

Hamilton’s Emergency Shelter Standards

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1.1 Acknowledgments

The Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards (“the Standards”) were created in collaboration with local Indigenous leaders, people experiencing homelessness, emergency shelter operators, and shelter staff. In addition, the Standards were informed by best practices learned from other municipalities across Canada.

Indigenous Peoples are respected partners and leaders in the work of ending homelessness. The City of Hamilton and shelter operators value the ongoing collaboration with local Indigenous leaders that informs continuous improvement to the homeless-serving sector beyond updating the Standards. This document is representative of the City of Hamilton’s commitment to addressing and preventing Indigenous homelessness in ways that are rooted in the spirit and actions of reconciliation.

The City of Hamilton is situated upon the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Today, the City of Hamilton is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island (North America) and we recognize that as part of our commitment to truth and reconciliation, we must do more to learn about the rich history of this land so that we can better understand our roles as residents, neighbours, partners, and caretakers. The City of Hamilton is grateful for the experience, knowledge, and feedback our community partners and people with lived experience contributed throughout the process of developing the Standards.



1.2 Background

The Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards were designed to support the work happening to end homelessness in our community by providing a transparent framework of consistent shelter services for all individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Hamilton. Building upon the 2008 Emergency Shelter Standards, the updated 2023 Standards provide more comprehensive and detailed information with 24 new sections and 39 enhanced sections. By establishing expectations for minimum operating, service-delivery, and facility standards based on local community input, research, and best practices from the Canadian Shelter Transformation Network and other jurisdictions across Canada, this document is a guide for emergency shelters to

continue their individual and collective success in helping individuals resolve their homelessness in order to live safer, healthier lives. This document serves as a tool to support quality, consistency, and transparency in the provision of emergency shelter services in Hamilton.

The Standards apply to Emergency Shelter Operators within the homeless-serving sector of Hamilton. Other services such as Violence Against Women, short-term/transitional housing, and supportive housing programs are all essential components of addressing homelessness, however, these services require distinct service delivery models and standards.

The Standards are not intended to be exhaustive as our homeless-serving sector is continuously adapting to changing circumstances, demands, and challenges. Emergency Shelter Operators will have their own policies and procedures in addition to the expectations laid out in the standards. For issues not covered within the Standards, it is expected that Emergency Shelter Operators will exercise reasonable judgment and/or consult with City of Hamilton staff where necessary.

It is recommended that the Standards be reviewed and updated every four years in order to reflect and adapt to evolving research and needs within the City of Hamilton. The City of Hamilton, Emergency Shelter Operators, and local Indigenous leaders are committed to reconvening as needed to adapt to changing circumstances between the four-year review point.

1.3 Writing the Standards

The Standards were written in collaboration with the community. The City sketched out an initial rough draft of the Standards based on Hamilton’s 2008 Standards, a jurisdictional scan of the standards from other municipalities, and best practice documents. Based on this rough draft, the City initiated two parallel consultation processes. A working group made up of emergency shelter operators and Indigenous representatives formed and met weekly to write the Standards. Also, a consultation group was formed between the City and Keeping 6 peer workers to engage people with living experience. People accessing each of the City funded emergency shelters plus three drop-ins were engaged in open-ended small group discussions about the Standards, and what was important to them. The expertise of these two groups, emergency shelter operators and people with living experience, are foundational to the Standards. A first draft was completed and brought to several community groups with expertise related to specific standards. The suggested edits were brought back to the shelter operators’ steering committee to draft a final version of the Standards.

1.4 Local Homeless-Serving Sector

The successful ongoing implementation of the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards depends on a reciprocal process between the City of Hamilton, emergency shelter operators, and Indigenous community partners. Collaboration to support a coordinated

system is essential for improving service integration and effectiveness. Service delivery and positive housing outcomes are enhanced through open and collaborative working relationships. The City of Hamilton, emergency shelter operators, and Indigenous community partners each have important roles to play in supporting each other and the clients we serve.

