

December 2025

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ Clients Directive 2025-02

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.
- 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 most recently 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 or directly operated by the City of Toronto, including any winter respite sites and all 24-hour women's 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.
- The TRS were first approved by the General Manager of Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) and officially released on November 15, 2018. An administrative review of the TRS was completed throughout 2024, and the updated version was released in 2025.

3. What updates are being made to the TSS and TRS, and what are these changes guided by?

- The TSS and the TRS have been updated to better support Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer individuals, as well as other people in City-funded shelters who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse populations not captured by these terms. Particular focus was placed on people who are gender diverse, transgender and Two-Spirit.
- Improvements to the standards were made to ensure improved equity for 2SLGBTQ+ clients and to help address systemic barriers related to discrimination by providing guidance through new and revised standards.
- Section 10.3.3 *2SLGBTQ+ Clients* was extensively revised to include specialized program requirements and supports tailored to 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.
- This work reflects TSSS's goal of advancing equity and inclusion and aligns with the Division's Homelessness Solutions Service Plan – Action 2.2.

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

- 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are overrepresented amongst individuals experiencing homelessness, particularly youth, young adults and refugee claimants. Further, it is likely that 2SLGBTQ+ individuals experiencing homelessness may not be proportionately represented in shelters due to hidden homelessness, stigma, discrimination, and safety concerns.
- Based on the 2024 Street Needs Assessment:
 - The share of respondents who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ has nearly doubled since the last survey, with more than a fifth identifying as 2SLGBTQ+; 20% of respondents self-identified as 2SLGBTQ+, and 30% of youth respondents in City-administered sites identified as 2SLGBTQ+.
 - Almost one-third (31%) of refugee claimants identified as 2SLGBTQ+, compared to 14% of respondents who did not arrive in Canada as refugee claimants. A primary reason for refugee claimants arriving in Canada within the past year was fear for safety.
- With a growing number of individuals experiencing homelessness identifying as 2SLGBTQ+, paired with the discrimination that 2SLGBTQ+ communities continue to experience, it is vital that shelters and respites provide this client group with dedicated resources and supports that recognize and help address their unique needs and experiences.
- Updates to the TSS and TRS are intended to better support and improve the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals accessing Toronto's shelter system, as well as improve the understanding of 2SLGBTQ+ communities among all clients.

5. How were the updated standards to better support 2SLGBTQ+ clients developed?

- To better understand what changes were needed to the Toronto Shelter Standards to better serve 2SLGBTQ+ clients, TSSS organized:
 - Client consultations
 - 7 focus groups were held at shelter sites across all sectors. These sessions were facilitated by a consultant who identifies as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
 - 6 one-on-one interviews were held over a 2-day drop-in session at The 519, facilitated by the Quality Assurance Team
 - 1 focus group dedicated to 2-Spirit clients was held at the University of Toronto's Teaching Lodge (St. George campus) and organized in partnership with the 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations
 - Staff consultations
 - 5 virtual staff engagement sessions were held in which over 70 staff at all levels shared their experiences working with 2SLGBTQ+ clients and how to better support this client group.
- Once the draft standards were developed, TSSS gathered internal feedback, and a revised set of standards was reviewed by sector staff and partners.

- An online survey to gather sector-wide feedback from both clients and staff was shared throughout July 2025. The survey gathered responses to the draft standards and asked respondents what supports would help implement the changes.

6. How long do service providers have to implement the updated standards?

- Directive 2025-02 “Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ clients” is effective immediately.
- Providers are expected to begin adopting the updated standards into programs and services right away. Compliance assessments of these standards will be conducted by the Quality Assurance team in 2026.

