



Ipsos Reid



# Hostel Services Quality Assurance Review: Shelter Provider Access Survey Final Report

September 30 2013





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## Research Objectives

- In support of its Quality Assurance review, Hostel Services sought to conduct two surveys:
  - ⇒ Shelter Provider Access Survey
  - ⇒ Client Satisfaction Survey
- This report presents the findings of the Shelter Provider Access Survey.
- The survey is intended to assess and evaluate the performance of City-funded homeless shelter providers, Central Intake (CI), Streets to Homes Assessment Referral Centre (SHARC) and 311 in providing intake or access services as part of the overall process to access shelter services.
- The research was designed to achieve three main objectives:
  - ⇒ Determine the incidence of calls to these providers where: a bed was offered, a referral was offered or a bed was denied without a referral;
  - ⇒ Provide feedback on the level of customer service provided to those attempting to find a shelter bed; and,
  - ⇒ Determine if the incidence of calls and level of service varies significantly between specific sub-groups, for example, by sector, client profile or shelter type etc.
- Hostel Services commissioned Ipsos Reid to conduct the survey.



# Methodology (1)

- The Shelter Provider Access Survey involved mystery shopper telephone inquiries to 55 homeless shelters, CI, SHARC and 311. The survey was limited to the intake process. All calls were made as a fictitious first-time user of the shelter system who is seeking a bed.
- A total of five (5) calls were made to each of the following 58 shelters or referral agencies for a total of 290 calls. In every case, the caller was making the request for a bed for themselves or on behalf of someone else for whom the shelter would be appropriate (e.g. calling an Aboriginal shelter or refugee shelter ).

311	Eva's Phoenix	Homes First Society - Savard	Salvation Army – Gateway	SVDP - Elisa House	Womens Residence
Birkdale Residence	Eva's Place	Homes First Society - Strachan House	Salvation Army – Hope	SVDP - Mary's Home	Womens Residence: Bellwoods House
Central Intake	Eva's Satellite	Horizons for Youth	Salvation Army – Maxwell Meighen	SVDP - St. Clare's Residence	Woodgreen Red Door Queen
Christie Refugee Welcome Centre	Family Residence	Native Child & Family Services Eagle's Nest Transition House	Scott Mission	Sojourn House	YMCA House
Christie-Ossington Men's Shelter	Fife House: Denison	Native Men's Residence	Seaton House: Birchmount Residence	St. Simon's	Youth Without Shelter
Cornerstone Place	Fife House: Sherbourne	Nellie's	Seaton House: Downsview Dells	Street Haven at the Crossroads	YWCA - First Stop Woodlawn Youth Unit
Costi Reception Centre	Fred Victor Centre - Bethlehem United	Robertson House	Seaton House: Fort York	SHARC	YWCA - First Stop Woodlawn-Women's Unit
Covenant House - Rights of Passage	Fred Victor Centre - Women's Shelter	Sagatay	Seaton House: Main Site	Toronto Community Hostel	YWCA Beatrice House
Dixon Hall - Heyworth House	Good Shepherd Centre	Salvation Army - Florence Booth	Second Base Youth Shelter	Turning Point Youth Services	
Dixon Hall - School House	Homes First Society - 3576 St. Clair East Shelter	Salvation Army – Evangeline Residence	SVDP - Amelie House	University Settlement-Part time Shelter	



## Methodology (2)

- The five (5) calls to each shelter or referral agency were stratified based on a specific scenario and time of day (see table below).
- The scenarios and scripted responses were drafted by Hostel Services in order to help Ipsos Reid representatives prepare as fictitious clients requesting shelter services. These scenarios, along with the Shelter Access Survey questions, were devised to adhere to relevant divisional *Customer Service Principles and Expectations*.
- The survey was conducted between July 18 and August 9, 2013.
- Note: calling was limited on extreme heat alert days.

