



Evictions With Dignity: Creating a More Humane Process for Mobile Home Neighbors By Mike Whitty, Mr. Mike's Neighborhood Resident-Union

“A DIGNITY FIRST EVICTION MODEL”

No one disputes that a Mobile Home Park Owner has the right to collect rent. Neighbors who fail to pay their rent despite repeated opportunities to do so may ultimately face eviction. Mobile Home Park Owners have financial obligations, operating costs, taxes, maintenance expenses, and responsibilities to the Community as a whole. Evictions, unfortunately, are sometimes necessary.

What should never be necessary, however, is stripping a family of its dignity.

Over the years, Mr. Mike's Neighborhood Resident-Union has witnessed some of the most heartbreaking moments a family can experience. We have seen elderly Neighbors lose homes they spent decades paying for. We have seen parents trying to explain to their children why they can no longer live in the place they called home. We have seen families sitting in their cars crying while watching a marshal place their belongings on the grass.

In some cases, we have even observed Park Management watching these events unfold with little apparent concern for the emotional trauma being experienced by the Neighbor. Whether intentional or not, such behavior sends a troubling message: that once a Neighbor falls behind financially, they no longer deserve compassion.

THE MESSAGE IS WRONG!

A Neighbor facing eviction is not merely an account balance. They are a human being. They are a Neighbor. They are often someone experiencing a personal crisis, job loss, medical emergency, disability, divorce, death of a spouse, or other life-changing hardship.

The question should not simply be whether an eviction is legally justified. The question should be:

How can we conduct an eviction in a way that preserves human dignity while still protecting the Mobile Home Park Owner's rights?

The Unique Problem of Mobile Home Evictions

Unlike apartment residents, mobile home Neighbors often own the structure in which they live but rent the land underneath it. When they are evicted, they frequently lose much more than a rental unit.

Many manufactured homes cannot be moved because of age, condition, or relocation costs. A family may lose an asset worth tens of thousands of dollars because they can no longer afford lot rent.

The consequences can be devastating:

- **Loss of housing**

Losing a home is often the most immediate and traumatic consequence of an eviction. Families suddenly find themselves searching for shelter while coping with emotional stress, uncertainty, and financial hardship.

- **Loss of personal property**

Many Neighbors are unable to move all of their belongings before an eviction is completed. Personal possessions, family heirlooms, important documents, and sentimental items can be damaged, discarded, or permanently lost.

- **Loss of Community support systems**

Neighbors often depend on Neighbors, local churches, Community groups, and nearby family members for support. When they are forced to leave, those relationships and support networks may be disrupted or completely lost.

- **Increased risk of homelessness**

Finding affordable housing on short notice can be extremely difficult, particularly for seniors, disabled individuals, and low-income families. Without a plan or available resources, some Neighbors may find themselves living in shelters, motels, vehicles, or other temporary arrangements.

- **Emotional trauma for children**

Children often do not fully understand the financial circumstances that lead to eviction. What they do understand is that they are losing their home, their friends, and their sense of security, which can have lasting emotional effects.

- **Mental health challenges**

The stress associated with eviction can contribute to anxiety, depression, and feelings of hopelessness. Neighbors who are already facing personal or financial difficulties may experience worsening mental health during and after the eviction.

process.

- **Financial devastation**

Beyond unpaid rent, evicted Neighbors often face moving costs, storage fees, application fees, security deposits, and other unexpected expenses. These additional financial burdens can make it even more difficult for families to recover and establish stable housing again.

Because the stakes are so high, mobile home park evictions require a higher level of care and professionalism.

A Better System: The Dignity First Eviction Model

Mr. Mike's Neighborhood Resident-Union believes that every Mobile Home Park Owner should adopt a structured, compassionate process that balances accountability with humanity.

Step 1: Early Intervention

The process should begin long before an eviction filing. When a Neighbor falls behind, **Management should reach out personally** to determine the cause.

Questions should include:

- **Is there a temporary hardship?**

Many Neighbors fall behind because of a short-term financial setback rather than a long-term inability to pay. Identifying a temporary hardship early may allow Management and the Neighbor to work together on a solution before the situation escalates to eviction.

- **Has the Neighbor lost employment?**

Job loss is one of the most common reasons Neighbors struggle to pay rent. Understanding whether unemployment is the cause can help connect Neighbors with employment resources, unemployment benefits, or temporary payment arrangements.

- **Is there a medical issue?**

Unexpected medical expenses or illnesses can quickly overwhelm a family's budget. By understanding the circumstances, Management may be able to direct Neighbors to Community resources that provide financial or healthcare assistance.

- **Is the Neighbor a senior citizen on a fixed income?**

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- **Are there local assistance programs available?**

Many communities have organizations specifically designed to help Neighbors facing housing insecurity. Connecting Neighbors with these programs early may prevent an eviction and stabilize the household.

