semester and not return until the weekend prior to the first class day for the next semester. Those needing housing during this time must contact the Housing Office for possible arrangements, which will be billed to the student's account. Any arrangements will be made in writing and fees must be paid as agreed to in the written contract. Graduates are not allowed to extend their stay as their lease expires once they are no longer enrolled. **Residents remaining in Housing during break are not allowed to receive guests at any time.**

### **Bicycles**

All bicycles must be properly locked and attached to the provided bike racks located across the housing complex. No bikes are allowed next to entrances, or inside residences.. After a first warning, fines and actions can and will be taken, including, but not limited to, confiscation.

### **Business**

Conducting or operating a business from, or within, any housing unit is prohibited.

### **Candles, Etc.**

Candles, incense or devices with open flames and/or incense lit or unlit are not allowed in student rooms and/or public areas in any of the residence halls. Cutting the wick off of a candle does not make it "legal". Scentsy Wax Melting Devices and any Plug-In Scent Devices are not allowed.

### **Christmas Lights**

The use of Christmas lights as decoration in residences is limited to only those strands that are battery-operated, and LED. If found, plug-in Christmas lights will be confiscated.

### **Cohabitation**

Cohabitation is defined as a person using a residence hall room or apartment as if assigned as a resident to that room. Examples of this may include, but are not limited to, the following: keeping clothing and other personal belongings in the room, sleeping overnight in the room on a regular basis, using the bathroom and shower as if a resident. Individuals found cohabitating in TSTC housing will be immediately removed and barred from coming onto TSTC housing property.

The resident allowing cohabitation will be disciplined and may be subject to eviction.

### **Computer Resource Misuse**

The following are violations of the rules and guidelines governing the use of college computers and network:

- The use of college computers or network for monetary gain, to run or promote a business, or to otherwise profit.
- Modifying or tampering with network services, wiring or ports.
- The use of peer-to-peer or other file-sharing programs to download copyrighted music, TV programs, movies, other video or software is in violation of software copyright laws and is considered stealing.
- Participation in other copyright infringement through the college computer network. Copyrighted materials including, but not limited to, computer software, audio and video recordings, photographs and written material.
- Attempting to restrict data or breach any security materials in place on the college network system.
- Sending harassing messages through email, social networking sites, instant messaging services or other messaging services, on or off campus through the college network or on a college computer.

### **Damages**

Any damages will be charged to the individual(s) responsible for the damage. If the person responsible is not determined or reported, the charges for repairs will be shared among residents of the residence hall, floor, or apartment. Charges for damages in personal areas will be assessed to the individual resident. Students who deliberately cause damage or those who cause damage as a result of an unauthorized activity may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Dartboards**

Soft-tip darts and dartboards are allowed in housing facilities. Steel-tip darts are prohibited.

### **Drugs**

TSTC has a zero tolerance drug policy. Use or possession of illegal drugs and/or paraphernalia is prohibited in campus housing facilities and surrounding areas. TSTC students will not manufacture, distribute, dispense or possess any narcotic drug or controlled substance, including drug paraphernalia, such as bongs, roach clips, pipes, papers, seeds or residue anywhere on TSTC property, including residence halls and apartments, parking lots, picnic areas, stairways and immediate areas surrounding residence halls and apartments. If illegal substances or contraband are found in the common area of a living environment, each resident will be held responsible. It is the student's responsibility to report any such violation to the proper authorities. All prescribed medications must be in a properly labeled container from a pharmacy. Any student in violation of these regulations or whose behavior is affected by the use of drugs or who is found to be in violation of the drug policy will be subjected to severe disciplinary action that may include eviction and suspension. (See also Entry, Search and Seizure)

### **Drug Dogs**

For the protection of all students, TSTC employs the use of drug sniffing dogs as a means of enforcing the institution's policy on drugs and/or weapons. Drug dogs will be used periodically in the housing areas and parking lots as allowed by law. (See also Inspections)

### **End of Semester Dorm Cleaning**

Beginning in Fall 2018, students will be required to store all personal belongings (minus large electronics such as desktop computers, tvs, microwaves) in their assigned dorm room closet and/or dresser/drawers at the end of the *fall*, *spring* and *summer* semesters. Unless they have paid for the use of the entire room, students should only use the closet assigned to them. All other items must be taken home or stored elsewhere. Students using more storage space, without prior permission from the housing office, will be fined.