Scenario	Total
One call as a client with a disability	57
One call as a transgender client	58
One call as a client with a service animal	56
Two basic or straightforward calls where the client is seeking a shelter bed	119

Time of the Call	Total
Weekday Morning (7AM – 10AM)	55
Weekday Afternoon (1PM – 4PM)	54
Weekday Evening (7PM – 10PM)	62
Weekday Overnight (1 AM – 4AM)	58
Sunday (4 PM – 10PM)	61



## Reporting Conventions

### *Statistically Significant Differences Between Sub-Groups*

- Differences within sub-groups are identified by letter.
- A percentage that is followed by a letter(s) indicates that the percentage is significantly higher than the percentage shown in the column that coincides with the letter.
- In the example below, 26% of calls to youth shelters resulted in a bed being offered on the spot. This is statistically significantly higher than the percentage of calls to adult shelters that resulted in a bed being offered on the spot, which was 8%. In this example, even though 8% of calls to family shelters also resulted in a bed being offered the 8% is not considered statistically lower than the percentage of calls to youth shelters (26%) because of the smaller number of calls to family shelters (smaller sample size = higher margin of error).
- Statistical significance testing has been based on a 95% confidence level.

	Sector		
	Adult (n=149)	Youth (n=42)	Family (n=25)
	a	b	c
Bed offered	8%	26%a	8%

# Highlights



## Highlights

### Ease of Contacting a Shelter/Referral Agency:

- A total of 290 calls were made of which 75% were answered by intake or shelter staff; and 25% were unanswered or went to voicemail (a call was designated unanswered after 3 call attempts).

### Call Outcome: Of the calls where contact was made (75% of calls):

- 12% resulted in the client being offered a bed at the particular shelter.
- 14% resulted in the staff offering to call another shelter on the client's behalf
- The most common outcome was for staff to refer the caller to Central Intake (CI) or Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre (SHARC)(29%), another shelter (19%) or another agency (3%).
- 13% resulted in denial of a bed with no alternative provided
- 10% resulted in some 'other' outcome such as suggesting the client call back in 2 hours or come down in person since beds are first come first serve

### Customer Service: Of the calls where contact was made (75% of calls):

- 50% of the time staff were polite
- 41% of the time staff were attentive
- 28% of the time staff were empathetic



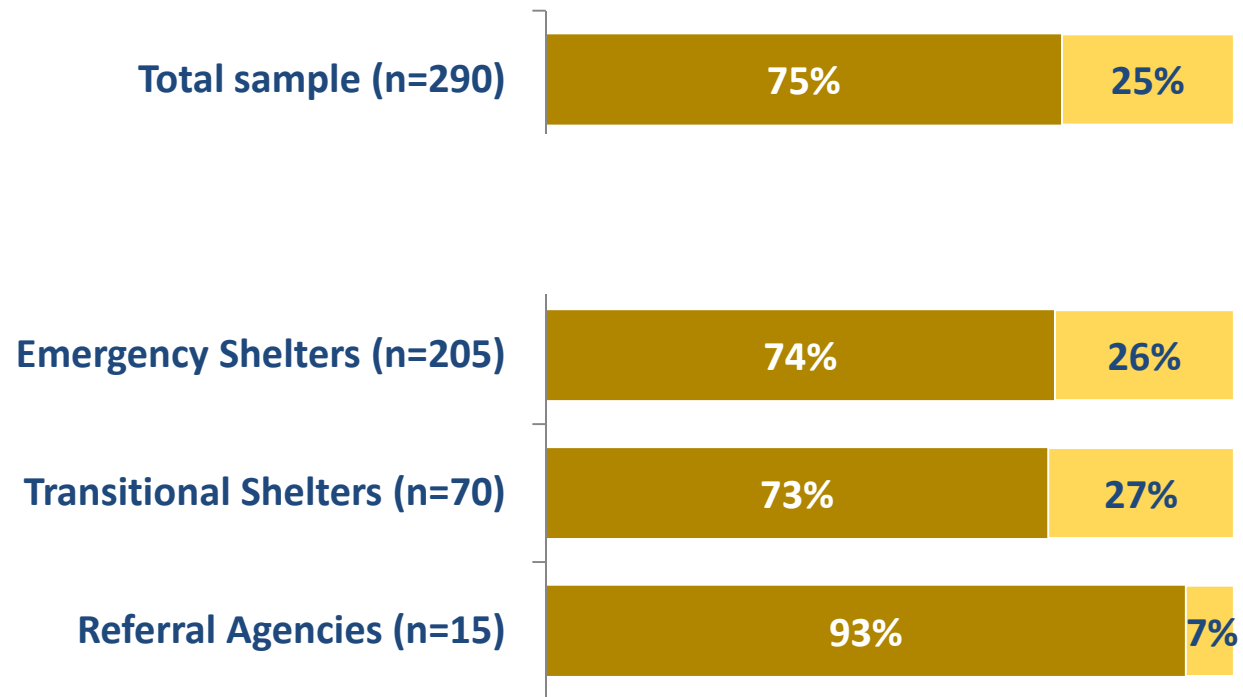
# Ease of Contacting Shelters/Referral Agencies