1.4.1 Role of the City

The City of Hamilton is responsible for coordinating the provision of emergency shelter services within Hamilton through the purchase of services with emergency shelter operators. Funding for emergency shelters is provided through municipal, provincial, and federal funding. Municipal funds are approved by Hamilton’s City Council through the annual operating budget process.

The City of Hamilton fulfils the municipal role by:

- Entering into contractual arrangements (purchase of service agreements) with community-based agencies and providers to purchase shelter assistance for people who are homeless, in accordance with the above-mentioned service agreements.
- Acting as the Service Manager for federal and provincial funding by administering and maintaining the shelter system through Funding Agreements with shelters.
- Ensuring that all shelter programs meet the Standards and the contractual obligations as set out in the Subsidy Agreements.
- Coordinating and administrating strategic planning.
- Undertaking an annual review of the funding and service levels.
- Conducting partial reviews as deemed necessary by the City, funders, and/or as requested by the emergency shelter operator.

In addition, the City of Hamilton is accountable to people experiencing homelessness, Indigenous community partners, and emergency shelter operators for:

- Inviting and reviewing the recommendations brought forward by Indigenous community partners, people with lived experience, and emergency shelter operators.
- Aiming to design a system that not only responds to Indigenous homelessness, but also respects, honours and promotes the strength and resiliency of Indigenous peoples.
- Being available for sharing information, resources, etc. that support both client services and developing organizational capacity.
- Leading the development and implementation of a coordinated access system to serve individuals experiencing homelessness more equitably with consistent best practices and service integration across providers.
- Providing support with policy development, research, program development, evaluation, and reviews as needed.

- Reviewing and updating the Standards every four years in partnership and collaboration with emergency shelter operators, Indigenous leaders, and people with lived experience.
- Supporting each emergency shelter operator as a contributing member of the overall service system for the homeless and at-risk population in Hamilton.

1.4.2 Role of Emergency Shelter Operators

As a primary delivery agent of emergency shelter services, each emergency shelter operator will be responsible for ensuring:

- Compliance with the operating agreement between the City of Hamilton and the emergency shelter organization.
- Compliance with the Standards.
- Participation in the Standards review.
- An understanding of their role as a key stakeholder in the emergency shelter service system in Hamilton and the coordinated access system.
- Shelter services respond to the unique needs of Indigenous clients.
- Shelter services understand and respect the needs of other marginalized clients.
- Ensure that all staff have education on the unique needs and experiences of Indigenous clients.

To this end, emergency shelter operators will:

- Ensure full understanding of the requirements of the Standards to implement them.
- Provide input for the regular review of the Standards and other evaluation and improvement projects coordinated by the City of Hamilton (this includes having ready all documentation necessary to support compliance and being prepared to arrange interviews/questionnaires for selected staff, volunteers, clients, and Board members).
- Be available for partial reviews as requested by the City of Hamilton.
- Ask the City of Hamilton to schedule a review if it is deemed an exercise that could be helpful in developing organizational capacity.
- Collaborate with other emergency shelter operators and Indigenous community partners to strengthen client service delivery as a shelter service system.

1.4.3 Role of Indigenous Partners and Community Leaders

Hamilton’s homeless-serving system must account for the systemic over-representation of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. Advancing Indigenous partners’ autonomy and self-determination, the City of Hamilton is committed to ongoing investments to Indigenous leadership and autonomy. We will work together to develop connections to housing and supports that are culturally appropriate, rooted in the spirit and actions of reconciliation.

As leaders in the City of Hamilton and representatives of the Indigenous community, Indigenous community partners are advancing work related to emergency shelter services through:

- Self-determination and autonomy, identifying local priorities and making investment decisions.
- Leading Indigenous-led research and policy development activities and working in collaboration with the City and shelter providers to support improvements in emergency shelter service delivery.
- Participating in and providing guidance on City-led research and policy development activities.