### **Entry, Search & Seizure**

Students, along with all other citizens, are protected by the constitution against unreasonable search and seizure. If, however, there is "reasonable cause" to believe that an institutional policy or law is being violated, a search may be considered reasonable. TSTC reserves the right to enter a student's living space when the occupant of the space may be harmed or endangered; for the purpose of inspection of property; to seek missing furnishings; to make improvements or repairs; to control the space in the event of an epidemic or an emergency; to ensure evacuation during fire drills; to conduct routine safety inspections, repairs or pest control; to check for suspected violations of the institution's policies on drugs or weapons; to exercise contractual lien; to remove unauthorized pets; or to show probable cause that a violation of TSTC policy is being or has been committed upon invitation of a resident; to allow entry by a law enforcement officer with a warrant; to show space to inspectors, fire marshal or an appraiser. A notice will be left for the resident describing the purpose of entry any time a space has been entered.

### **Extension Cords**

Only UL-approved surge protectors with built-in circuit breakers are allowed as long as they are plugged directly into the wall outlet. Extension cords, power strips without circuit breakers, and multi-plug outlet covers are not allowed in houses, residence halls or apartments. If a surge protector requires grounding, Housing Office can provide assistance.

### **Fire, Safety & Security**

It is the responsibility of each resident to be familiar with the policies and procedures designed to ensure safety and security. Fire alarms signal that all occupants of the building are to evacuate immediately. In the apartments, evacuation may include neighboring apartments, buildings etc. Residents should follow the instructions of the RA/CA during fire alarm/drill procedures. The RAs/CAs will evacuate areas as they deem necessary in order to ensure the safety of all residents. Any person who fails to comply with the evacuation proceedings will have disciplinary action imposed against them.

Each apartment and residence hall is equipped with fire prevention/notification devices. It is the responsibility of the student to immediately notify the Housing Office if one of the devices is not working, has been discharged or needs repair. Batteries are not to be removed from the smoke detectors. Residents who remove batteries from smoke detectors may face monetary fines and/or further disciplinary action.

Failure to evacuate the building during a fire alarm can cause harm to the individual, as well as fire safety personnel, if a rescue is needed. Failure to evacuate during a fire alarm will result in judicial action and possible monetary fines and could result in an arrest for violating federal laws. If awakened by a staff member and asked to evacuate the building, the resident is asked to realize that the staff member is following directions in an attempt to guard the safety of all.

### **Furniture**

The furniture in the room is there for the residents of that apartment. The items in the living areas should remain in the living area and not be taken to individual rooms or outside. No furniture should be taken outside the living area. Personal furnishings must be removed at move-out to avoid forfeiture of deposit and/or additional fines. Individual students may not bring large furniture of any kind to their rooms or apartments. No large sofas, large mattresses or weight equipment are allowed. Residence halls and apartments are furnished to comply with fire code restrictions. Waterbeds are not allowed in housing facilities. Should a resident have a special medical need requiring specific furnishings, they should contact the Housing Office.

### **Gambling**

Gambling is not permitted in any housing facilities. Residents found in violation are subject to disciplinary action.

### **Garbage**

Housing facilities have trash dumpsters located in their areas. Residents are responsible for disposing of their own garbage. Items such as engine parts, carpets, furniture, etc., will not be picked up. Those found leaving such items will be held responsible for any fines, and subject to disciplinary action. Do not place garbage outside your door, on the patio or balcony as it will result in disciplinary sanctions and a charge for removal.

### **Grills**

Due to the potential fire hazard, grills are not permitted on the porch/balcony areas, stairwells or parking lots of housing facilities. However, there are several grills located adjacent to the buildings for use by the residents. Any flammable items (charcoal, lighter fluid, etc) can be stored at the Housing Office.

### **Guests**

Residents have paid for the educational support that campus housing provides. Any guests of residents are subject to the same rules and regulations. Guests should not impose on the rights of other residents. Residents will be held responsible for the actions of their guests. In order to maintain the spirit of a community living environment, we ask that you abide by the following visitation hours in all residences:

- 10 a.m. until 11 p.m., Sunday through Thursday.
- 10 a.m. until 1 a.m., Friday and Saturday.

**GUESTS UNDER 17 ARE NOT ALLOWED IN HOUSING RESIDENCES AT ANYTIME WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN.**

**Oak Tree Apartments (Harlingen):** Oak Tree Visitors are required to remain only in the common living areas, and should not enter the bedrooms, and remain there, unless they are using the restroom.