7. What supports will be available to service providers to support implementation?

- Information sessions for management and supervisory shelter staff about the updates were held in early December 2025.
- Numerous resources on gender identity and sexual orientation to support 2SLGBTQ+ clients are available. Links to resources, and 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations can be found on the [TSSS Resources](#) page, in the “Cultural Safety Resources” accordion.
- Through its work on the [Access Plan for Two-Spirit, Trans & Non-Binary Youth](#), Social Development, Finance and Administration has provided a number of links and community resources for 2SLGBTQ+ clients. These can be viewed and accessed on the Access Plan for 2STNB Youth webpage, under [Community Resources & Supports for 2STNB Youth](#). Please note that the links on the webpage provide information to resources that support the broader 2SLGBTQ+ community, in addition to those that are specifically for 2STNB youth.
- [The 519](#) is offering free inclusion training to support providers in meeting their mandatory training requirements for Trans Awareness and 2SLGBTQ+ Cultural Competency. Information regarding registration can be found [here](#).
- Providers can also register for the TSN 2SLGBTQ+ Community of Practice (CoP), Co-Chaired by The 519 and the Toronto Shelter Network and supported by 2SLGBTQ+ leaders across the sector. The forthcoming Community of Practice will provide shelter providers with practical supports, best practices and peer learning opportunities. To register for the CoP, please email inclusion@the519.org.

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

- Compliance assessments, led by the City’s Quality Assurance Team, will help ensure that Providers are meeting the updated standards.
- Additionally, Providers are to establish (an) Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee(s), have (a) 2SLGBTQ+ liaison(s) and conduct self-evaluations based on leading practices that support 2SLGBTQ+ clients.
 - Part of the role of the EDI Committee will be to review any service restrictions involving a client who identifies as 2SLGBTQ+.

9. The updated standards mention that a 2SLGBTQ+ staff liaison. What are the main functions of this role and who would be suitable to fill it?

- The 2SLGBTQ+ liaison is a function that can be assigned to any staff, or group of staff, at the site-level. Staff in the 2SLGBTQ+ liaison role do not need to self-identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community but should be aware of the lived experiences of this client group and have completed the mandatory 2SLGBTQ+ Cultural Competency and Trans Awareness trainings.
- As noted in Directive 2025-02, the 2SLGBTQ+ staff liaison will:
 - lead the implementation of 2SLGBTQ+ policies, programs and supports (Section 10.3.3)
 - support 2SLGBTQ+ clients in accessing shelter programs and services, as requested (Section 10.3.3)
- The 2SLGBTQ+ staff liaison is meant as a supportive role. It is expected that all staff help implement and support policies and programs that support 2SLGBTQ+ clients.
- The 2SLGBTQ+ staff liaison is encouraged to participate in The 519 and TSN 2SLGBTQ+ Community of Practice, however, it is not mandatory.
- Recognizing that the burden of addressing discrimination often falls on equity-deserving groups. Sites are encouraged to distribute this work evenly across all staff in their organization.

10. Will staff have to complete new training requirements to familiarize themselves with the standards to better support 2SLGBTQ+ clients?

- At this time, staff will not have to complete a separate training on the Toronto Shelter Standards to familiarize themselves with the updated standards to better support 2SLGBTQ+ clients.
- The following changes will be made to the Toronto Shelter Standards' *Training Topics and Professional Competencies Matrix*.
 - Under Equity, Diversity and Human Rights, 2SLGBTQ+ Cultural Competency and Trans Awareness is now mandatory for Board Members
 - Under Working with Clients, *Working with Victims of Gender-Based Violence* will replace *Working with Abused Women and Children*. The updated training title better reflects the scope of individuals who may experience gender-based violence.

11. What other work is TSSS doing to support the 2SLGBTQ+ community and clients?

- TSSS is committed to advancing equity and inclusion. The City's upcoming Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness, led by TSSS, will include dedicated actions focused on improving access and supports for equity-deserving client groups.
- TSSS is updating the gender identity question in SMIS to be more inclusive of diverse gender identities. As the current gender identity field options in SMIS are limited, the

update will expand the gender identity options to improve inclusivity and client well-being. This update is expected to be complete by early 2026.

- TSSS will be represented at the 2SLGBTQ+Community of Practice, led by TSN and The 519.

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

- There are no planned additional changes to the TSS at this time. However, TSSS will continue to review the standards as needed to ensure the system remains responsive to evolving policy priorities, operational requirements, and stakeholder feedback, as well as to reflect any relevant government mandates and City-issued Directives that come into effect.