## Ease of Contacting Shelters/Referral Agencies

- Three-quarters (75% ) of shelter calls were answered by staff.
- One-quarter (25%) of calls were unanswered after 3 attempts.
- By comparison 93% of calls to referral agencies were answered within three calls.

■ Contact was made by third call   ■ No contact was made by third call





## Ease of Contacting Shelters/Referral Agencies: By Time of Day

- Significantly more calls were answered at shelters during weekday afternoons than any other time period.

	% of Calls Answered					
	Total Calls (n=290)	Sunday between 4 – 10 PM (n=61)	Weekday Afternoon 1 – 4 PM (n=54)	Weekday Evening 7 – 10 PM (n=62)	Weekday Morning 7 – 10 AM (n=55)	Weekday Overnight 1 – 4 AM (n=58)
		a	b	c	d	e
<b>Total Sample (n=290)</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>89%ace</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Emergency Shelter (n=205)</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>89%acde</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Transitional Shelter (n=70)</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>86%ae</b>	<b>86%ae</b>	<b>71%a</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Referral Agency (n=15)</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>100%e</b>	<b>100%e</b>	<b>100%e</b>	<b>100%e</b>	<b>67%</b>



## Ease of Contacting Shelters/Referral Agencies: By Average Number of Rings and Calls to Voicemail

- Where contact was made, the phone rang an average of 2.3 times before the call was picked up.
- Where contact was not made, 54% of calls went to voicemail. A message could be left on all occasions. None of the voicemail boxes were found to be full.