### **Guest Rules**

The host should accompany all guests while in any of the housing facilities. Residents are not to give guests the key to their space. No person will be allowed to use visitation privileges unless the specific guest of the resident and the host is present.

- Residents are not allowed to invite unauthorized guests to reside, even temporarily, in their residence.
- Overnight guests are not permitted.
- Residents should register all guests with the housing staff.
- Unauthorized visitors may be asked to leave immediately by a staff member.
- Registered sex offenders are not permitted on the premises for any reason or any amount of time, no matter what relation or affiliation they have with a resident.

### **Guns**

Persons with a valid handgun license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety may carry concealed handguns in any place not otherwise restricted. All others are subject to criminal prosecution. "Open carry of handguns is not allowed on any TSTC campus or premises." (TSTC Statewide Operating Standard No. GA 1.6.10)

### **Harassment**

Any act used for the purpose of harassing or submitting a student or employee of the college to pain, discomfort or indignity is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action. This includes racial, ethnic or sexual harassment. Criminal charges may apply.

Residents subjected to harassment should immediately report the behavior to the Housing Office, College Police or any other TSTC official. See the Sexual Harassment section of this handbook or the TSTC Student Catalog for more information about reporting harassment.

### **Hazing**

Texas Education Code, Sections 4.01-4.50, prohibits hazing at Texas public institutions of higher education. Hazing is defined as "any intentional knowing or reckless act, occurring on or off the campus of an educational institution, by one person alone or acting with others, directed at a student, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of the student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in or maintaining membership in an organization whose members are or include students at an educational institution."

## **Housing Policies**

Failure to follow through with any of the indicated policies may result in disciplinary action.

### **Identification Card**

All students, when asked to do so, should identify themselves to any college official (including RAs/CAs) upon request. In compliance with Texas state law, students should carry their TSTC ID card on their person at all times.

### **Inspections**

Staff members will, from time to time, conduct safety inspections to ensure that safety standards are being met, to check smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, and to check for safety and health hazards that may have been created. If safety hazards exist, they must be corrected immediately. If the hazard found is a result of the resident(s) action(s), the resident(s) will be charged for the corrections. (See Entry, Search & Seizure.) Residents should keep in mind that food and an unclean environment attract insects and may cause a health hazard. Drug-sniffing dogs may be used during inspections to enforce the College's policy on illegal or prohibited items and substances. Students found to be in violation of inspections will be subjected to disciplinary action and/or fines as appropriate.

### **Keys**

Every resident is provided with a key to his or her space at check-in. It is the resident's responsibility to keep possession of those keys. Lost or stolen keys should be reported immediately in order to protect the safety of the residents and their belongings. Residents will be responsible for any rekey charges that are a result of stolen or lost keys. Residents may not have duplicate keys made. If duplicates are found, the locks will be rekeyed and the resident will be charged and will be subjected to disciplinary action.

Sharing of Keys, or Providing Keys to Other Residents or Non-Residents is strictly prohibited. Those found providing the keys will face disciplinary action.

Keys are to be returned as part of the check-out procedure. Residents will be considered to be occupants of the space, and charges will be accrued until keys are turned in unless written notice has been provided to the appropriate office. Failure to turn in keys, however, will result in the automatic forfeiture of the deposit.

### **Overnight Guests**

Generally, overnight guests are prohibited in single-student housing facilities. Residents seeking an exemption from this policy are required to have any overnight guests cleared through the Housing Office and must be in accordance with each facility's guidelines. **Registered sex offenders are not permitted on the premises for any reason or amount of time, no matter what relation or affiliation they have with a resident.**

### **Parking**

All vehicles are required to be in legal, operable condition to be parked in the housing area. Parking in the grass, on the sidewalk, in front of trash dumpsters or any area marked restricted is prohibited. Those in violation will be towed at the owner's expense. Vehicles without proper license, inspection or housing parking permits (if applicable) may be ticketed or towed.

### **Payments**

Residents are responsible for payment of fees on time. It is the resident's responsibility to make payment on time without notice. Failure to do so will result in action that may include eviction.

### **Pets**

Pets are not permitted in single-student housing facilities. An animal control officer will remove unauthorized pets. (See Entry, Search & Seizure)

### **Phones**

Students are responsible for the arrangements for telephone service and any charges associated with it. Contact the Housing Office for information. At some locations, local telephone service is provided in individual rooms in residence halls. Residents must provide their own phone.

