



## Residence Life, University Housing Services **Marijuana Focus Group** Assessment Report

Aimee Scrivens and Jason Lu

**Choose One:** Needs Assessment

**Date of Assessment Implementation:** May 2012

**Date of Report:** June 2012

### **Purpose of Assessment**

There has been an increase in the number of residents evicted for using, possessing, or being under the influence of marijuana throughout the portfolio. Residence Life Coordinators Jason Lu and Aimee Scrivens wanted to receive feedback through a student focus group involving those who have been evicted and learn how the process has affected students and identify ways to improve the eviction process.

**Division Learning Outcome** Self-Determination

### **Targeted Learning Outcome**

The targeted learning outcomes from the focus group are to 1) Understand the students perspective of the marijuana policy and eviction process. 2) Determine what the former residents learned from this experience. 3) Explore recommendations for future practices related to addressing marijuana use in Housing.

### **Assessment Methodology**

All 29 evicted residents from the 2011-2012 academic year as of May 1, 2012 were emailed the following message to their Cal Poly email address. Those who did not reply to the email were called by phone if a phone number was on file.

A campus meeting space was reserved at the Office of Student Life as evicted residents are not allowed on UHS property. Subway sandwiches were purchased using UHS funds for those who attended. The participants and facilitators sat at one end of an oval table. Jason Lu and Aimee Scrivens were the staff facilitators and three students were present for the focus group. At the beginning of the meeting each of the students were asked for permission to take audio recording of the meeting for note-taking purposes and all agreed. The participants were told their responses would remain anonymous and that the facilitators were looking for honest feedback to learn about and improve upon the eviction process. The facilitators had 3 predetermined questions and asked follow-up questions according to student responses.

- What have you learned from the whole entire experience?
- What, if any, of your behaviors have changed?
- Describe the difference between being a resident and being a commuter student.

The entire conversation lasted 29 minutes and 15 seconds and at the end the students were allowed to select a pseudonym. The following three names will be used to describe the students involved and all will be referred to using male pronouns: Mohammad Ali, The Stack, and John Norris. All 3 persons are still students at Cal Poly and live off-campus.

## Results

### **Findings: What have you learned from the whole entire experience?**

All three students felt they learned something about the marijuana policy and the eviction process. Prior to his eviction, The Stack knew that residents could be evicted for smoking marijuana on-campus but did not know this also applied to coming onto campus under the influence. Mohammad Ali knew that when people were found smoking marijuana that they would “go through a process” but he did not know that it meant immediate eviction. John Norris learned “the rules and how the [eviction] process works”.

The Stack repeated two times throughout the conversation that he felt the conduct process taught him to be dishonest with staff. The Stack’s violation occurred because he had smoked marijuana off-campus before coming back into his residence hall and when asked by a staff member if he had been smoking he said “yes”. The Stack felt that had he lied he would not have been held responsible. He felt this is teaching students the wrong message to not tell the truth. Mohammad Ali also felt that had he made up a story in his conduct meeting rather than telling the truth he would have been “better off”.

### **Findings: What, if any, of your behaviors have changed?**

The Stack said that within the past nine days he stopped smoking marijuana regularly but this was not due to the eviction process. The Stack felt that his daily use of marijuana was affecting him mentally and physically and has noticed his “brain sped up” since stopping smoking and he is “happier in life”. The Stack realized that he does not need marijuana and that over time he made it too much of a priority in his life. Mohammad Ali also recently stopped smoking marijuana because he is trying to become a professional athlete although he says he was never a regular smoker. John Norris did not share anything specifically that he has changed since eviction.

### **Findings: Describe the difference between being a resident and being a commuter student.**

Mohammad Ali felt that living off campus was a hard transition and now lives an hour away from campus. The Stack agreed that it was inconvenient to move off-campus and felt it was difficult to be told he could not go on any housing property since a large part of campus is UHS property. Specifically, as a first year student The Stack had no knowledge of where he could go to get a full healthy meal other than Los Olivos.

## Conclusion

The three former residents were very honest with their feedback and provided good insight into what happens to residents that are evicted for marijuana use. In addition, we learned that residents feel that it is better to be dishonest when the sanctions may result in eviction. However, two of the three students indicated that they stopped using marijuana but did not credit the stoppage to going through the conduct process. The recommendation made to improve the process by the former residents was helpful information, which will be used to enhance programming and provide implications for future practices. Another area that stood out was the information gathered on the residents understanding of the financial responsibilities tied to eviction and the conflict the residents find with the policy and having a medical marijuana card.

## Implications for Practice

1) Limit the number of eviction meetings to one or two unless further meetings are necessary on a case by case basis. They currently meet with the Residence Life Coordinator first (recommend for eviction if responsible), then the Conduct Coordinator (sanctions the eviction based on finding the resident responsible and refers to Judicial Affairs), then meets with the Director of Judicial Affairs. The time frame to resolve the incident may take up to months.

2) Continue to explore avenues to educate students about eviction policies, procedures, and marijuana use.