



2 TORONTO'S SHELTER SYSTEM

2.1 TYPES OF SHELTERS

The City of Toronto funds purchase of service shelters, and directly operates shelters in two broad categories: emergency shelters and transitional shelters.

Emergency shelters serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness with or without a referral. Clients may self-refer in person or over the phone. The typical length of stay in an emergency shelter is intended to be of short duration and the majority of clients use this type of shelter only once before returning to permanent housing.

Transitional Shelters serve individuals and families with a referral from an emergency shelter, Central Intake, Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre (SHARC) or another agency. Clients cannot self-refer. Transitional Shelters provide specialized programming; clients are assessed for eligibility prior to admission. The typical length of stay in transitional shelters is intended to be longer to enable clients to address their particular housing and service needs.

Emergency and transitional shelters funded or directly operated by the City of Toronto may operate in a variety of built-forms such as purpose built facilities, re-purposed buildings, hotels and motels.

2.2 SECTORS OF THE SHELTER SYSTEM

Emergency and transitional shelters are further sub-categorized by the client groups they serve; each of these sub-categories is called a sector. Presently, there are five (5) sectors: adult men, adult women, mixed adult, youth and family.

2.3 ROLES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.3.1 ROLE OF THE CITY OF TORONTO

The City of Toronto is the legislated provincial Consolidated Municipal Service Manager responsible for the administration of provincial and federal funding and the planning and management of the housing and homelessness service system.

The City of Toronto provides a wide range of housing and homelessness services intended to support all Torontonians to achieve housing stability. Several City divisions are involved, to varying degrees, in the delivery of these services.

SSHA is the division with primary responsibility for managing a coordinated and effective system of shelter and homelessness services.

With respect to shelter services, SSHA is responsible for

- (a) Directly operating some emergency and transitional shelters
- (b) Administering and ensuring contract compliance with Operating Agreements between the City of Toronto and community-based organizations that deliver shelter and related services including emergency and transitional shelters, Housing Help programs within shelters, Drop-In centres and the Toronto Hostel Training Centre
- (c) Ensuring service quality assurance by maintaining and providing funder oversight for the implementation of the TSS by shelter providers, starting in the planning process and while shelters are operational
- (d) Developing policies that improve the shelter system's efficiency and capacity to generate positive outcomes for all stakeholders
- (e) Assessing the need under emergency conditions for flexibility in the implementation of the TSS, while ensuring that essential health and safety standards are met.

2.3.2 ROLE OF SHELTER PROVIDERS

The role of shelter providers is to deliver high-quality services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness while fulfilling the obligations set out in their Operating Agreements and the TSS, as well as adhering to applicable legislation. Shelter providers must ensure that all contracted services meet the applicable TSS.

City-funded shelter providers operate a majority of the shelters in Toronto. Their operational contributions as well as their knowledge, skills and experience serve as critical inputs to the development and refinement of system-wide policies and service delivery leading practices.

2.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE

SSHA undertakes a number of activities and uses a variety of tools to ensure that shelter providers deliver services in an effective and efficient manner.

SSHA conducts audits/reviews of shelter providers' operations and is primarily concerned with

- (a) Ensuring that shelter providers meet the TSS and their contractual obligations as set out in their Operating Agreement and License/Lease Agreements if applicable
- (b) Reviewing shelter providers' financial viability, budget submissions and service delivery performance
- (c) Providing information and assistance to shelter providers with respect to their shelter's budgets, policies, services and business processes

(d) Monitoring, reviewing and resolving complaints from clients and the community.

Audits and reviews focus on shelter providers' services, bed management practices, budget and related submissions, financial controls, capital assets and organizational/administrative functions. They are conducted at regular intervals and as needed.

2.4.1 PROGRAM REVIEWS

Program Reviews are conducted to ensure that shelter providers are in compliance with the TSS in order to ensure high-quality service delivery to clients. Program Reviews typically focus on models and processes.

2.4.2 SITE REVIEWS

Site Reviews are conducted to ensure that shelters are well-maintained and in a state of good repair. The primary purpose of a Site Review is to ensure the health and safety of all persons on shelter property.

2.4.3 ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEWS

Organizational Reviews are conducted to ensure that shelter providers' finances are in good standing and that their governance and administrative functions comply with the TSS. Shelter providers may be required to demonstrate their compliance with applicable legislation and generally accepted professional practices.

Organizational Reviews are often combined with Program and Site Reviews as part of a comprehensive evaluation of a shelter's operations.

2.4.4 SHELTER MONITORING PLAN

SSHA implements a Shelter Monitoring Plan on a case-by-case basis when there are concerns that a shelter provider is not meeting its contractual obligations, including meeting the TSS. A Shelter Monitoring Plan is implemented in response to difficulties arising from poor financial controls, service-level disruptions, frequent and severe complaints against a shelter and/or its staff or significant damage to a shelter's physical assets that impact on the shelter's ability to provide service and which requires remediation. A Shelter Monitoring Plan could be implemented at more than one shelter site if the shelter provider operates programs at more than one site. SSHA develops and administers Shelter Monitoring Plans in consultation with shelter providers to determine how to proceed with remediation while delivering the best possible services to clients.

2.4.5 UPDATING THE TORONTO SHELTER STANDARDS (TSS)

In order to maintain the relevance of the TSS to the evolving realities of shelter service delivery, the TSS are subject to amendment. Proposed amendments to the TSS will be reviewed by SSHA in consultation with stakeholders to determine their feasibility and impact. Amendments to the TSS are subject to approval from the General Manager, SSHA.

SSHA reserves the right to introduce interim amendments to the TSS outside of the regularly scheduled amendment process via SSHA Directives.

2.4.6 SHELTER MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SMIS)

SMIS is a secure, web-based application used to collect, store and retrieve client information and to facilitate efficient access to shelter services by identifying available beds in real time. The use of SMIS is mandatory at all City-funded shelters.

The analysis of SMIS information provides valuable insights for policy development, shelter system planning and for the preparation for Program, Site and/or Organizational Reviews.