

Writing an IR | Fall 2017 RA Training

Incident Reports (IR) are extremely important for documenting situations that arise in the residence halls. When a resident requires emergency attention, there is a physical issue with the building, or a resident has potentially broken Curry College policy, it is important that a clear description of what occurred and who was involved is communicated with RLH staff members for future follow up.

1. **Know the facts and people involved.** Even if you are able to write the IR immediately following an incident, you should jot down notes during the incident to remind yourself of all pertinent facts.
 - a. Use your senses and make notes on what you see, smell, and hear.
 - b. Be sure to record the names and titles of *all* involved parties (i.e. Resident Julio Jones, RA Matt Ryan, Public Safety Officer Dan Quinn). In addition to titles, record folks Curry ID numbers, building and room number, and note the type of incident/violation.
 - c. Write down important quotes. Include inappropriate language, even if it is hurtful.
 - d. Do NOT take pictures or record anything!
2. **Write in third person.** Assume that someone is reading this file 5 years. The reader does not know you and they do not know any of the involved parties. Writing in third person will provide clarity for the reader.
3. **Avoid using pronouns too often.** Try to use a person's title and name as opposed to their pronoun (he, she, they, etc.). This will likely feel redundant; however, it will allow for greater clarity in your report.
4. **Detailed but not a lecture.** Keep irrelevant information out.
 - a. "The students were under 21 and I asked why they were drinking on the north side of campus"
 - b. "I went into the room and confronted five members of the swim team"
5. **Be objective.** Your notes should also reflect statements made by the involved parties. It may feel counterintuitive, but it is a good practice to start most sentences with the person's title and name, followed by an action such as said, stated, or explained. You should also focus on providing the who, what, when, where, and why (sometimes how) without interjecting your personal feelings about the incident.
6. **Write chronologically.** Provide a detailed version of events as they unfolded. This will help provide more logical and easy-to-understand narrative of the events.
7. **No History Lessons.** Past incidents/other issues should not be included.
 - a. "This is the fourth time this resident has been documented for this"
 - b. "Mike was my resident last year and a good kid so I was surprised this was happening"
8. **How'd we get here?** Show just cause why you are documenting a situation
 - a. "I saw five people go into a room so I knocked to see what was going on"
 - b. "I got a call that members from the swim team were in the building and heading to a room in sunflower hall"

We need to establish trust with our residents and be transparent as to why we needed to document a situation; Suspicion, hearsay, or rumors should not be a reason to confront anyone. What can you do in these situations?

9. **When in doubt, write it out!** Resident Assistants will often ask, "Should this be an incident report?" "What if this happens? Should I write it up?" If you have to ask, the answer is yes!!

Formalize Language

Instead of....	Use....
RA	Resident Assistant
PS	Public Safety
Chirp	Notification/notified
Weed	Marijuana
Student, kid, young man	Resident, student, or individual
Guy/girl/lady/boy	Male or female
Drinking	Consuming what appeared to be alcohol
Stuff, items, things	X, Y, Z
Root	Drinking game known as “root”

Other Tips:

- Write the documentation promptly—within an hour of the incident!
- Confer with other Res Life Staff that were present
- Write in 3rd person as much as you can
 - a. Avoid using “I, me we” and other pronouns like “he, she, they”
- Use titles and descriptors to identify key individuals
 - a. Resident Assistant (RA), Officer, Community Director (CD), etc.
- Use an individual’s full name the first time you use it, then you can use first/last name in the rest of the report.
- If you are going to write someone’s name in the **“Description/Narrative,”** make sure you list them in the **“Involved Parties”** portion of the form, even if they are non-students, and vice-versa!

Room for Improvement Example: I saw my resident Alex stumble as she exited the elevator. I could smell alcohol and vodka so I suspected they were drunk so I stopped Alex and her friends to ask if she was okay. Kelley said they were fine, but her speech was slurred. I could see vomit on the elevator and Alex had some wet spots on her shirt. I asked if she and her friends had been drinking. Alex said that she and her friends went to a party. They got there around 9PM. They all drank and when they got back to the hall, she got sick in the elevator. Alex said she was going to get sick again. I called for help and Officer Dawn Scott and RD Christie Pearce responded. After arriving, they called for a medical transport. Alex was taken to the hospital.

Rewrite it with the improvements:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Compare Your Rewrite to This

Ideal Example: Resident Assistant (RA) Sam Mewis was conducting a round on the 5th floor in Race Street Residence when she noticed Resident Alex Morgan, Resident Kelley O'Hara, and Resident Tobin Heath. RA Sam Mewis noticed Resident Alex Morgan stumble as she exited the elevator and could detect an odor of alcohol and vomit coming from the residents so she stopped the group to ask if everyone was okay. Resident Kelley O'Hara stated that they were fine and returning to their residence hall apartment after hanging out off-campus. RA Sam Mewis heard a slight slur in Resident Kelley O'Hara's speech. Additionally, RA Sam Mewis saw vomit in the elevator and noted some wet staining to Resident Alex Morgan's shirt, near the neck collar. RA Sam Mewis asked Resident Alex Morgan if she had been drinking alcohol. Resident Alex Morgan stated that she and the other two residents attended a party at an unknown off-campus location. Resident Alex Morgan stated that she drank alcohol at the party. Resident Kelley O'Hara stated that she consumed 2 beers. Resident Tobin Heath stated that she consumed alcohol at the party. Resident Alex Morgan stated that she felt as though she was going to be sick/vomit again. RA Sam Mewis contacted RD Christie Pearce and Office Dawn Scott. Upon their arrival, RD Christie Pearce called for a medical transport and Resident Alex Morgan was taken to the hospital. RD Christie Pearce spoke with Resident Tobin Heath and Resident Kelley O'Hara to discuss their drinking. RD Christie Pearce informed the Residents of the conduct process and everyone dispersed.

How did you do? What did you fix? What did you forget to fix?

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