### **Posters/Wall Hangings/Decorations**

We ask that you use tape with gummed adhesive in hanging items from concrete or brick walls. Small nails or straight pins should be used on sheetrock walls. Any damages caused will be charged to the residents. No flags, banners, signs, posters or any other medium for a message may be displayed outside or in view of the public. Flags, banners, signs, posters or any other medium for a message may not be hung from ceilings. Lewd, indecent, obscene expression or conduct is not condoned by the institution.

### **Prohibited Items**

TSTC officials will confiscate all unauthorized items. The following items are strictly prohibited:

- Alcoholic beverages and/or empty containers.
- Propane-powered barbeque grills or pits.
- Illegal drugs or paraphernalia.
- Weapons of any kind, knives, clubs, guns, firearms, ammunition, etc. This applies anywhere on campus, including residences and privately managed apartments. There is an exception for concealed handguns possessed by person with a valid handgun license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety, and such a person with a DPS license shall ensure that no others have access to the firearms. This handbook is not giving permission to possess any firearm. Nobody can or will give permission to possess a firearm on campus.
- Fireworks.
- Darts (steel-tipped) and dartboards.
- Extension cords, multiple plug adapters, power strips without circuit breakers.
- Electric or gas space heaters.
- Inoperable vehicles.
- Candles, incense or devices with open flames.
- Personal beds/waterbeds.
- Pets.
- Live Christmas trees.
- Flammable liquids, fuel.
- Weights.
- Bean bag chairs.
- Halogen lights.
- Toaster Ovens, hot plates or any cooking device with an exposed heating element.
- Scentsy/wax warmers.

### **Quiet Hours**

Reasonable noise levels are to be maintained at all times. Any infractions should be reported to the RA/CA. Quiet hours to be observed are **10pm to 10am, Monday to Sunday**. Residents should limit their volume so as not to disturb the neighbors or roommates. Residents are asked to cooperate with RAs/CAs when asked to reduce the noise level. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action.

### **Room Alterations**

Housing facilities are not to be altered, including painting, wallpapering or additional fixtures.

**Room Conditions**

Individual living spaces, including any common areas, should be kept in a neat and orderly fashion in order to prevent any unsanitary or unhealthy living conditions. The following are standards to be used to determine the appropriate condition of the living unit(s):

- Floors and walking paths are uncluttered.
- Cooking areas are clean and free of unclean utensils.
- Food items are properly stored.
- Personal belongings are limited to private quarters.
- Items and/or furniture are not arranged in a manner to present a significant risk of injury.
- Furniture and property are properly maintained and not damaged.
- Conditions do not exist that may attract vermin or insects.

**Solicitation & Posting**

Solicitation and posting of materials in any housing facility is prohibited. Anyone wishing to distribute materials or solicit in campus housing should first make a request to the Housing Office. Residents should report anyone posting items or soliciting in the housing area to the Housing Office.

**Tobacco/Smoking**

Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco are not allowed inside any housing building. Smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes, is allowed beyond 25 feet of any housing building. Smokers must dispose of cigarette butts appropriately. Fines will be imposed on any resident found violating this policy.

**Vehicles**

Students are to follow all federal, state and campus statutes pertaining to the operation of any and all vehicles. Any damage caused by any unlawful activities will be charged to the offender's account. No repair work of any kind is to be done in the parking areas. Should a vehicle become inoperable, students should notify the necessary staff to make the necessary arrangements.

No vehicle may be left on jacks, logs, blocks, etc. Inoperable vehicles may be towed at the owner's expense in accordance with the City Ordinances for Junk Vehicles.

Eighteen-wheelers, trailers of any type, boats, recreational vehicles and all motorized off-road vehicles are prohibited and are subject to a housing violation fine or towing at the owner's expense.

**Vending Machines**

Any problems with vending machines (soda, candy and washer/dryer) should be reported to the Housing Office. Abuse, vandalism or destruction of any vending machine will result in disciplinary and possible legal action.

**Weapons**

No firearms or deadly weapons are allowed on campus except where allowed under the law. (See also Guns and Prohibited Items) This shall include, but is not limited to: pellet guns, blow guns, bows, arrows, BB guns, paint guns, knives with a blades over five (5) inches long, daggers, swords, spears, darts, Chinese stars, blackjacks, nightsticks, mace, tomahawks, switchblade knives or metal knuckles. This regulation is not limited to this list; it includes all other deadly weapons. If you are unsure if an item in your possession falls into this category, ask Campus Police.