1.4.4 Role of People with Lived Experience

People with Lived Experience (PWLE) are invaluable to shaping programs, facilities, and policies in the emergency shelter sector. People with living experience know how the system works, they know what their needs are, and experience the system at work on the everyday level. They can bring to light perspectives that may be unknown or unknowable at the staff or senior leadership level.

Updating Hamilton’s Emergency Shelter Standards included consulting with PWLE who were currently accessing emergency shelter beds and drop-in programs for people experiencing homelessness. City of Hamilton staff held 12 engagement sessions over the course of four months and met with people accessing the men’s, women’s, youth, and family sectors as well as Indigenous service providers. People who attended the sessions were compensated for their time and expertise. City staff documented 1,650 suggestions, experiences, and feedback during the engagement process.

Throughout the writing process City staff brought forward feedback from PWLE and integrated responses from PWLE into the updated Standards. Many sections of the Standards were expanded on in ways that reflect suggestions from participants or attempts to address gaps identified by PWLE. The City is grateful to all the people who participated in the engagement sessions for sharing their knowledge, experiences, and ideas.

People with living experience will continue to be invited and supported to take part in the homeless serving sector through:

- A Living Engagement Strategy developed by the City of Hamilton which will promote best practices for engaging PWLE and build formal opportunities for people experiencing homelessness to share their feedback to improve programs and services.
- Client input activities led by emergency shelter operators, such as PWLE advisory committees, satisfaction surveys, etc.

1.5 Guiding Principles

The City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators are committed to delivering emergency shelter services that uphold the following guiding principles:

- **Accountability:** Emergency shelter operators are held accountable to the standards through multiple mechanisms, including funding contracts, data analysis, the complaints process, and governance tables. Governance tables comprised of representatives from the emergency shelter sector, the local Indigenous community entity, and the City of Hamilton meet regularly to ensure accountability to the Standards and ownership over their development, operationalization, and implementation, especially as it applies to equity policies.
- **Truth and Reconciliation:** Indigenous homelessness is defined as a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect, means, or ability to acquire such housing. Services must be committed to supporting Indigenous populations and the commitments outlined in the report on Ontario’s Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.
- **Acknowledging the Unique Autonomous Leadership of the Indigenous Community in the Work in Homelessness:** Hamilton’s homeless-serving system must account for systemic over-representation of Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness. Indigenous peoples experience homelessness, as well as other forms of social exclusion, at a higher rate than the general population. Specific policy interventions are therefore needed to account for these circumstances. Homelessness amongst Indigenous peoples is a colonial legacy. The interconnectedness of ongoing colonialism, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, and ongoing systematic social and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples shape our understanding of Indigenous homelessness in Canada. Acknowledging our Indigenous partners’ autonomy and self-determination, we will work together to develop connection to housing and supports that are culturally appropriate, rooted in the spirit and actions of reconciliation. Building upon strong relationships between the City of Hamilton and local Indigenous leadership, we aim to design a system that not only responds to Indigenous homelessness, but also respects, honours, and promotes the strength and resiliency of Indigenous peoples.
- **Coordinated Access:** Hamilton’s homeless-serving system is made up of a range of community agencies who together offer a continuum of integrated supports to assist people in preventing and ending homelessness. Ending homelessness requires a coordinated approach to reduce gaps in services and improve the process of connecting people to the most appropriate housing supports. The City of Hamilton, Indigenous leaders, and homeless-serving sector partners have developed coordinated access processes to share knowledge of clients experiencing homelessness, establish consistent best practices applied

across the sector, and ensure that limited resources are allocated effectively and equitably. Coordinated Access relies on collaborating with other service providers and stakeholders across the homeless-serving sector and with relevant health and community services to connect people to resources that will help them access and retain stable housing.