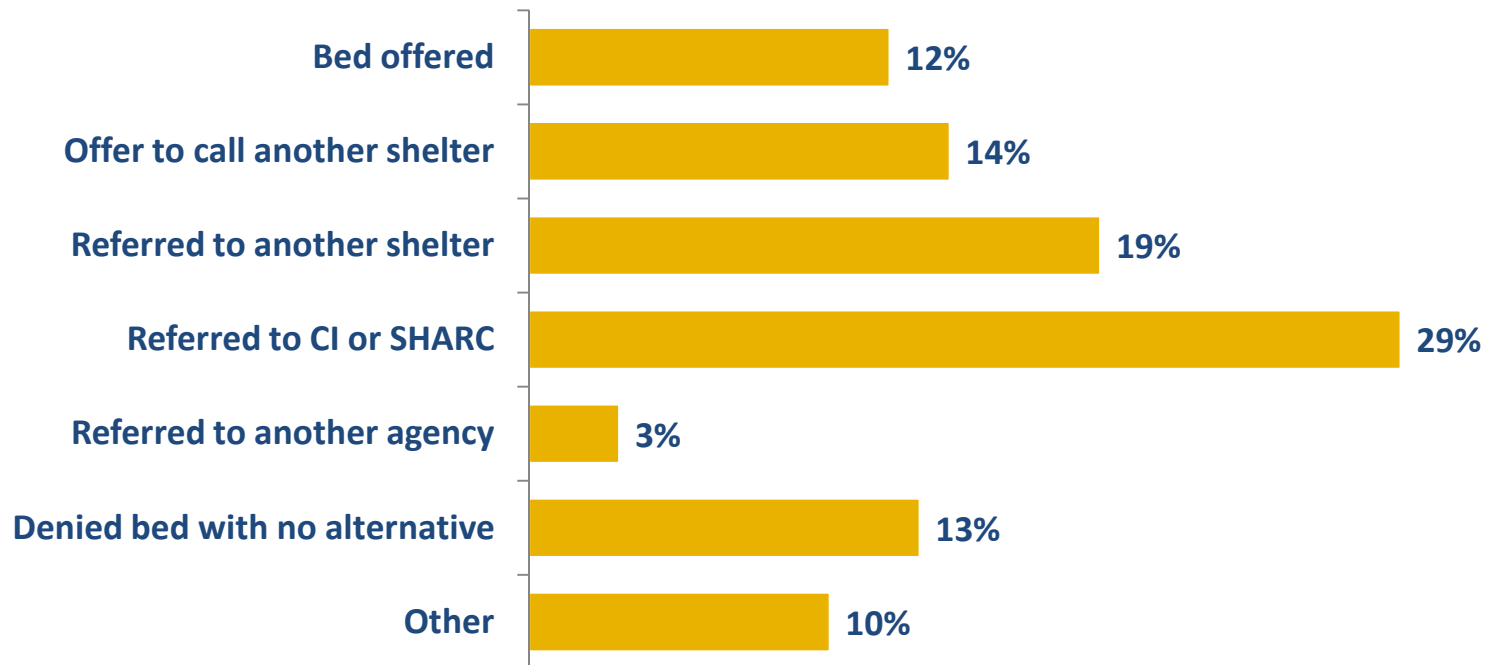
	Where contact was made	Where contact was not made	
	Average number of rings before call was picked up	Did Call Go to Voice Mail?	If yes, was Mailbox Full?
<b>Total Sample (n=290)</b>	<b>(n=216) 2.3</b>	<b>(n=74)</b> Yes 54% No 46%	Yes 0% No 100%
<b>Emergency Shelter (n=205)</b>	<b>(n=151) 2.3</b>	<b>(n=54)</b> Yes 50% No 50%	Yes 0% No 100%
<b>Transitional Shelter (n=70)</b>	<b>(n=51) 2.4</b>	<b>(n=19)</b> Yes 68% No 32%	Yes 0% No 100%
<b>Referral Agency (n=15)</b>	<b>(n=14) 1.9</b>	<b>(n=1)</b> Yes 0% No 100%	n/a

# Call Outcome



## Call Outcome

- Of the calls where contact was made (75% of calls), 12% resulted in the client being offered a bed at the particular shelter and 14% resulted in the staff offering to call another shelter on the client's behalf.
- The most common outcome was for staff to refer the caller to CI, SHARC (29%) or another shelter (19%).
- To 1-in-10 callers (13%), staff denied a bed with no alternative.
- Staff offered an "other" options to 1-in-10 callers (10%). The most common being , "call back" or "you need to come in before a bed can be offered".



Base: Where contact was made (n=216)

Note: total may not add to 100% due to rounding



## Call Outcome: By Time of Day

- The incidence of being offered a bed was highest on weekday mornings.
- The incidence of being denied a bed was highest on Sundays.