**Weights**

Weights, weight benches or exercise equipment are not permitted in housing facilities. TSTC maintains exercise facilities and programs for students to use. Should you have a special medical need that would require such equipment, please contact the Housing Office.

**VIOLATING THE AFOREMENTIONED POLICIES COULD RESULT IN FINES OF A MINIMUM OF \$75 FOR FIRST OFFENSE, \$150 FOR SECOND OFFENSE AND \$250 FOR THIRD OR MORE. FURTHER DISCIPLINARY ACTION INCLUDING EVICTION MAY BE APPLICABLE DEPENDING ON OFFENSE OR HABITUAL DISREGARD OF PROTOCOLS, RULES & REGULATIONS.**

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

### **Alcohol Violation Penalties**

The misuse (underage drinking, etc.) and the abuse of alcohol (drinking to an extent such that one's behavior and judgment are impaired or result in disruption of others) frequently leads to behavioral problems in the residence halls and apartments. The effects of alcohol misuse/abuse include, but are not limited to, excessive noise, interpersonal conflict and vandalism. Residents who misuse/abuse alcohol could negatively affect the community and endanger other residents. This policy is designed to assist the resident who, through the misuse/abuse of alcohol, is violating housing rules and to protect the community from the effect of a resident who continues to misuse/abuse alcohol, often infringing on the rights of others to a quiet and orderly living environment.

### **Discipline**

TSTC expects all students to abide by policies and regulations involving student conduct defined herein. When violations of such policies occur, students will be referred through the institution's disciplinary process. There are several types of disciplinary actions that may be imposed. These actions, as well as the appeal review procedure and due process proceedings, are defined in the Code of Student Conduct section of the Student Catalog.

Disciplinary action taken by the Housing Office include, but are not limited to, as follows:

1. If the first housing violation is minor (i.e., not affecting another student's safety, causing property damage, or involving the use of alcohol or illicit drugs), a warning will be issued along with a \$75 fine.
2. Upon a second violation of housing regulations, the resident will be placed on probation in addition to a \$150 fine.
3. A third violation of housing regulations will result in a \$250 fine and possible eviction.

At any point, students can be sanctioned, fined or evicted based on the severity of the violation. Students have the right to appeal institutional disciplinary measures brought upon them by submitting a written request for an appeal hearing to the appropriate disciplinary officer, director or supervisor within three (3) work days of the disciplinary action taken. A complete explanation of the review procedures is found in the TSTC Catalog.

### **Incident Reports**

Any staff member, including an RA/CA, has the authority to file an incident report for offenses that violate institutional policies. Anyone issued an incident report will need to contact the appropriate authorities the following working day. Information on the contact procedure is located on the incident report. Important: Failure to report will result in disciplinary action based on the information in the report.

## **TSTC HOUSING SERVICES**

### **Housing Office Staff**

The staff is available to assist you in your educational experience. We hope to create a living/learning environment that will not only allow you to develop your educational goals, but also to develop personally and socially.

### **Resident Assistants/Community Assistants**

The Resident Assistant (RA)/Community Assistant (CA) is a resident and full-time student enrolled at TSTC. It is the responsibility of the RA/CA to supplement and complement the quality of life in the community by planning activities, scheduling meetings with assigned residents, answering resident questions and responding to concerns, and assisting the housing management. RAs/CAs are the primary resource of information for you and have received training to enable them to deal with various situations. The RA/CA is concerned with the growth and development of each individual resident while ensuring that the quality of service is maintained at the highest standards. They are employees and should be treated with the same respect as any other employee. They have a primary responsibility to enforce policies of the institution and the rules and regulations of the Housing Office. You are expected to cooperate accordingly. Residents are encouraged to become familiar with the RA/CAs assigned to them and participate in scheduled activities.

### **Housing Accommodations for Students With Disabilities**

Students with disabilities that require accommodations for TSTC housing must contact the appropriate Access and Learning Accommodations Office in a timely manner for further guidance on the accommodations process. Students with disabilities are encouraged to self-disclose with the Access and Learning Accommodations Office when initiating the housing application process.

