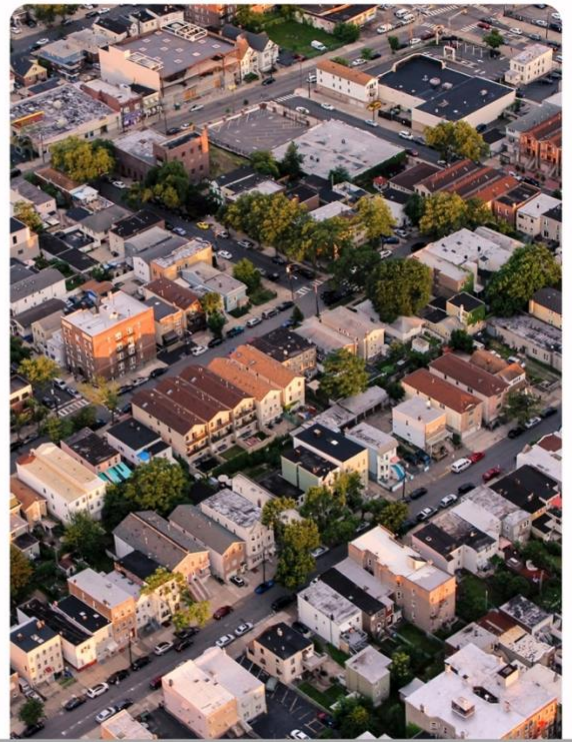


Innovative PSH Programs: A Community of Friends' Tenants Advisory Council

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What is the Tenant Advisory Council?

The Tenant Advisory Council (TAC) was established in 2013 by A Community of Friends (ACOF), a Los Angeles-based organization that aims to develop and manage affordable rental housing for people with mental illness. Using Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) as an intervention to end homelessness,¹ ACOF facilitates recovery for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and mental or physical disability, providing voluntary supportive services and housing assistance for tenants.² The TAC's development originally began in partnership with the Corporation for Supportive Housing's (CSH) Speak Up! program, where individuals were partnered with coaches with the goal of developing stories for homelessness advocacy.³ CSH created a pilot program called the Supportive Housing Community Advocates, designed to give formerly unhoused PSH residents the skillset to effectively advocate for themselves, as well as their communities, at the local, state, and federal level using a combination of storytelling and

¹ Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual living somewhere deemed unfit for human habitation for the duration of at least one year, or at least on four separate occasions within the last three years, in addition to possessing mental or physical disability, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2015-12-04/pdf/2015-30473.pdf>

² National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Permanent Supportive Housing," 2023, <https://endhomelessness.org/resources/toolkits-and-training-materials/permanent-supportive-housing/>.

³ "Speak Up! - Amplifying Voices of Lived Experience," Corporation for Supportive Housing. Retrieved February 3rd, 2026, from <https://www.csh.org/csh-solutions/speak-up/>.

narrative development.⁴ After the pilot's demonstrated success, the TAC was created by ACOF with the purpose to teach previously unhoused residents to use their voices to stand up for themselves and their neighbors within their housing communities. While the number of council members varies across terms, ACOF's goal is growing to one tenant representative per property as PSH sites continue to expand in Ventura and Imperial counties.

Growth Through the Tenant Advisory Council

The TAC was designed to provide an opportunity for tenants to develop their leadership skills while also providing valuable connections between organizational staff and residents. The TAC promotes a stronger sense of a community by empowering current tenants to use their perspectives to represent their housing and service needs, as well as those of their neighbors. The TAC helps PSH residents flourish through community building, while challenging tenants through journeys of personal growth. The TAC acts as a forum that can build tenant confidence, helping residents practice advocating on behalf of entire communities. While some TAC members come to the council with natural public speaking and advocacy abilities, others may develop these over time by working with peers on the council. A key quality of the program is the implementation of a feedback loop, designed for tenants to share their experiences and ideas with ACOF leadership, aiming to improve programming and service delivery.⁵ The TAC exists as a source of knowledge for the organization's leadership, providing direct input as a key part of decision making and organizational strategy. While in the past the TAC has been largely funded by grants and donations, the council currently operates on funding from the organization's general budget.

Tenant Advisory Council Administration

ACOF CEO Dora Leong Gallo saw the impact of peer support programs through her professional experience within mental health and substance use treatment. Gallo noted increased confidence amongst participants resulting from the creation of shared experiential storytelling. ACOF's design was drawn from Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs—a five-stage model divided into needs for psychological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Gallo saw the potential for tenants to seek continuous improvement in their communities using shared

⁴ "History of ACOF's Tenant Advisory Council," ACOF: A Community of Friends.. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Cuexl0jvm6BdTZRI3bCcdC4RNfWkzm-qP2MSSvnTDZI/edit?tab=t.0>

⁵ "Tenant Advisory Council," ACOF: A Community of Friends. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from <https://acof.org/tenant-advisory-council/>

experiences of homelessness and in their housing developments to connect with others, as well as aiming for self-actualization by practicing advocacy on behalf of their neighbors.⁶

The TAC is composed of tenants from different properties who are nominated, have submitted an application, and interviewed with organization leadership and current TAC members. Council candidates are nominated by case managers and property management staff; afterwards, existing TAC members review individual resumes, applications, and interview statements before concluding with a vote. An example of peer-led listening, this committee meets monthly to represent those living in ACOF communities, sharing feedback on property management, service delivery, and even organizational strategy. These meetings have surfaced ideas that have transformed into new programs, such as a healthy eating program that was created due to the TAC conversations on tenants’ struggles to secure nutritious food. The TAC members also review, update, and distribute a bi-annual Tenant Survey in which they are able to address tenant needs, such as improving building designs, program development, or influence policy for property management in their home buildings.⁷

2025 ACOF Strategic Work Plan: Goals

Strategic Plan 2025	
Goal	Action(s)
1 Promote Tenant Engagement	Sponsor Valentine Card Project
	Sponsor Summer Art Contest
2 Increase Leadership Skills of the TAC	Implement 1 training per quarter
	Roberts Rules, public speaking, serving on boards
3 Increase Advocacy Around Homeless Issues	Learn about policy issues
	Attend L.A. City Council Meeting
4 Be a Voice for Tenants with ACOF	Conduct Tenant Survey (every 18 month)
	Meet with ACOF Services and Property Management Directors

⁶ “History of ACOF’s Tenant Advisory Council,” ACOF: A Community of Friends.. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Cuexl0jvm6BdTZRI3bCcdC4RNfWkzm-qP2MSSvnTDZI/edit?tab=t.0>

⁷ “Tenant Advisory Council,” ACOF: A Community of Friends. Retrieved August 29, 2025, from <https://acof.org/tenant-advisory-council/>