Many evictions can be prevented when Management identifies problems early.

Step 2: Resource Referral Program

Every Community should maintain a list of local resources, including:

- **Emergency rental assistance**

Emergency rental assistance programs can provide short-term financial relief to Neighbors who have fallen behind on payments. Accessing these resources may allow families to remain housed while they work through temporary hardships.

- **Housing agencies**

Housing agencies often provide counseling, referrals, and information about affordable housing options. They can help Neighbors understand their rights and identify alternatives if relocation becomes necessary.

- **Veteran assistance programs**

Veterans may qualify for specialized programs that offer financial assistance, housing support, and other services. Ensuring veterans are aware of these resources can help them avoid unnecessary displacement.

- **Senior services**

Senior service organizations frequently offer assistance with housing, transportation, food, and healthcare needs. These services can help older Neighbors maintain stability during difficult times.

- **Food assistance organizations**

When families struggle financially, food costs often compete with rent payments. Access to food assistance can reduce household expenses and free up resources for housing obligations.

- **Utility assistance programs**

High utility bills can contribute to financial distress and make it difficult to keep up with rent. Utility assistance programs may help Neighbors reduce expenses and regain financial footing.

- **Non-profit housing organizations**

Non-profit organizations often specialize in preventing homelessness and assisting families in crisis. Their expertise and resources can be invaluable when Neighbors face the possibility of eviction.

Rather than simply sending a legal notice, Management should provide information that could help the Neighbor resolve the situation. Unfortunately, this is way to much work for Sun Communities and Park Management since the easiest process for them is to just kick them out with no assistance and let them fend for themselves.

Step 3: Payment Resolution Meeting

Before any eviction filing occurs, Management and the Neighbor should meet face-to-face.

The purpose should be to:

- **Review the balance owed**

Non-profit organizations often specialize in preventing homelessness and assisting families in crisis. Their expertise and resources can be invaluable when Neighbors face the possibility of eviction.

- **Explore payment options**

Neighbors may have access to resources or income that can be applied toward the debt if given reasonable options. Exploring alternatives demonstrates a willingness to solve the problem rather than immediately pursuing eviction.

- **Discuss realistic repayment schedules**

A repayment plan should be based on what the Neighbor can reasonably afford while continuing to meet current obligations. Unrealistic agreements often fail and only delay an inevitable crisis.

- **Identify available assistance**

Many Neighbors are unaware of programs that may help cover rent or related expenses. Taking time to identify available assistance can create opportunities to resolve the debt and preserve housing.

Many Neighbors may want to pay but need a workable plan. Since Sun Communities will not even take a partial payment, developing a plan would not be in their system.

Step 4: Independent Neighbor Advocate

Every Neighbor facing eviction should have access to an independent advocate. Mr.

Mike's Neighborhood Resident Union has an Advocacy Program based within the law that can assist a Neighbor in working through their fears and developing a plan forward. We have helped over a dozen Neighbors since its inception make an easier transition to their new living environment.

Organizations such as Mr. Mike's Neighborhood Resident-Union and Community Advocacy Groups can:

- **Explain the process**
Eviction procedures can be confusing and intimidating for Neighbors unfamiliar with legal proceedings. An advocate can help Neighbors understand what to expect and what steps they need to take.
- **Connect families with resources**
Advocates often have knowledge of Community programs that Neighbors may not know exist. These connections can provide critical support during a housing crisis.
- **Help create transition plans**
When eviction cannot be avoided, planning becomes essential. Advocates can help Neighbors identify housing alternatives and develop a timeline for relocation.
- **Provide emotional support**
Facing eviction can be emotionally overwhelming. Having someone available to listen, guide, and encourage Neighbors can make a difficult situation more manageable.

Mr. Mike's Neighborhood Resident-Union has helped many Neighbors navigate these difficult situations by identifying housing alternatives and creating practical plans for what comes next.

Step 5: Transition Planning

If eviction becomes unavoidable, planning should begin immediately.

A transition meeting should address:

- **Where the family will relocate**
Identifying future housing should become a priority as soon as eviction appears likely. The earlier a family begins searching, the greater the chance of finding suitable accommodations.
- **Storage options**
Families often need temporary storage for belongings during a move. Planning ahead can help prevent the loss or damage of personal property.

- **Transportation needs**

Many Neighbors may not have access to trucks, trailers, or other transportation required for moving. Addressing transportation challenges early helps ensure a smoother transition.

- **School considerations for children**

Changing schools can be disruptive and stressful for children. Families should consider how relocation may affect transportation, enrollment, and educational continuity.

- **Assistance for elderly or disabled Neighbors**

Seniors and disabled Neighbors may face additional challenges when moving. Specialized support may be necessary to ensure their safety and well-being throughout the transition.