### **Intramural & Recreational Facilities**

The Intramural Department sponsors team and individual sports for all TSTC students and TSTC housing students in particular throughout the school year. The intramural program seeks to supplement and contribute to the student's general education by offering opportunities achieved through their participation in sports, athletic competition and recreational activities. Intramural sports may include volleyball, flag football, basketball, racquetball, tennis, golf, badminton and more.

### **Laundry Facilities**

Laundry facilities are located on or near housing facilities. Those located in the housing area are for the residents only. Clothes should not be left unattended. Any problems with a washer/dryer should be reported according to instruction in each facility. See the Housing Office for the location of a change machine. For information on hours, please visit the Housing Office.

### **Lock-Outs**

Residents who become locked out of their space can contact the appropriate Housing Office during normal working hours or the RA/CA or security/PD on duty after hours. For your protection, identification will be required prior to students regaining access to the space.

### **Mail**

Information regarding mail will be provided upon check-in and will differentiate between campuses.

### **Messages**

Due to limited personnel, we are unable to provide a message service for you. However, students may advise relatives that in case of an emergency, we will make every effort to contact you.

### **TSTC Food Pantry (Limited Locations)**

A food pantry stocked for students in need is available. Contact the Housing Office or your RA/CA if you need temporary food assistance.

### **Harlingen: Charlie's Pantry**

## **A GUIDE TO YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY**

This section will familiarize residents with emergency evacuation procedures, safety issues, and practices and responsibilities of college residence life.

Roommates should discuss these personal safety issues and concerns. Residents should have a plan to protect their safety and property in case of emergencies. TSTC strives to make the college housing community as safe as possible. It is up to each individual to adopt a personal safety strategy that will enhance the quality of life in college housing. These guidelines are not guaranteed to protect in all situations; however, by following and practicing these guidelines, students may substantially increase their ability to handle unforeseen circumstances. The best assurance of a safe and secure environment is a caring and involved community.

TSTC encourages all residents to assume personal responsibility for their actions, as well as to contribute to the well-being of the TSTC housing community.

Prevention is the key to avoiding accidents and crimes.

The following suggestions should help residents establish preventative patterns to increase the awareness of safety in a student's daily routine. Suggestions presented within this section should serve as examples of common-sense behaviors that would help make life safer and more secure.

### **Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault**

According to Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance is prohibited. This includes sexual harassment, which is conduct that is sexual in nature, unwelcomed, and denies or limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from a school's educational program. The following are examples of types of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment:

- Inappropriate touching, patting or pinching.
- Physical assault or coerced sexual activity.
- Obscene phone calls, texts, emails or gestures.
- Badgering someone for a date.
- Repeatedly making inappropriate sexual comments or unwanted sexual advances.

If a housing resident feels that he or she is a victim of sexual harassment or sexual assault by another resident or college student, the resident should immediately report the incident/complaint to the Housing Office, College Police or the Title IX Coordinator.

### **Preventing Sexual Assault**

Because college housing has a large concentration of women who travel predictable routes, it is especially important that female residents generate an awareness of their surroundings and avoid risky situations. Sexual assault frequently involves persons who know each other.

Be aware of your surroundings, especially in:

- Parking lots.
- Poorly lit open spaces.
- Empty academic, recreational or other buildings.
- Deserted college housing areas.
- Unfamiliar rooms or apartments.

If you are a victim of a sexual assault, call Security/College Police immediately.

- Do not bathe or change clothes
- Seek immediate medical attention. Go to the medical facility of your choice for examination and treatment by a physician and staff. Officers need not be present, but they will transport a victim to a medical facility and assist in whatever manner is needed.

After receiving medical services, victims should report the incident to the Security/College Police Department or Title IX Coordinator. Counseling information and resources are available.

### **Protection of Property/Room Security**

TSTC is not responsible for damages to a resident's room or personal items of any kind as a result of theft, vandalism or maintenance failure. Room security is the responsibility of the student. Rooms and apartments should be locked at all times when students are not present. Lending keys to unauthorized users is strictly prohibited. Violators are subject to probation or dismissal from housing.

Engrave all personal items of value in the room or apartment. It is a good idea to engrave these items with your driver's license number. This deters theft because it makes it more difficult for thieves to dispose of property. Mark items that are regularly taken to class, such as books, backpacks and calculators. Unattended books and supplies are easy targets in crowded, busy areas, especially around the end of the semester when the Bookstore is buying back books, as well as at the beginning of a semester when students need books for classes.

