

## Certified Property Manager Reading Material – Section 5

### Best Practices

- ❖ *Communication*
- ❖ *Screening*
- ❖ *Posting Performance Standards*
- ❖ *Adjusting Occupancy*
- ❖ *Strategies for Success*

**Best Practices can be remembered by a simple acronym – MANAGE!**

<b>M</b>	<b>MONITOR</b> Monitor the guests to ensure they are compliant with the performance standards
<b>A</b>	<b>ANSWER</b> Respond to calls from neighbors 24/7
<b>N</b>	<b>NOTIFY</b> Inform the neighbor on how you plan to resolve the issue
<b>A</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b> Address complaints and ensure the problem is solved within the required timeframe
<b>G</b>	<b>GO</b> Visit the property if the problem persists
<b>E</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b> Create a record of all complaints received and send reports to Permit Sonoma

### ❖ Communication

***What are the best communication practices for property managers?***

It is always a best practice to communicate with neighbors of a vacation rental as much as possible. Neighbors must always have access to the 24-hour contact information in case of any issues. Permit Sonoma staff will notify all neighbors and property owners with this information through the mailing of postcards; however, property managers who contact neighbors before the official notice is received help to ensure neighbors that a real person is watching out for them and is sincerely interested in hearing about their experiences. Open communication between the neighbor and property manager will make resolution of any future issues easier.

When a property manager receives a complaint from a neighbor, it is a best practice to inform the neighbor on how you will resolve the issue. It is important to ensure that the neighbor feels comfortable to call again if the problem persists. While the Property Manager is not required to visit the vacation rental every time a complaint is received, the property manager *must* visit the vacation rental if a problem persists. It is a best practice to follow through with the neighbor with all actions that the property manager has taken to resolve the issue.

When reporting complaints and resolution to Permit Sonoma staff, please include the date of the complaint and all communication with the neighbor and renters. Property manager reports allow Permit Sonoma staff to ensure that the complaints were addressed and resolved. The Reporting Form for Property Managers can be found on the Permit Sonoma Vacation Rental website at [SonomaCounty.ca.gov/VacationRentals](https://SonomaCounty.ca.gov/VacationRentals).

## ❖ Screening

Screening guests prior to booking the vacation rental helps to ensure that the occupancy is compatible with the vacation rental and the surrounding neighborhood. Screening guests does not need to be a long process! Asking potential renters a few questions about the guests that will be joining them and their plans for the stay will help the property manager recognize if the renters are planning to rent the property respectfully. The following are examples of questions the property manager may ask guests prior to booking:

- What is the purpose of the guest's trip? Will the guests be celebrating a special occasion, such as a bachelorette/bachelor party, birthday, wedding party, etc.?
- Have the guests stayed in a short-term rental before?
- How many adults and children will be staying in the vacation rental? Will additional guests be visiting?
- Do the guests smoke?
- Will the guests be bringing pets to the vacation rental?

### ***What questions may not be asked to screen potential renters?***

Questions that violate federal, state, and local anti-discrimination and housing laws may not be asked. Federal and local laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, gender, familial status, and physical or mental disability. Additional laws may also prohibit discrimination based on marital status or sexual orientation.

### ***Does the property manager need to meet the guests in-person at the vacation rental?***

While meeting guests at a vacation rental is not required, Permit Sonoma considers it a best practice to greet vacation rental guests in person during the initial guest check-in at the vacation rental. The property manager may utilize this opportunity to help guests with their bags and luggage, go over emergency procedures, and remind the guests of the performance standards.

## ❖ Posting Performance Standards

### ***What are some best practices for ensuring that renters understand the performance standards of the vacation rental?***

The Vacation Rental Code requires a copy of the permit listing all applicable standards and limits to be posted within six feet of the front door and included as part of all rental agreements. It is a best practice for property managers to post vacation rental standards in multiple places in the vacation rental: if guests see the Permit Sonoma vacation rental standards in multiple places, it will be clear to all guests and renters that inappropriate use of the vacation rental will not be tolerated. Recommended places for posting performance standards include near pools, hot tubs, dining areas/kitchen, etc.



**Note:** Information about the vacation rental standards may be kept in a binder or on laminated signs throughout the vacation rental.

If the property manager is unable to meet with guests on the site and must instead speak with potential renters over the phone, they should inform the guests of the performance standards prior to booking. Permit Sonoma considers it a best practice to remind guests that their deposits may be forfeited if the renters are not in compliance with the vacation rental performance standards.

## ❖ Adjusting Occupancy

As stated in the *Certified Property Manager Reading Material – Section 3*, the maximum overnight occupancy for vacation rentals is a maximum of two persons per bedroom, plus two additional persons per property. Children under three years of age are excluded from this maximum. However, if a property manager or property owner believes the vacation rental is better suited to serve less people, lessening the maximum occupancy on all listings and advertisements is encouraged. Many property managers also prohibit additional guests during the day unless they are specifically approved in advance by the property manager.

For example, even if the Vacation Rental Permit issued by Permit Sonoma staff permits a maximum overnight occupancy of ten people, the property manager or property owner may decide to allow a maximum overnight occupancy of eight people.

## ❖ **Strategies for Success**

### ***What additional practices may be used to operate a vacation rental more effectively?***

There are many ways to make vacation rentals run more smoothly. The following strategies are considered best practices that may be utilized to create not only a more welcoming and safe environment for guests, but to also ensure the vacation rental operates in compliance with the performance standards:

- Noise monitors that measure decibel levels and will notify renters when noise levels exceed standards
- Motion sensor lights may be a good option to ensure outside and inside lights are not left on when not in use
- Investing in a security system will help reassure the guests that you care about their safety and want them to enjoy a comfortable stay
- Updating facilities to be better suitable for children will allow families to feel comfortable bringing their entire family to the vacation rental
- Maintain well established emergency procedures, see below

**Note:** It is important for a property manager to remember that a good relationship with the neighbors is the most effective tool in maintaining a successful vacation rental.

### **What emergency procedures are important to know as a property manager?**

Permit Sonoma staff consider it a best practice for property managers to prepare emergency procedures in order to ensure the safety of the guests. For example, if the power goes out or the guests blow a fuse, it is a best practice to include information on the following to ensure that guests will remain safe until the property manager arrives:

- Emergency kits
- Location of fuse boxes
- Location of fire extinguishers
- Location of first aid kits