



Housing Focused Shelters

Durham Region

**BUILT
FOR
ZERO.**
DURHAM

Defining Housing Focused Sheltering

Housing-Focused Sheltering aims to make homelessness as brief as possible and be part of the solution to ending homelessness. From the moment a person accesses shelter services, there are efforts made to ensure an appropriate and safe exit from shelter. Shelter operators have a strong housing-orientation that focus on short-term stays whenever possible.

Shelter operators in Durham Region are expected to follow the [Canadian Shelter Transformation Network's Housing-Focused Shelter Manual](#).

What to Expect

Staff at Housing-Focused Shelters will help you with your housing plan. They are not able to do your housing search for you and you are expected to always be working on your housing plan.

Staff may also ask you questions to explore if there are any appropriate options available for you to not have to come to shelter. This is called diversion. Diversion is not denying shelter, it is trying to help meet your needs without requiring a stay at the shelter.

Vision

Shelter stays are rare in Durham Region, and if it does occur it is brief and happens once in the person's life.

Mission

To reduce the number of people needing shelter support in Durham Region through an intensive, housing-focused response that values housing as a solution to homelessness.

Values

Trauma-Informed Approach: Trauma, including physical, emotional, and/or sexual, is linked to both the factors leading to homelessness, as well because of homelessness. It is imperative that interventions operate from a trauma-informed approach, with both staff and volunteers trained to provide excellent care.

Harm Reduction: Harm reduction aims to reduce risks and harmful health, social and legal impacts associated with substance use and addiction. Individuals are supported

with strategies and information on reducing substance use, safer substance use and related behaviours.

Collaboration & Systems Approach: Collaboration with other agencies providing support for shared clients is important to ensure that effective and co-ordinated services are available.

Strength-Based Approach: Focusing on each persons' unique strengths, not their deficits.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: While acknowledging strength and resiliency of unique populations, there is also an awareness of unique and different structural and institutional barriers that each group may experience linked to system discrimination and oppression. Services must not be a one-size-fits-all approach and should be able to be effectively adapted to meet the specific needs of the people they serve.

Lived and Living Experiencing Input: Services must seek to engage people with lived or living experience of homelessness in intervention development, evaluation and decision-making.

Truth and Reconciliation: Indigenous homelessness is defined as a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Services must be committed to supporting indigenous populations and the commitments outlined in the report on Ontario's Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

Guiding Principles

- Recognizing that people are capable of moving toward increasing levels of self-reliance and self-determination, shelter services must be provided in an atmosphere of dignity and respect for all people.
- Programs must be as low-barrier as possible.
- Services must be provided in a non-judgemental manner.
- Collaboration with other agencies providing support for people is important to ensure that effective and co-ordinated services are available.
- Services provided to people in shelter extend to any households unable to be accommodated within the shelter itself due to household composition or disability and are being supported through hotel program extensions.
- Recognizing that shelters are part of the community where they are located and the importance of being a good neighbour.

Eligibility for Emergency Shelter Assistance

The shelter operator has the responsibility for managing the shelter and has control over the admission and discharge of people. Eligibility and admissions to housing-focused shelters should strive to be as low barrier as possible.

Eligibility for emergency shelter assistance will be determined by the policies and procedures of the shelter operator. As a general rule, shelter assistance is available to current residents of Durham Region or new residents who have a meaningful connection to Durham (reunited with family, new employment opportunity, etc.)

Anyone who does not meet basic eligibility requirements can be temporarily accommodated and supported with transportation assistance to re-access their home community.

Rights and Responsibilities

Each shelter has a written policy concerning the rights and responsibilities of people using the shelter. It must be posted in a common area of the shelter and be communicated through various ways such as intake, admission, and guest meetings.

At a minimum, the rights of everyone in shelter should include the right to:

- Expect that the standards outlined in this document will be followed.
- Be treated in a non-judgemental and respectful way.
- Be free from discrimination and harassment.
- A fair, clear complaints and appeals process without fear of punishment.
- Safe, adequate, and nutritious food. Nutritional accommodation will be honoured.
- Provide input and feedback into shelter programs and policies.
- Be involved in decisions that affect them.
- Identify their own goals and receive support from staff to achieve them.
- Be given information about services and resources in order to make informed decisions.
- Have forms and requests for information explained.
- Have personal information treated confidentially.
- Contact Housing Services for information, concerns, or to lodge a complaint.

Everyone in shelter is responsible to:

- Work on your housing plan to the best of your ability and to exit the shelter as quickly as is safe and appropriate to housing.
- Follow the rules of the shelter.
- Treat shelter staff and other shelter guests with respect.
- Respect the private property and belongings of other shelter guests.

Input by Service Users

Input from people using shelter services will be sought in all areas of program planning, program development, policy development, and program evaluation. This may include exit interviews, discharge surveys, personal interviews, surveys, focus groups, and/or meetings.

