

December 2023

Confronting Anti-Black Racism standards added to the Toronto Shelter Standards Directive 2023-02

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 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, and the TSS has since been updated in 2022.

2. What are the 24-Hour Respite Site Standards?

- The [24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#) (TRS) establish standards for all 24-Hour Respite Sites funded by the City of Toronto including any winter-only respite sites and all 24-hour women's only drop-in sites. Each of these programs are included in the term "24-Hour Respite Site" and are expected to meet the standards established in the TRS document.

3. What updates are being made to the Toronto Shelter Standards, and what are these changes guided by?

- The Toronto Shelter Standards are being updated with an anti-Black racism lens. These revisions will be referred to as the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) standards.
- In 2018, the City of Toronto released the [Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#) (Action Plan), a seminal document signaling the City's commitment to confronting anti-Black racism. The Action Plan included 22 recommendations and 80 actions to address five issue areas: Children & Youth Development; Health & Community Services; Job Opportunities & Income Supports; Policing & the Justice System; and Community Engagement & Black Leadership.
- The addition of CABR standards to the TSS addresses Action 10.2 of the [Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#), which requires that Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) apply an Anti-Black Racism analysis to shelter standards and procedures. This work also aligns with Implementation Priority #2 in SSHA's [Homelessness Solutions Service Plan](#).

- The CABR standards and updates will be adapted to the 24-Hour Respite Site Standards in early 2024.

4. What was the process for developing the CABR standards?

- To better understand what changes needed to be made to the Toronto Shelter Standards to better serve Black clients, SSHA conducted:
 - Client consultations, i.e., consultations with 149 Black clients across 16 shelter sites, with the support of an external facilitator ([Facilitating Change](#))
 - Staff consultations, i.e., consultations with 98 staff including shelter service providers and subject matter experts via 20+ virtual engagement sessions, including 11 dedicated Black staff engagement sessions
- Once the draft CABR standards were developed, SSHA consulted with staff at all levels via online meetings and an online survey to gather feedback on the draft standards, and to understand what supports would be needed to implement these changes.
- To help ensure the updates represent the perspective of the Black community, a concerted effort was made to consult with Black staff from across the sector and at all levels of staffing.

5. Why are these changes important? How will these changes help clients?

- Anti-Black racism is embedded in Canadian institutions through policies and practices that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination directed at people of African descent and rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization here in Canada.
- Black Torontonians contribute to all areas of city life, adding their talents and assets to make Toronto stronger, more vibrant, and more successful. However, anti-Black racism still exists in the city and has detrimental impacts on the life and work of Black people in our city.
- The addition of CABR standards to the Toronto Shelter Standards are intended to improve the experiences of Black people accessing Toronto's shelter system. Confronting and removing barriers caused by anti-Black racism benefits all Torontonians, especially other Toronto communities experiencing racism and marginalization.

6. When will these changes come into effect? How long do service providers have to implement these changes?

- Directive 2023-02 "Confronting Anti-Black Racism standards added to the Toronto Shelter Standards" is effective immediately.
- Providers are expected to begin adopting the CABR standards into programs and services right away and will have until the end of Q4 2024 to implement all the changes. Compliance assessments of these standards will be conducted by the Quality Assurance team in Q1 2025.

- SSHA recognizes that some providers have already started and/or are advanced in CABR work at their sites, while others may be at the start of their CABR journey. SSHA thanks and appreciates those who have already begun this work, for their leadership in this area, and looks forward to ongoing conversations with all providers on how to better serve Black clients accessing Toronto's shelter system.

7. What supports will be available to service providers to support implementation? Will additional funding be provided to support implementation?

- Information sessions will be offered to management and supervisory shelter staff, to help staff better understand the changes to the Toronto Shelter Standards, and to help answer any initial questions.
- An implementation plan for this work is being developed. Resources will be developed with support from the sector and will be provided as they become available. This may include policy templates, reference guides and other materials.
- CABR representatives from each program are also invited to join City staff at SSHA CABR Knowledge Exchange Table meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity for open dialogue and sharing knowledge about best practices and innovative strategies to confront anti-Black racism. Please work with your Agency Review Officer (ARO) to share the contact information of your CABR representative and/or get further information about the Knowledge Exchange Tables.