	Time of Day of Call					
	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Sunday between 4 – 10 PM (n=43)	Weekday Afternoon 1 – 4 PM (n=48)	Weekday Evening 7 – 10 PM (n=45)	Weekday Morning 7 – 10 AM (n=41)	Weekday Overnight 1 – 4 AM (n=39)
		a	b	c	d	e
Bed offered	12%	9%	8%	11%	22%	8%
Offer to call another shelter	14%	12%	21%	9%	15%	15%
Referred to another shelter	19%	26% <sup>e</sup>	25% <sup>e</sup>	20% <sup>e</sup>	20% <sup>e</sup>	5%
Referred to CI or SHARC	29%	23%	23%	31%	24%	46% <sup>abd</sup>
Referred to another agency	3%	0%	6% <sup>a</sup>	4%	2%	3%
Denied bed with no alternative	13%	28% <sup>bc</sup>	2%	11%	12%	13%
Other	10%	2%	15% <sup>a</sup>	16% <sup>a</sup>	5%	10%



## Call Outcome: By Shelter Type and Operation

- Calls to emergency shelters resulted in 14% being offered a bed and 16% being denied a bed with no alternative.
- The offer and denial of a bed was less common when calling transitional shelters (4% offered a bed and 6% denied); transitional shelter staff were more likely to refer callers to other shelters or agencies (29% called another shelter). A higher number of referrals among transitional shelters is likely to be expected given that callers were first-time users of the shelter system.
- There was no difference in call outcomes between city operated or city funded shelters.

	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Shelter Type Called			Shelter Operation	
		Emergency Shelter (n=151)	Transitional Shelter (n=51)	Referral Agency (n=14)	City Operated (n=44)	City Funded (n=172)
		a	b	c	d	e
Bed offered	12%	14% <sup>b</sup>	4%	14%	9%	12%
Offer to call another shelter	14%	15%	10%	21%	18%	13%
Referred to another shelter	19%	15%	29% <sup>a</sup>	29%	30%	17%
Referred to CI or SHARC	29%	30%	29%	21% <sup>*</sup>	23%	31%
Referred to another agency	3%	2%	8% <sup>a</sup>	0%	5%	3%
Denied bed with no alternative	13%	16% <sup>b</sup>	6%	7%	9%	14%
Other	10%	9%	14%	7%	7%	10%

\* There was 1 call to 311 where the caller was referred to CI and 2 calls to SHARC where the caller was referred to CI.





## Call Outcome: By Sector

- Calls to youth shelters were more likely to result in a bed being offered (26%); compared to calls to adult or family shelters (8% respectively).

		Sector		
	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Adult (n=149)	Youth (n=42)	Family (n=25)
		a	b	c
<b>Bed offered</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>26%a</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Offer to call another shelter</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Referred to another shelter</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>31%c</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Referred to CI or SHARC</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%b</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>56%ab</b>
<b>Referred to another agency</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Denied bed with no alternative</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>8%</b>



## Call Outcome: By Client Profile

- Female callers were less likely than male callers to be offered a bed on the spot (3% versus 15%), but more likely to receive an offer from the shelter staff to call another shelter on their behalf (24% versus 10%).
- Female callers were also less likely to be denied a bed with no alternative, compared to their male counterparts (9% versus 15%).

		Client Profile					
	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Male (n=149)	Female (n=67)	Aboriginal (n=26)	Transgender Person (n=43)	Person with Disability (n=45)	Person Requires Service Animal (n=40)
		a	b	c	d	e	f
Bed offered	12%	15% <sup>b</sup>	3%	15% <sup>b</sup>	12%	13% <sup>b</sup>	5%
Offer to call another shelter	14%	10%	24% <sup>acd</sup>	4%	9%	13%	20%
Referred to another shelter	19%	22%	15%	19%	21%	9%	20%
Referred to CI or SHARC	29%	26%	36%	31%	28%	38%	33%
Referred to another agency	3%	3%	3%	0%	7%	2%	3%
Denied bed with no alternative	13%	15% <sup>b</sup>	9%	12%	14%	11%	7%
Other	10%	9%	11%	19%	12%	13%	13%



## Referrals

- In 62% of calls where contact was made, the client was offered a referral or other assistance, short of an offer to call another shelter on the client's behalf. In 2 out of 3 of these calls (64%), staff provided the client with the shelter name, address and phone number.