- **Moving timelines**

A clear timeline allows Neighbors to prepare and organize their relocation efforts. Adequate planning reduces stress and improves the likelihood of a successful move.

The goal should be to prevent homelessness whenever possible.

Step 6: Dignified Communication

All communication should remain respectful.

Park Management should receive training emphasizing:

- **Professionalism**

Neighbors deserve to be treated respectfully regardless of their financial circumstances. Professional conduct reflects positively on Management and helps maintain trust within the Community.

- **Empathy**

Empathy does not require Management to overlook unpaid rent. It simply means recognizing that Neighbors facing eviction are often experiencing significant personal hardship.

- **Respect**

Respectful communication can reduce conflict and preserve dignity even when difficult decisions must be made. Every Neighbor should feel they are being treated fairly throughout the process.

- **Conflict de-escalation**

Evictions can create emotional and tense situations for everyone involved. Proper

training in de-escalation techniques helps prevent unnecessary confrontations and promotes safer interactions.

No Neighbor should be mocked, humiliated, or treated as though they are less deserving of respect because they are struggling financially.

Step 7: Eviction Day Protocol

If a court orders an eviction, clear standards should govern the process.

Management should:

- **Remain professional at all times.**

Eviction day is often one of the most emotional and difficult days a family will ever experience. Management representatives should conduct themselves with professionalism, courtesy, and respect, recognizing the human impact of the situation.

- **Avoid unnecessary spectators.**

An eviction should never become a public event or a source of curiosity for others. Limiting the number of people present helps preserve the Neighbor's dignity and reduces additional embarrassment and emotional distress.

- **Designate a private point of contact for the family.**

Families should have a specific person they can approach with questions or concerns throughout the process. Having a single, compassionate point of contact helps reduce confusion and provides Neighbors with a sense of support during a stressful situation.

- **Ensure children are shielded from unnecessary trauma whenever possible.**

Children should not have to witness confrontations, arguments, or the removal of their family's belongings if it can be avoided. Management should work with the family to minimize the emotional impact on children and protect their sense of safety and well-being.

- **Provide information on available Community resources.**

Even on eviction day, Neighbors should be given information about housing assistance, shelters, social service agencies, food programs, and other available resources. A simple resource packet can help families take their first steps toward recovery and stability.

Eviction day should never become a spectacle.

Step 8: Post-Eviction Assistance

Even after an eviction is completed, communities should provide departing Neighbors with information regarding:

- **Housing resources**

Providing information about housing opportunities can help families quickly begin rebuilding stability. Even basic guidance can make a meaningful difference during a difficult transition.

- **Shelters**

Emergency shelters may serve as a temporary solution when immediate housing is unavailable. Neighbors should know where these facilities are located and how to access them. difficult transition.

- **Social service agencies**

Social service agencies often provide assistance with housing, food, employment, healthcare, and other essential needs. Referrals can help families access comprehensive support.

- **Storage facilities**

Many families need a secure place to store belongings while arranging new housing. Information about local storage options can help protect personal property.

- **Employment resources**

Employment services can help Neighbors improve their financial situation and regain independence. Job placement assistance and training opportunities may contribute to long-term stability.

A simple packet of information can make a significant difference during a crisis.

The Importance of Leadership

Corporate leadership sets the tone for every Community. When leaders encourage compassion, Managers are more likely to act compassionately. When leaders focus solely on collections and enforcement, empathy often disappears from the process.

The best Community operators understand that enforcing rules and showing compassion are not mutually exclusive. Both can exist at the same time. A professional Manager can protect the interests of the Community while still recognizing the humanity of the Neighbor standing before them.

Measuring Success Differently

Too often, success is measured by occupancy rates, collections, and financial performance. Those metrics matter. But perhaps another measure should be considered:

- How many families avoided homelessness?
- How many Neighbors were connected with assistance programs?
- How many payment plans succeeded?
- How many people left the Community feeling they were treated fairly and respectfully, even when the outcome was difficult?

Those measurements speak to the character of a Community, as well as a Mobile Home Park Owner and Park Manager.

A Call for Change

No one is suggesting that rent should not be paid. No one is suggesting that Mobile Home Park Owners should absorb unlimited losses. What we are suggesting is simple: When eviction becomes necessary, it should be handled with dignity, compassion, and professionalism.

A family facing one of the worst days of their lives should not be met with indifference. They should not become a source of amusement. They should not feel abandoned. They should leave knowing that although circumstances required them to move, they were treated with respect.

At Mr. Mike's Neighborhood Resident-Union, we believe every Neighbor deserves that dignity. A Community is not defined solely by how it treats Neighbors when times are good. A Community is defined by how it treats people when they are struggling the most.

That is where true leadership begins.