HOUSING CONTRACT EXEMPTION & APPEAL PROCESS

The South Dakota Board of Regents policy manual states that “during the first two years from the time they were or would have been graduated from high school, all unmarried students who enroll in courses delivered on a main campus for six credit hours or more are required to enter into a housing agreement with the institution unless special permission to room elsewhere is received from the institution. Permission ordinarily shall be granted to students with dependent children or to students who reside full time during the academic year with parents or legal guardians. Students who have enrolled for twelve or more credits for four (4) semesters may be exempted from this agreement at the discretion of the institution.”

This residency requirement serves important educational and developmental purposes. Education professionals widely recognize that where students live their freshman and sophomore years has a significant impact on the quality of their academic and personal preparation for post-collegiate life. Students prosper in stable living environments that are close to academic resources and organized student activities that promote social interaction and exposure to new and diverse life experiences, and that afford supervision, counseling, and other assistance as may be needed. In short, on-campus residency provides unparalleled opportunities for multi-dimensional student development and is part of the university’s broad educational program.

The Housing Contract Policy is strictly enforced. However, BHSU recognizes that some off-campus living circumstances may closely approximate the advantages of on-campus residency. Also, some students may have living requirements that the University cannot accommodate on campus. The following exemptions will be considered:

Exemption Categories
After proper documentation and university inquiry, students may qualify for an exemption to the Housing Policy.

1. Married Exemption: Students requesting a release because they are married must meet the following criteria:
   - A copy of a valid marriage certificate must be submitted to the Residence Life office before a release can be approved or rent charges cancelled.
The release date will not be earlier than the date of marriage

2. **Legal Dependent Exemption:** A copy of the dependent’s birth certificate must be provided to the Residence Life office before a release can be granted.

3. **Commuter Exemption:** A commuter exemption may be granted to students desiring to live at the permanent residence of a parent or legal guardian within fifty (50) miles of campus.

4. **Financial Hardship Exemption:** Applicants requesting release based on verifiable extenuating circumstances must obtain a Supplemental Financial Need Verification Form from the Residence Life Office. **Release are not based upon the assertion that living off campus may be cheaper.** A release will be considered when the applicant has a significant verified need for financial aid as defined by the personnel of the BHSU Financial Aid Office and that need is not fully funded by University financial aid.

   Or

   When financial circumstances are created by situations over which you have no control (such as a loss of parental support due to death, divorce, loss of employment, catastrophic health issues, bankruptcy) which create a financial hardship.

5. **Physical Health Exemption:** Applicants requesting a release based on this criterion must provide information from the attending physician stating the specific verifiable condition for which it is medically necessary for the student to be released and why specific off-campus housing would provide better living conditions in regard to this medical condition.

   Applicants must obtain a Supplemental Medical Need Verification Form from the Residence Life Office or the BHSU Residence Life webpage. The form must be completed in detail and signed by the attending physician. Applicants may be asked to get a second opinion from BHSU Student Health Services or other referral physicians. Paperwork must be complete before a decision is rendered.

6. **Mental Health Exemption:** Applicants requesting a release based on mental health or emotional needs must provide a specific psychological recommendation from a licensed mental health care provider. Applicants not seeing University Counseling Center personnel must provide the Residence Life Office with a written statement evaluating the student’s specific needs or problems written by a certified mental health care giver.

Other students will be considered for release when the Residence Hall Contract gives them specific release options, or when the residence halls are full (as determined by the Residence Life Office) and space is needed for incoming required students. Unless a student receives written notice from the Residence Life Office that he/she is released from the residency requirement and/or signed Residence Hall Contract, **he/she is expected to occupy his/her assigned room.**