Do not advertise valuables. Do not leave unattended valuables in plain sight; thieves usually only take visible items, which can be accessed quickly. Arrange the room or apartment so that high-risk items such as cameras, stereos, televisions, computers, etc., are not visible from the hallway, street or ground-level windows. Leave expensive items at home. There's a greater chance of impressing a thief when you flaunt expensive items, such as jewelry.

Purchase renter's insurance to protect against loss or damage of property. If a student's family has homeowner's insurance, it will most likely protect valuables while the resident is away from home. Check with an insurance agent about coverage. TSTC does not offer rental insurance.

TSTC is not liable for any lost or damaged items left in dorms during semester breaks or holidays.

Do not keep large sums of cash in the room or apartment. Open a local checking or savings account. Be discreet about receiving large sums of money, such as financial aid or money from home.

Keep a list of bank account numbers and secure credit and ID cards in a safe place. If a purse or wallet is lost or stolen, use the list of numbers when notifying authorities. After notifying the police of theft or loss, immediately notify all credit card-issuing companies and banks. If notified within 24 hours, the total liability for loss is usually limited to \$50 per card.

Always lock a bicycle/moped when unattended. Experts recommend securing bicycles and mopeds with an oversized shackle-style bicycle lock or a lock and chain/cable combination with at least a 5/8-inch diameter chain or steel. Secure these with a padlock, preferably one with a hardened case and shank at least 3/8 inches in diameter.

Additional preventative measures:

- Report suspicious-looking people to College Police no matter where they are on campus.
- Keep the room door locked.
- Make certain that the smoke detector works.
- Know the locations of fire exits and fire extinguishers.
- Use common sense when approaching unfamiliar situations.

### **Self-Protection Tips**

The majority of crimes committed are crimes of convenience. Don't become a convenient target. Always lock the door, especially before going to sleep or while alone in the room or apartment. Even if you are going to get a soda or to see a friend nearby, take your keys and lock your door. All students should promptly report any doors or windows that are not locking properly to the Housing Office. Don't open the door to strangers. If the door has a peephole, use it to identify a visitor before allowing access. Never unlock the door for persons who refuse to sufficiently identify themselves. If possible, contact College Police. If a resident receives a suspicious telephone call, notify a roommate. Keep doors locked and do not leave the room or apartment. If the caller identifies him/herself as a police officer, get his/her first and last name and call Security/College Police.

- Travel in a group at night or early morning. Always try to let a roommate or a friend know your whereabouts and the time of your return.
- Travel in well-lit areas at night and early in the morning. Avoid taking shortcuts through dark or deserted areas. Walk facing traffic whenever possible.
- Keep keys in hand when walking to your vehicle.
- Be aware of the surroundings while walking to and from the vehicle.
- Check beneath the vehicle, as well as in the back seat.
- Keep doors locked when riding in any vehicle. Park in well-lit areas.
- Be alert and aware of any unusual or suspicious activity. If a suspicious pattern of activity emerges, take the initiative to contact the Housing Office or College Police. Be safe instead of sorry and contact the Housing Office or College Police if in doubt.

## **EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

The following general guidelines should help residents deal effectively with any emergency situation.

TSTC faculty, staff and students are notified about college-wide emergencies through the Emergency Notification System. Students should make sure they maintain updated contact information in the system.

### **Bacterial Meningitis Information**

Bacterial meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress extremely fast. It is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. The bacteria that cause meningitis can also infect the blood. This disease affects about 3,000 Americans every year, including 100-125 in colleges and universities, leading to 5-15 deaths among college students every year. There is treatment, but those who survive could develop severe health problems and disabilities. An antibiotic treatment, if received early, can save lives and increases the chance of recovery.

Symptoms include high fever, rash or purple patches on skin, sensitivity to light, confusion, sleepiness, lethargy, severe headache, vomiting, stiff neck, nausea, seizures. There might be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots caused by bleeding under the skin. These could occur anywhere on the body. The more symptoms, the higher the risk. When these symptoms occur, seek immediate medical attention.

The disease is transmitted when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing or sharing drink containers, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come into contact with respiratory or throat secretions. Living in close conditions (such as sharing a dorm/apartment) increases your risk of getting bacterial meningitis. Possible consequences of this disease include death (in 8-24 hours from perfectly well to dead), permanent brain damage, kidney failure, learning disabilities, hearing loss, blindness, limb damage, coma, convulsions and gangrene.

