

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, within 50 miles of campus: 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).

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.

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 and will be accommodated as possible. Room changes initiated during the first two weeks of the semester will be at no charge. Moves initiated after the first two weeks of the semester will be assessed a \$50 fee. Should special situations arise after, 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.

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.

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.

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 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 Disabilities Office in a timely manner for further guidance on the accommodations process. Students with disabilities are encouraged to self-disclose with the Disabilities 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 the 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.

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.

Residents of any housing owned or controlled by TSTC must store any lawfully possessed firearm in a manner that precludes access by any unlicensed person.

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.

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
956-364-4235
800-852-8784

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

Disabilities Offices/Programs:

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:**Waco**

254-867-3026

Sweetwater

325-734-3653

Harlingen

956-364-4314

Marshall

903-923-3318