

TORONTO SHELTER BULLETIN

Bulletin No.: 2024-01

Date Issued: January 16, 2024

Bulletin Type: **General Update**

Subject: **Extreme Cold Weather Alerts & Extreme Weather Standards**

Bulletin: Please post this bulletin in a conspicuous area accessible to all relevant shelter staff.

Service providers are required to follow Extreme Weather standards when temperatures reach -15 degrees Celsius.

Extreme Cold Weather Alerts are issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). Toronto Public Health no longer issues this information. For the most up-to-date information from Environment and Climate Change Canada, providers are encouraged to download the [WeatherCan](#) mobile app, or visit the ECCC website for information on the [local forecast](#) and [weather](#).

A list of Extreme Weather standards are outlined in Section 8.7 of the [Toronto Shelter Standards](#), and Section 6.5 of the [24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#).

During **Extreme Cold temperatures, it is imperative that shelter, respite and 24-hour Drop-in providers do not turn away individuals who are looking for shelter or a place to come inside from the cold.** Programs should temporarily suspend all service restrictions except in circumstances where the individual poses an immediate threat or danger to others.

It is essential that information in SMIS regarding vacant beds is as up-to-date and accurate as possible. The information in SMIS is critical in connecting people looking for referrals to a safe, warm space.

To assist in ensuring an effective system flow, this Bulletin highlights key sections of the Toronto Shelter Standards and system guidelines for staff to employ:

- Ensure that the service queues are clear of "stale" intakes by using the "closeout" drop down option if clients are no longer being served in your programs

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- Complete intakes in SMIS in real time for every client; this allows for better management of the system and the ability to ensure requests for shelter beds are prioritized appropriately
- Do not hold beds for clients referred to your shelter longer than 2 hours. Providers may grant extensions beyond the maximum queue/hold time under extenuating circumstances (e.g., lengthy travel time to site), as per Toronto Shelter Standards
- Make vacant beds available for use as soon as practical in order to facilitate new admissions
- Make sure clients are aware of curfew times and that they may be discharged if they miss curfew with no communication or explanation (beds must not be held after curfew unless a client's service plan requires it)
- Emergency shelter beds that are vacant as a result of an approved Leave with Permission should be treated as an available bed and assigned to clients seeking shelter
- Notify SSHA Duty Office immediately of any and all planned service disruptions

In order to assist with managing capacity demands, please also ensure the following:

- Report serious occurrences immediately to TSSS Duty Office and document in SMIS within 12 hours
- Document incidents in SMIS using the SMIS incident reporting module as soon as possible but no later than 12 hours after the incident

Resources: [Funding Submissions, Directives & Bulletins – City of Toronto](#)

Contact Information: For more information about this Bulletin, please contact your ARO.