Shelters must identify communication mechanisms between the Board of Directors and people staying at the shelter. This may include advisory committees, newsletters, and posting board minutes in an accessible area.

Shelters must develop a forum to regularly receive opinions, input, and feedback on shelter operations and proposed policy or program changes in a manner that is appropriate for the population being supported. Both raw shelter data and feedback data is to be provided to the Board of Directors regularly.

Service Restrictions

Service Restrictions are used only when necessary when all other options have been tried. The primary goal of housing-focused shelter programs is to help people remain in shelter and exit to housing solutions. Each shelter operator is responsible for finding a balance between upholding the safety of everyone in shelter and finding ways to assist each person to maintain the shelter standards.

At the time the decision is made to restrict services, the person being discharged must be provided with the reason for the service restriction, the length of time the restriction will be in place and must be offered an opportunity to have the decision reviewed by shelter management staff and/or Board members. The decision must be available in writing. Service Restrictions may be ended early or extended on a case-by-case basis.

Adult Housing-Focused Shelter Program Service Restrictions:

Category	Description	Duration	Reason
Service Restriction 3	Physical Assault or Violence; Sexual Assault, Arson; Persistent Drug Trafficking; Persistent Predatory Behaviour to Other People	Up to 3 months	Service Restriction 3 is used when someone poses a significant health and safety risk to other clients or staff. This level is used only to protect others within the program.
Service Restriction 2	Intentional property damage (clients/staff/shelter); Possession of a weapon; Threatening other people; Bullying; Theft from other people or property	Up to 45 days	

Service Restriction 1	Repeated breach of shelter rules or responsibilities	Up to 21 days	Service Restriction 1 is not used unless the shelter operator has provided repeated warnings and case management meetings and provided advanced notice of a possible service restriction.
-----------------------	--	---------------	---

Youth Housing-Focused Shelter Program Service Restrictions:

Category	Description	Duration	Reason
Service Restriction 4	Physical assault or violence; Sexual Assault, Arson; Persistent Drug Trafficking; Persistent Predatory Behaviour to Other People	Up to 3 months	Service Restriction 4 is used when someone poses a significant health and safety risk to other people. This level is used only to protect other people within the program.
Service Restriction 3	Possession of a weapon; Threatening other people; Bullying; Theft from other people or property; Entering restricted areas without permission	Up to 30 days	Service Restriction 3 is used when someone poses a health and safety risk to others. This level is used only to protect other people within the program.
Service Restriction 2	Received 5 strikes for the second time; Intentional property damage (clients/staff/shelter); Breaching confidentiality of other people in shelter	Up to 14 days	
Service Restriction 1	Received 5 strikes	Up to 7 days	Service Restriction 1 is not used unless the shelter operator has provided repeated warnings and case management meetings and provided advanced notice of a possible service restriction.

Length of Stay for Emergency Shelters

Housing-Focused Shelters are required to use a person-centered approach to case management and length of stay based on each persons' unique strengths and support needs. These decisions are to be made using the VI-SPDAT score, length of time the person has been homeless, level of support needed to exit homelessness successfully, etc. Each person who stays longer than 30-days will have their housing plan re-assessed.

The housing plan will address the person's current situation and will provide an action plan that will include, but not be limited to:

- Assessing each person's service needs and resources, normally through the completion of a VI-SPDAT.
- Developing a course of action.
- Providing education on tenant rights and responsibilities.
- Making referrals to all necessary internal and external services.
- Monitoring progress.
- Advocating on behalf of the person to ensure access to needed services or resources.
- Developing partnerships with other agencies to co-ordinate and provide services to people in shelter.

Discharge Plan

People using shelter services should be discharged with a follow-up case plan in place unless the discharge is for cause.

If a person is discharged directly to another service provider (ex. Crisis bed, housing program or hospital), the shelter will coordinate the discharge and case management of the person with the new service provider.

Exceptional circumstances where someone may be discharged without a case plan in place include assault of someone else, other violent behaviour, possession of weapons, or trafficking in illegal drugs (see Service Restrictions).

Complaints and Appeals

The shelter operator must develop a written procedure whereby a person can make a complaint about their stay at the shelter with the expectation that the issue will be appropriately reviewed.

1. People are encouraged to first discuss any concern with the shelter manager or the Executive Director to resolve the issue internally.
 - a. Contact information must be easily accessible in the shelter.
2. If the concern has not been resolved, staff will provide the [Shelter Services Review Form](#). Alternatively, the contact information for the Homelessness Initiatives Team will be provided.
3. The Homelessness initiatives team will then complete the review. A copy of the review will be provided to the Board of Directors and form part of an evaluation of services at the shelter.
 - a. The Homelessness Initiatives team may visit the site to conduct a review or interview the people involved about the issue