Class Activities for **Chapter 13: Communities At-Risk and Housing**

**Class activity #1**

Computers or smart phones with a reliable signal will be needed for this activity.

Have your students break up into groups based on the number of communities you plan to use for this activity. For each group, assign a particular nearby community. Have the students use their phones or computers to research what the state of public housing is in that community, answering the following questions.

* Are there Section 8 homes/apartments available?
* Is there a public housing authority?
* What does the waiting list look like to get into public housing or Section 8 housing?
* What are the requirements?
* Is this information easy or difficult to find?
* Is it possible to apply online to get into any of these housing options?
* How would they feel if they were looking for public assistance getting a home in that area?

Have the groups report back to the full class. Does this help them to have empathy for clients in need of this assistance? Discuss how a social worker may be able to help people navigate this often complex system.

**Class activity #2**

Identify in advance of class a number of rental options in the community surrounding your institution, from low-rent to high-rent. Print out and copy information about these properties, but block out the prices of the properties. Hand out the copies to your students after breaking them into groups. Have them look at the particulars of the apartments and try to guess what the monthly rent will be on each of the units. They must come to a consensus as a group. Then they should calculate what income level they would need in order to rent that apartment on their own, with a roommate, or as a single parent with two children. Keeping in mind the oft-repeated guideline that rent should not be more than 30% of one’s income, what would their gross income need to be? Even with that 30% guideline, standards of living will vary widely depending on whether one has a roommate or children. Are any of these apartments realistic for a single parent with two kids? Could any of them be affordable on a minimum-wage, full-time job?

After they’ve come to their conclusions about price, ask them to share with the whole class. Reveal the actual figures and discuss any discrepancies between guesses and reality and why they exist. What would it be like for a client trying to rent one of these apartments with a minimum-wage job? As a single parent?

**Class activity #3**

The textbook mentions the Continuum of Care Program strategy and the Housing First program strategy. (One example of a Housing First Program is covered in a video link in the instructor’s guide.) Have your students reread the section that discusses these programs in their chapter. Split them up into groups to discuss which strategy they think would be more effective at reducing homelessness, and doing so efficiently.

After each group’s discussion has ended, ask them which strategy they think is more in line with social work values. If their answers are not the same, ask them to explain what they would support if they were in a position to help a municipality make a decision about which angle to take to tackle its homelessness issue. How would they justify their choice if they didn’t think it was likely to be the most effective? How would they live with their choice if it wasn’t in line with social work values?

Consider showing the video about the Housing First Program in Salt Lake City, Utah, and juxtapose that with cities that are passing ordinances criminalizing the feeding of the poor on the streets or in other public spaces. What makes some communities take a more empathic approach and others get so draconian about their policies?