

Attachment 3: EFSS Program Operational Details and Requirements

Program Eligibility and Operations

The Emergency Family Shelter Support (EFSS) Program provides short-term financial assistance to families experiencing homelessness when shelter space is unavailable.

For families to be eligible to receive EFSS, they must:

- Be currently experiencing homelessness and sleeping outdoors and not have access to an indoor resting location.
- Include one or more children under the age of 18 years living full time with the parent or guardian, or a person in the third trimester of pregnancy.
- Be active with OW.
- Not have a history of misusing EFSS funds previously.
- Not have left shelter or housing for the purpose of accessing the EFSS program.

The following outlines the operational processes and expectations for EFSS participants:

1. Intake and Eligibility Assessment

- Families in need of shelter contact Central Intake (CI), which conducts an initial assessment to determine program eligibility and available accommodation options.
- CI confirms Ontario Works (OW) eligibility with Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) before authorizing EFSS support.
- All adults over the age of 18 in the household must agree to program requirements, including accepting the first available shelter referral. Families who do not consent to EFSS program requirements are prioritized for alternative accommodation programs.

2. Accommodation and Fund Disbursement

- Families secure their own short-term accommodations, including hotels, motels, or approved temporary rentals, for periods of up to seven days at a time.
- Families provide TESS with weekly accommodation plans, including associated costs, for approval and fund disbursement.
- TESS issues funds to cover eligible short-term accommodations and monitors the appropriate use of funds through receipt verification via the MyBenefits portal.

3. Ongoing Monitoring and Compliance

- Families are required to provide weekly updates to CI regarding shelter needs and to TESS regarding accommodation and receipts.

- CI and TESS collaborate closely to verify eligibility, monitor program compliance, and maintain records of services provided.
- Families must notify CI and TESS of any changes that may affect participation in the EFSS program or access to shelter referrals.
- Non-compliant families are offered alternative supports to ensure safe accommodations while awaiting placement in shelter or other housing programs.

4. Program Integrity and Investigations

- CI and TESS are responsible for maintaining program integrity, including investigating any suspected misuse of EFSS funds.
- Families may submit complaints if they disagree with the outcome of a program investigation.

5. Participant Responsibilities

All families participating in the EFSS program are required to:

- Secure their own short-term accommodations within the boundaries of Toronto.
- Provide weekly updates to TESS staff regarding the family's needs and accommodations.
- Provide weekly updates to CI to confirm if shelter space is still required by the family.
- Submit official receipts for their accommodations through the MyBenefits portal weekly, for review by TESS staff.
- Accept any shelter referral provided to the family by CI.
- Attend all in-person meetings and provide documentation for verification upon request by City staff.
- Inform caseworkers for CI and TESS of any changes to the family's situation that would impact their participation in the EFSS program and/or referral to shelter.
- Work to resolve their housing emergency by actively working to access housing supports and benefits.

Any future changes to the EFSS program eligibility or operational processes will be subject to the Access to Shelter Framework. TSSS acknowledges City Council's direction that the General Manager will follow the Toronto Shelter Standards' interim amendment process by issuing a Directive when making changes to eligibility criteria for Toronto's shelter system, and this process be applied for all eligibility changes under the Framework.