- **Equitable Access:** Access to appropriate shelter space will never be denied based on citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex/pregnancy, family status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or economic status.
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** While acknowledging strength and resiliency of unique populations, there is also an awareness of unique structural and institutional barriers that each group may experience linked to systemic discrimination and oppression. Services must not be a one-size-fits-all approach and should be able to be effectively adapted to meet the specific needs of the people they serve. An anti-racist, anti-oppression approach and analysis should be applied to the policies, procedures, and services connected to the homeless-serving sector.
- **Harm Reduction:** Hamilton’s homeless-serving sector recognizes the complex, intersecting social inequalities which put people experiencing homelessness at high risk of substance use and other activities which may endanger their safety and wellbeing. Partners across the sector work to minimize the harm and risks faced by people experiencing homelessness through a continuum of harm reduction approaches, the minimum of which are referrals to harm reduction supplies, detox, or addiction services.
- **Lived and Living Experiencing Input:** The City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators will seek to engage people with lived or living experience of homelessness in intervention development, evaluation, and decision-making.
- **Non-Judgment:** A non-judgmental approach is critical to building relationships of openness and trust with program participants that can lead to positive life change. Staff also use a non-judgmental approach to ensure service is provided objectively and consistently to everyone.
- **Respect:** Staff treat program participants with dignity and respect, putting the person at the centre of decision-making and recognizing that an individual’s autonomy and self-determination will guide their plan of care. Staff understand that individuals have a right to their choices. Shelters should make every effort to provide an environment that fosters a sense of personal control through providing choice and autonomy and building capacity wherever possible.
- **Strengths-Based and Empowerment Focused:** The homeless-serving sector recognizes that people experiencing homelessness have unique strengths and

diverse needs. People experiencing homelessness will be empowered to identify their own goals and provide input into the development of emergency shelter services and policies.

1.6 Key Terms and Definitions

- **2SLGBTQIA+:** An acronym that refers collectively to two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and questioning people. While terms and identities evolve and more inclusive acronyms may be introduced elsewhere (e.g. LGBTQQIP2SAA, LBGTQIA), 2SLGBTQIA+ will be used as an all-encompassing term in the Standards.
- **Client:** Any individual who is in receipt of any support services provided by a shelter.
- **Common Intake and Assessment:** A standardized approach to assessing a person’s current situation, the acuity of their needs, the services they currently receive/may require in the future, and their preferences for service delivery. It takes into account the background factors that contribute to risk and resilience, changes in acuity, and the role of friends, family, caregivers, community and environmental factors.
- **Discharge:** The process of concluding a client’s stay at a shelter. Discharge from shelter may be initiated by the client or staff for a variety of reasons, including finding housing or exceeding the maximum length of stay in shelter.
- **Discrimination:** An action or decision that treats an individual, family, or group negatively and/or denies social participation based on perceived or actual protected human rights grounds: citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex/pregnancy, family status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing) and record of offences (in employment).
- **Emergency Shelter:** An organization that provides shelter to an individual or family experiencing homelessness with or without a referral, with the intention of providing short-term accommodation and support services to move clients into housing.
- **Harm Reduction:** A non-judgmental, non-coercive philosophy and set of practical strategies aimed at improving safety and reducing the adverse health, social, and economic consequences associated with legal and illegal substance use.
- **HMIS:** The Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) is a system whereby data pertaining to people experiencing homelessness are recorded,

stored, retrieved, and processed to improve service coordination and decision-making.

- **HIFIS:** The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is a web-enabled database that is used to support coordinated access using real-time information of individuals and families accessing the homeless serving sector. HIFIS is the current primary Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) used by the City of Hamilton.
- **Homeless:** Academic research on homelessness demonstrates a complex interplay of structural factors, systems failures, and individual circumstances. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness as “the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.” This includes individuals or families who are unsheltered, in emergency shelter, provisionally accommodated and at risk of losing their housing. This working definition of homelessness has been endorsed by the federal government and has been adopted by municipalities across Canada.
- **Housing First:** A service approach that focuses on moving people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing without preconditions and then connecting them to supports and services as needed in order to stabilize their housing.
- **Housing-Focused Shelter:** A housing-focused shelter is unrelenting in its pursuit to make homelessness as brief as possible while returning people to permanent accommodation. From the moment an individual or family pursues shelter, there are efforts to ensure a safe and appropriate exit from shelter. Housing-focused shelter does not operate other programming that can interfere with ensuring stays are short-term with a return to housing rapidly¹.
- **Indigenous:** Persons who identify as having First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis ancestry.
- **Indigenous Homelessness:** Indigenous Homelessness is a colonial legacy. Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous

¹ OrgCode Consulting Inc. in partnership with the Canadian Shelter Transformation Network and Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. (March 2019). *Housing Focused Shelter*.

worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally, or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships.²

- **Medication:** Any prescribed or over the counter medications the client identifies as part of their health care needs.
- **Sector:** Emergency shelters are sub-categorized by the client groups they serve; each of these sub-categories is called a sector. Presently, there are four sectors: single adult men, single adult women, youth, and families. Trans, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals may self-select the shelter environment that feels best able to maintain their safety and well-being.
- **Serious Incidents:** Any occurrence or event that takes place on shelter premises which results in significant negative impact(s) on the health, safety, or well-being of clients and/or staff, such as fire, death, or critical injury.
- **Service Restriction:** Restricting a client’s access to one or more shelter services for a length of time due to circumstances, incident(s) or behaviours that jeopardize the safety and well-being of others.
- **Shelter Diversion:** The process of working with clients to explore safe and appropriate accommodations which could be accessed prior to admittance into emergency shelter or the shelter overflow hotel system. Diversion is not saying “no” to sheltering people that have exhausted all their alternate housing options. Rather, diversion works to prevent people from accessing emergency shelter services where other housing options can be explored and, if necessary, supported with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.
- **Emergency Shelter Operators:** An organization that receives funds from the City to provide emergency shelter services in Hamilton.
- **Support Services:** Any program or service offered on shelter property by a shelter provider or external service provider to help clients meet their goals or needs including, but not limited to a shelter’s meal programs, housing services, employment programs, health services, etc.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** An approach to providing services which acknowledges the impact that trauma and abuse have on the development and behaviour of survivors.

² Jesse Thistle. (2017). *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Retrieved on April 20, 2023 from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness>

- **Youth:** For determining eligibility for emergency shelter service, a youth is a person who is between 16 and 21 years of age, inclusive.

2. Client Rights and Responsibilities

- 2.1. Rights and Responsibilities
- 2.2. Client Input
- 2.3. Complaints Process

Intent: This section of the Standards outlines the minimum rights and responsibilities clients can expect while accessing emergency shelters. In addition, this section intends to emphasize how the valuable knowledge of people with lived experience helps shape shelter services, conditions, and decisions related to their experiences.

2.1 Rights and Responsibilities	
Standard Statement	<p>Clients accessing emergency shelter will have access to information on their rights and responsibilities while in shelter. Each shelter will have a written policy concerning the rights and responsibilities of clients using the shelter. The policy will be posted in a common area of the shelter and be communicated to clients through various ways such as intake, admission, and meetings.</p> <p>At a minimum, everyone in shelter has the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be provided with a copy of the client rights and responsibilities at intake (or as soon as possible after admission). • Expect that the standards outlined in this document will be followed. • Be treated in a non-judgmental and respectful way. • Be free from discrimination and harassment. • Be recognized as having unique cultural needs and based on the identified connection (e.g., Indigenous ancestry) be informed of and referred to related community support(s) as requested. • Be provided with access to services in French if required. • Safe, adequate, and nutritious food. Every effort will be taken to meet dietary needs related to religious, cultural, or medical conditions. • Have forms, consent procedures, and policies explained in an accessible way. • Identify their own goals and receive support from staff to achieve them within shelter mandates. • Be given information about services and resources to make informed decisions. • A fair, clear complaints and appeals process without fear of punishment. • Be involved in decisions that affect them. • Have personal information treated confidentially. • Access their personal file if requested. • Provide input and feedback into shelter programs and policies. <p>Clients are responsible for the following:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and signing a copy of the client rights and responsibilities at intake (or as soon as possible after admission). • Abstain from any form of violence (including physical, verbal, emotional, sexual) and discrimination based on protected grounds. • Follow the rules of the shelter. • Treat shelter staff, volunteers, neighbours, visitors to the shelter, and other shelter residents with respect. • Respect the privacy and confidentiality of other shelter residents. • Respect the private property and belongings of other shelter residents. • Respect the private property and belongings of the shelter. • Work with shelter staff to improve their housing situation within their capacity. Notify the shelter when they will be late for curfew or no longer need to access emergency shelter. • Contribute to maintaining their own space in the shelter whenever possible.
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rights and responsibilities of clients using the shelter which will, at a minimum, include the expectations outlined in Section 2.1: Rights and Responsibilities of the Standards.