	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Shelter Type			Shelter Operation	
		Emergency Shelter (n=151)	Transitional Shelter (n=51)	Referral Agency (n=14)	City Operated (n=44)	City Funded (n=172)
		a	b	c	d	e
Gave you referral shelter name, address and phone number	64%	65%	63%	50%	61%	64%
Not given name, address and phone number	36%	35%	37%	50%	39%	36%

# **Customer Service Provided to Clients Seeking a Shelter Bed**



# Greeting

- Shelter staff identified the shelter name to 3-in-4 (76%) callers.
- Shelter staff offered their name to 1-in-3 (33%) callers.

**% of staff offering the following information**

	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Shelter Type			Shelter Operation	
		Emergency Shelter (n=151)	Transitional Shelter (n=51)	Referral Agency (n=14)	City Operated (n=44)	City Funded (n=172)
		a	b	c	d	e
<b>Name of shelter/agency</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>The staff member's name</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>30%</b>

Q4. Did the shelter provider ask the following questions?  
 Base: Made Contact (n=216)



## Intake Questions

- Among the list of intake questions, staff most commonly asked the caller their first and last name, their date of birth and if the caller had previously stayed in a shelter.
- Shelter staff seldom asked questions related to past housing circumstances or income.
- Overall, shelter staff asked very few background questions.
- By contrast referral agencies regularly sought more client details as part of intake process.

### % of staff who asked the following questions

Total calls where contact was made (n=216)		Shelter Type			Shelter Operation	
		Emergency Shelter (n=151)	Transitional Shelter (n=51)	Referral Agency (n=14)	City Operated (n=44)	City Funded (n=172)
		a	b	c	d	e
First and Last name	31%	31%	28%	43%	30%	31%
Gender	8%	9%	8%	0%	5%	9%
Date of Birth	24%	25%	16%	43% <sup>b</sup>	21%	24%
Current sleeping situation	13%	11%	10%	50% <sup>ab</sup>	21%	12%
Staying in shelter before	24%	25%	16%	50% <sup>ab</sup>	30%	23%
Reason for homelessness	13%	10%	12%	43% <sup>ab</sup>	21%	11%
Length of homelessness	7%	4%	6%	36% <sup>ab</sup>	14% <sup>e</sup>	5%
Sources of income	8%	5%	8%	43% <sup>ab</sup>	16% <sup>e</sup>	6%
Lived in last 12 months	10%	7%	8%	43% <sup>ab</sup>	18%	8%

Q4. Did the shelter provider ask the following questions?  
Base: Made Contact (n=216)



## Customer Service Elements (Part 1): By Shelter Type and Operation

- Among callers who spoke to staff, 27% were put on hold at some point during the call.
- Callers to referral agencies were more likely to be put on hold (71%).
- The average length of time clients were put on hold was 3.4 minutes.
- For a small minority of callers (3%) staff mentioned an option other than a shelter, such as calling a particular number for further information, or to seek alternative accommodations such as staying with a friend, or at the YMCA.
- For 6% of callers, staff tried to help the client in other ways beyond just finding a bed.

	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Shelter Type			Shelter Operation	
		Emergency Shelter (n=151)	Transitional Shelter (n=51)	Referral Agency (n=14)	City Operated (n=44)	City Funded (n=172)
		a	b	c	d	e
% of calls put on hold	27%	28% <sup>b</sup>	12%	71% <sup>ab</sup>	32%	26%
Mean length of time on hold	3.4	2.2	5.1	6.9 <sup>a</sup>	5.2 <sup>e</sup>	2.8
% of calls where staff mentioned a option other than a shelter (e.g. OW, addiction help)	3%	3%	6%	0%	5%	3%
% of calls where staff attempted to help in other ways	6%	7%	4%	7%	9%	5%

Q2. Did the person answering the phone provide the following information?  
 Base: Made Contact (n=216)

Note: total may not add to 100% due to rounding



## Customer Service Elements (Part 1): By Client Profile

- Callers requiring accommodation for a service animal were more likely to be put on hold (43%), while transgender callers were more likely to wait on hold for a longer period of time (4.3 minutes).
- Staff were more likely to attempt to help callers in other ways (beyond just finding a bed), when the caller had a service animal, compared to other callers.