### **Bomb Threat**

Residents will be evacuated as in a fire emergency. The emergency notification system will be used to notify

the college community. No one will be allowed to return until cleared by a proper authority. Anyone found to have made a "terroristic threat" by using or threatening to use a bomb or incendiary device will be subject to serious college disciplinary and legal action.

### **Fire Emergencies**

Fire alarms should always be taken seriously. Never assume that an alarm, no matter how frequently they may happen, is false. Always assume that there is an actual fire in progress and take the necessary precautions to protect people and property.

In case of fire, residents should exit the building according to the evacuation procedures provided in all units. You should only re-enter the facility after clearance has been given by a TSTC police officer or school official. All residents receive a copy of the evacuation plans, and there are procedures posted in each unit.

- Know the fire and emergency exits, alternate escape routes, locations of fire extinguishers and alarms.
- Do not obstruct windows or fire extinguishers.
- Leave the building and gather in the evacuation assembly area away from the building.
- Do not re-enter the building until given specific instructions from an official to do so.
- To intentionally create a false alarm is a serious crime. Violators may expect sanctions from the college, as well as from the City Fire Marshal's Office.

If you are the first to discover a fire in progress, call 911 and pull the fire alarm. Residents should not fight fires themselves.

### **Medical Emergencies**

Medical emergencies are reported by calling 911 directly or the college Security/Police Department's emergency number.

When calling:

- Assess the emergency situation.
- Remain calm.
- Identify your name and location to the officer who receives the call.
- Identify as clearly as possible the type of emergency, i.e., medical, fire, assault, theft, etc.
- Do not hang up unless told to do so by the officer.

### **Missing Housing Student Notification**

Any individual on campus who has information that a housing student may be a missing person must notify College Police as soon as possible. College Police will immediately investigate the report and notify local law enforcement when the student has been missing for 24 hours unless circumstances warrant a faster implementation (e.g., witnessed abduction). As part of the housing application process, a housing student age

18 and above or an emancipated minor may designate a confidential contact person(s) to be notified by College Police no more than 24 hours after the time the student is determined to be missing. This designation will remain in effect until changed or revoked by the student. College Police will notify a custodial parent or guardian of any student under the age of 18 no more than 24 hours after the time the student is determined to be missing.

### **Reporting Hazardous or Unsafe Conditions**

As soon as unsafe conditions are observed, they should be reported to the Housing Office.

### **Reporting Suspicious Behavior or a Threat**

Residents who observe other residents or individuals as a threat to themselves or others may file an anonymous incident report to the College's Security/Police Department.

**Severe Storms**

In case of a potential tornado/hurricane or natural disaster, residents should monitor the weather conditions and be prepared. Please refer to the Housing Office for further information on evacuation procedures and shelter.

**RESOURCES/CONTACT INFORMATION****Housing Offices:**

**Harlingen Housing Office:** G-2, OT Apartments

956-364-4235

956-364-4236

**Marshall**

Housing Commons

903-923-3647

**Waco**

Student Services Center

254-867-3824

**West Texas**

Student Center

325-235-7368

**Security/Police**

**Departments: Harlingen**

Public Safety Building

956-364-4220

**Marshall**

Campus Security

903-923-3351

**Waco**

TSTC Police Department

254-867-3690

**West Texas**

Campus Police Department

325-235-7400

**Access & Learning**

**Accommodations Office:**

**Harlingen**

Student Services Center

956-364-4520

**Marshall**

Administration Building  
903-923-3313

**Waco**

Student Services Center  
254-867-3600

**West Texas**

Lance Sears Technology Center  
325-236-8292

**Intramurals:****Harlingen**

Wellness & Sports Center  
956-364-4344

**Marshall**

Housing Commons  
903-923-3647

**Waco**

Murray Watson Jr. Student Rec. Center  
254-867-3400

**West Texas**

Student Center  
325-235-7396

**Counseling & Addiction Resources:****Campus Counselor (Harlingen)**

Student Services Center (EK)  
956-364-4314

**Advocacy & Resources Center:**

Student Center, Rm. 132  
956-364-4305

**If at any time you feel, or someone else notifies you that they feel, despondent or are wanting to self-harm, do not hesitate to contact the Student Housing Office or Campus Police. We are here to help, and connect you to resources available to you. As always, if you see something, say something.**