2.2 Client Input	
Standard Statement	<p>Clients have unique insight and knowledge which can contribute to continuous quality improvement within emergency shelters. Client input will be sought in all areas of program development, policy development, and program evaluation in multiple ways, including but not limited to exit interviews, discharge surveys, one-on-one interviews, client surveys, client focus groups, and resident meetings.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will promote engagement opportunities and provide accessible methods of participation to all clients, especially those who are members of communities that may have complex barriers to accessing shelter services and taking part in engagement activities. This process will include feedback on harm reduction interventions and supports.</p>

	<p>On occasion, the City of Hamilton may ask emergency shelter operators for support with seeking input from clients for research, policy development, and program review purposes. Shelters will have a policy and plan regarding client engagement activities and will report activities and outcomes to the City when requested.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop a client input and engagement policy which will, at a minimum, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The frequency and format of engagement activities. • How engagement activities will be designed to be accessible for all clients especially members of communities more likely to be marginalized. • How engagement activities will be documented. • How clients will be informed of the impact of their input and any decisions or changes which are a result of client input.

2.3 Complaints Process	
Standard Statement	<p>Clients have the right to participate in a fair and clear complaint and appeal process without fear of reprisal.</p> <p>Each shelter will have a board-approved policy regarding complaints and appeals, including how complaints can be made at the shelter level by clients or community members, how complaints will be investigated and resolved in a timely manner, and any subsequent escalation or appeal processes, including escalating a complaint to the City when all other options have been exhausted, in accordance with the City of Hamilton complaint resolution process (pending City Council approval September 2023).</p> <p>The process will be accessible to all people upon intake, posted within the shelter, and issued upon request.</p> <p>People will be referred to supports throughout this process, if requested. Shelters will allow clients to bring a support person with them throughout the complaint process if requested. If a client does not have support for making a complaint and requests one, shelters will provide information and/or referrals to community resources.</p> <p>Shelter providers will collect and evaluate all complaints and take any necessary corrective action whenever possible.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City of Hamilton complaint resolution process (pending City Council approval September 2023).• A complaints policy which will:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Be submitted as an appendix of the contract and updated when changed.○ Outline how complaints are received, reviewed, and responded to by the emergency shelter, and escalated within the organization as required.○ Include a process for referrals of support to the shelter stayer.○ Detail an internal documentation process for tracking and evaluating complaints.○ Establish how unresolved complaints will be referred to the manager of Homelessness and Housing Support if resolution is not possible at the level of the emergency shelter, in accordance with the City of Hamilton complaint resolution process.
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3. Accessing Services

- 3.1. Intake and Initial Assessment
- 3.2. Belongings
- 3.3. Daytime Access
- 3.4. Curfew and Overnight Passes
- 3.5. Length of Stay
- 3.6. Capacity Limits
- 3.7. Service Restrictions

Intent: This section of the standards aims to outline the practices required to support standardized and equitable access to emergency shelter services for all clients. In addition, this section clarifies expectations around how shelters balance operational capacity and maintain safety within the shelter environment, while ensuring that clients have clear information on how emergency shelter facilities can be accessed.