		Client Profile					
	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Male (n=149)	Female (n=67)	Aboriginal (n=26)	Transgender Person (n=43)	Person with Disability (n=45)	Person Requires Service Animal (n=40)
		a	b	c	d	e	f
% of calls put on hold	27%	26%	30%	27%	21%	22%	43% <sup>e</sup>
Mean length of time on hold	3.4	3.2	3.7	1.6	4.3	3.5	2.5
% of calls where staff mentioned a option other than a shelter (e.g. OW, addiction help)	3%	4%	2%	0%	0%	7%	5%
% of calls where staff attempted to help in other ways	6%	6%	6%	8%	0%	9%	18%





## Customer Service Elements (Part 1): By Sector

- There is little difference in service experience between sectors.

	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Sector		
		Adult (n=149)	Youth (n=42)	Family (n=25)
		a	b	c
% of calls put on hold	27%	26%	38%	16%
Mean length of time on hold	3.4	3.8b	1.4	6.7
% of calls where staff mentioned a option other than a shelter (e.g. OW, addiction help)	3%	3%	2%	8%
% of calls where staff attempted to help in other ways	6%	6%	2%	12%



## Customer Service Elements (Part 2): By Shelter Type and Operation

- Half of callers (51%) found staff to be polite on the phone.
- Roughly 3-in-10 callers (28%) found staff to be empathetic to their situation.
- Approximately 4-in-10 callers (37%) indicated shelter staff were attentive on the phone.

	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Shelter Type			Shelter Operation	
		Emergency Shelter (n=151)	Transitional Shelter (n=51)	Referral Agency (n=14)	City Operated (n=44)	City Funded (n=172)
		a	b	c	d	e
% of calls where staff was polite	51%	47%	55%	71%	52%	50%
% of calls where staff was empathetic	28%	26%	31%	36%	36%	26%
% of calls where staff was attentive	37%	36%	37%	43%	50%	34%
(among callers with disability or service animal n=85) % of calls where staff attempted to accommodate the issue.	32%	33%	24%	50%	47%	28%



## Customer Service Elements (Part 2): By Client Profile

- Female callers were less likely to indicate that the staff were polite compared to men (34% versus 58%). Clients who had a service animal were more likely to report the staff being polite (65%), empathetic (43%) and attentive (58%).

		Client Profile					
	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Men (n=149)	Women (n=67)	Aboriginal (n=26)	Transgender Person (n=43)	Person with Disability (n=45)	Person Requires Service Animal (n=40)
		a	b	c	d	e	f
% of calls where staff was polite	51%	58%bcd	34%	35%	32%	67%bcd	65%bcd
% of calls where staff was empathetic	28%	24%	37%	23%	23%	24%	43%a
% of calls where staff was attentive	37%	29%	33%	27%	35%	31%	58%abcde



## Customer Service Elements (Part 2): By Sector

- Half (52%) of the callers to youth shelters indicated that staff were attentive – this is significantly higher than callers to adult shelters (31%).

		Sector		
	Total calls where contact was made (n=216)	Adult (n=149)	Youth (n=42)	Family (n=25)
		a	b	c
% of calls where staff was polite	51%	48%	64%	48%
% of calls where staff was empathetic	28%	28%	26%	24%
% of calls where staff was attentive	37%	31%	52% <sup>a</sup>	48%