8. What accountability measures are being put into place to ensure these standards are implemented effectively?

- As with all Toronto Shelter Standards, SSHA will be assessing compliance of the CABR standards on a routine basis, beginning in Q1 2025. The process for receiving feedback after the assessment(s) will remain the same, as outlined below.
- Following each assessment, providers will receive a report that outlines all the indicators included in the assessment and compliance with each of them. Service providers also receive a separate assessment highlighting all items that were non-compliant from the current and previous assessments, providing a complete list of all standards that have not been met across all assessed sections.
- SSHA staff will support service providers in remediating any non-compliant items in several ways. During an assessment, staff may advise how to remediate an item and allow the service provider to immediately address the issue. Following an assessment, supports and resources are identified and shared with the service provider in collaboration with multiple SSHA teams.
- Service providers then revise policies, procedures, and processes as needed to ensure they are meeting City requirements.
- Further information about the compliance assessment process will be shared as it becomes available.

9. The CABR standards mention a CABR Lead. What is a CABR lead? How is this role the same or different than the CABR representative?

- The **CABR lead** is a function that should be assigned to an existing management or supervisory level staff at the site-level. The person assigned this function should be trained in confronting anti-Black racism, anti-oppression, and trauma-informed practice.
- The CABR lead would ideally self-identify as Black, but in the event that this is not operationally feasible, the role can be assigned to a non-Black staff who meets the above criteria.
- As noted in Directive 2023-02, the CABR lead will:
 - support the implementation of CABR policies, programs and supports (Section 10.3.6)
 - review all service restrictions from a bedded program involving incidents of ABR and/or Black clients, using an ABR lens, either at the time-of-service restriction or within 36 hours (section 8.6.2)
 - ensure that any Black client who is issued a service restriction will be made aware of the appeal process, either at the time-of-service restriction or within 36 hours (section 8.6.2)
- SSHA has recently established a CABR Knowledge Exchange Table, which provides sites with an opportunity to have open dialogue and share knowledge about best practices and innovative strategies to confront anti-Black racism. The **CABR representative** is a staff person appointed by service providers to attend the Knowledge Exchange Table on behalf of their organization. The CABR representative is not required to be at the management or supervisor level.
- Sites may choose to assign the CABR lead function to whoever meets the above criteria, based on staffing needs. For some sites, the CABR lead and CABR representative may be the same person, while for others, it may be different people. Sites may also choose to assign two or more staff for this position to ensure continuity in the work.
- Recognizing that the burden of confronting anti-Black racism often falls on Black people, sites are encouraged to distribute this work evenly with non-Black people in their organization.

10. Will staff have to complete new training requirements to familiarize themselves with the CABR standards?

- Supervisory staff are encouraged to review Directive 2023-02 and attend one of the information sessions to better understand the changes being made to the Toronto Shelter Standards, as well as their role in implementing them.
- At this time, staff will not have to complete a separate training on the Toronto Shelter Standards to familiarize themselves with the CABR standards. Training on the CABR standards will be developed in 2024.
- In addition, the following changes will be made to the Toronto Shelter Standards' *Training Topics and Professional Competencies Matrix*.

- Under Equity, Diversity and Human Rights, ABR training is now mandatory for Board Members
- Under Working with Clients, training regarding "Working with racialized children and youth" is now mandatory for staff working in family and youth shelters

11. What other work is Shelter, Support and Housing Administration doing to confront anti-Black racism?

- The Shelter, Support and Housing Administration division is committed to confronting anti-Black racism in the homelessness services system.
- Some of this work, listed in [Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#), includes:
 - ensuring shelter staff are trained on anti-Black racism as a trigger to mental illness (action 10.3)
 - creating safer spaces within new 2SLGBTQ+ shelters for Black queer and trans youth (action 10.4)
 - creating safer spaces within women's and family shelters for women of African descent (action 10.6)
 - collecting race-based data on homelessness, particularly on the needs of Black queer and trans youth for shelters support services planning (action 10.5)
- SSHA has also recently established the CABR Knowledge Exchange Table, which provides sites with an opportunity to have open dialogue and share information about best practices and innovative strategies to confront anti-Black racism. At a recent meeting, SSHA shared resources related to Intentional Reflections, and SSHA Guidelines for Confronting Anti-Black Racism Initiated by Clients.

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

- SSHA will continue to review the standards with a focus on equity and inclusion to ensure that shelters are welcoming spaces for all clients.
- A review of standards supporting 2SLGBTQ+ clients, focused on trans and non-binary clients, has begun, and will be completed in 2024. This review will help ensure that these clients feel safe and supported when accessing shelter services.