

March 2023

Update to the Toronto Shelter Standards

1. What are the Toronto Shelter Standards?

- The Toronto Shelter Standards (TSS) are the set of standards that provide City of Toronto-funded shelter providers and clients with a clear set of expectations, guidelines and minimum requirements for the delivery of shelter services in Toronto. These standards are captured in the Toronto Shelter Standards document.
- All emergency and transitional shelters funded or directly operated by the City of Toronto are required to adhere to the TSS. This includes hotels, purpose-built shelters, leased properties, and any and all built-forms where shelter services are delivered.
- The TSS were first created in 1992 to ensure that services are delivered in a consistent manner across the shelter system.
- The previous version of the TSS was adopted by City Council in 2015.

2. Why has the Toronto Shelter Standards been updated and what updates were made?

- The version of the TSS that City Council adopted in 2015 requires a review of standards every five years. This review, scheduled for 2020, was postponed to focus resources on SSHA's COVID-19 pandemic response.
- An administrative review of the TSS was completed throughout 2021 and 2022. The now revised version of the TSS incorporates City-issued Toronto Shelter Directives, benchmarks from the 24-Hour Respite Site Standards, and previously updated health and safety practices, as well as changes that have taken place to overall shelter systems and processes (e.g. updates in the Shelter Management Information System).
- In 2021, City Council granted SSHA the authority to introduce interim amendments to the TSS outside of the regularly scheduled amendment process via SSHA Directives. This allows the TSS to be updated more regularly as needed.

3. Will staff have to complete new training requirements to familiarize themselves with the updates?

- At this time, current staff will need to refresh their training of the TSS based on the updates that have been made.
- To support staff to better understand the updates and answer questions, information sessions will be offered to supervisory staff throughout the coming months.

- The online TSS training currently offered through the Toronto Hostels Training Centre will also be updated in the coming months. New shelter staff can still complete this training in the interim.

4. What changes have been made regarding the requirements for trainings and acceptable qualifications for shelter staff?

- The reference tool outlining recommended and mandatory trainings and qualification is now called the *Training Topics and Professional Competencies Matrix*.
- Shelter providers may continue to accept previously completed staff training or staff qualifications, provided they meet the applicable requirements of section 12.4.2.
- Trainings and professional competencies can continue to be completed either as stand-alone (e.g. a training specific to Trans awareness) or as part of (a) general training(s) (e.g. a training focused on cultural and racial sensitivity that discusses Trans awareness and racial discrimination).
- The following training(s) and professional competencies have been added as “mandatory” for Client Support staff, Dietary staff, cleaning/maintenance staff, Supervisory/Management staff:
 - Infection Prevention and Control
 - Injury Prevention
 - Confronting Anti-Black Racism
 - Indigenous Cultural Safety Training
 - Trans Awareness
- The following training(s) and professional competencies have been added as “mandatory” for Client Support staff, cleaning/maintenance staff, Supervisory/Management staff:
 - Overdose Response
- The following trainings and professional competencies have been made “mandatory” for Client Support staff, and Supervisory/Management staff working in senior shelters:
 - Working with Older/Aging Clients

5. How will the updates help improve health and safety in the shelter system?

- The TSS now includes a section dedicated to Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) practices and has strengthened standards relating to facilities management, custodial services and maintenance.
- The updates incorporate health and safety measures that were put in place over the course of the pandemic to help mitigate and control COVID-19 and reflect overall effective IPAC practices.

6. Do the updates to the Toronto Shelter Standards include the updates to physical distancing measurements or reflect the work of the COVID-19 transition plan?

- No; the personal client space standards remain in the TSS as they currently appear and do not reflect the work of the COVID-19 transition plan.
- Shelter providers are currently following the physical distancing requirements that were implemented through the [SSHA Directive 2020-01 \(updated December 8, 2022\)](#). These physical distancing guidelines will continue to remain in effect.

7. How will the updates to the Toronto Shelter Standards help improve equity for service users?

- The updates include the addition of sections noting specific supports and services for Indigenous clients, and clients with disabilities. These sections were initially developed as part of the 24-Hour Respite Sites Standards.
- Trainings on serving transgendered clients have been added as mandatory for staff.
- Further, SSHA is reviewing the shelter standards with an anti-Black racism lens in response to SSHA's Action 10.2 in Toronto's Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. Consultations with Black service users and shelter staff took place throughout 2022. SSHA is now working on developing a set of recommendations informed by the consultations that will be used to update the TSS with an ABR-lens.

8. How will the updated Toronto Shelter Standards help improve clients' experiences in shelters?

- The updates reflect positive changes for client well-being. The updates to the TSS now include:
 - New training for staff on to help improve equity (i.e. training on Trans awareness, Confronting Anti-Black Racism, and Indigenous Cultural Safety training)
 - Updates of service expectations for clients with pets
 - Sections noting specific supports and services for Indigenous clients, and clients with disabilities to align with the 24-Hour Respite Sites Standards

9. Are any other changes or updates expected within the next year for the Toronto Shelter Standards?

- SSHA will continue to review the standards as government mandates and City-issued Directives come into effect to ensure they reflect the most up-to-date public health and safety information, and strengthen safety and quality in shelters.
- SSHA will also continue to review the standards with a focus on equity and inclusion to ensure that shelters are welcoming spaces for all clients.

- In response to SSHA's Action 10.2 in Toronto's Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, a set of updates with an anti-black racism lens for the TSS will be developed throughout 2023 and incorporated into the TSS. A SSHA Directive will be issued to outline the list of updates and notify the sector of the changes.
- A review of policies supporting 2SLGTBQ+ clients and Indigenous clients will begin in 2023. This review will help ensure that these clients continue to feel safe and supported when accessing shelter services.