3.1 Intake and Initial Assessment	
Standard Statement	<p>Each shelter will have an intake procedure, which includes a diversion assessment, an assessment of eligibility, and an initial assessment of the person’s and dependents’ support needs. Clients will be informed of key policies and procedures at intake, including rights and responsibilities, curfew, available supports, service restriction policies, etc.</p> <p>With the appropriate Indigenous training shelter staff will ask whether a person has Indigenous ancestry and if so, will inform client of option for a referral to an Indigenous organization of the person’s choice as well as option to not be listed on HIFIS, not complete a VI-SPDAT intake and/or complete the alternative intake process for Indigenous clients. Other referrals may be appropriate at intake including supports for newcomers, health services, or supports based on a person’s gender.</p> <p>Each shelter will seek coordinated access consent with clients and complete consent forms in accordance with the data sharing protocol, consent policy, and intake policy. Information will be added to HIFIS following the guidance in the HIFIS User Manual, policies, and training materials.</p> <p>Shelters will document a person’s preliminary information including but not limited to legal names, date of birth, dependent details, gender, veteran status, Indigenous ancestry (as voluntarily provided by clients), housing history, contact information, and financial income. In addition to preliminary information, shelters will determine the appropriate length of time to complete the common triage assessment (typically at 15 days of cumulative stay in the shelter system) and assess and document any safety concerns and/or risks as appropriate.</p> <p>A comprehensive, housing-focused plan should be developed with clients within 14 days of admission to shelter. Shelter staff will work with clients to understand their needs by completing common assessment tools as agreed upon with the City. Indigenous clients are not required to participate in the completion of any mainstream assessment tool. These plans may evolve as client circumstances and goals change.</p>

Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> and applicable data entry guidance. • <u>Hamilton’s Coordinated Access System Process Guide</u>. • <u>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Triage and Assessment Policy</u>. • <i>Coordinated Access Case Management Policy</i>.
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3.2 Belongings	
Standard Statement	<p>What people carry with them into the shelter may be their only possessions and should be treated with respect and kept securely. Emergency shelter operators retain the right to limit the type of belongings allowed on-premises based on safety, staffing, and space limitations.</p> <p>Secured storage will be made available for all clients staying in the emergency shelter. Emergency shelter operators will have a policy outlining the limits to storing personal belongings, including length of time belongings will be stored after a client leaves shelter. Policies regarding storage and limitations on specific items will be posted and explained to clients upon intake.</p> <p>At intake and throughout the shelter stay, emergency shelter operators will support clients in maintaining possession of their sacred items and traditional medicines.</p> <p>When a client is discharged and they have left behind their belongings, the items will be securely stored for a minimum of 48 hours. Clients requiring storage for their belongings beyond this length of time should reach out to the shelter to discuss an extension, however emergency shelter operators may not be able to accommodate such requests.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weapons • Prescribed drugs • Illicit drugs • Drug use equipment

3.3 Daytime Access	
Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelters provide temporary accommodation while supporting people experiencing homelessness work towards finding housing. Emergency shelters may have common spaces, programs, and services available for clients during the day, however, to address a diverse range of needs, shelter staff will connect clients with other programs and services as appropriate. Access to sleeping quarters and other shelter facilities may be limited at times due to a variety of factors such as staffing levels, resourcing, maintenance, cleaning, and ability to maintain safety in the shelter.</p> <p>At shelters where daytime access is limited, provisions will be in place for people who work overnight shifts or who are ill and need a place to rest (provided they are not in need of medical care). Some emergency shelter operators may require a doctor’s note specifying the medical need and timeline for accommodating clients during the day.</p> <p>Clients will have access to hygiene facilities such as toilets, sinks, and showers at all times and in rare instances that access is not possible during daytime hours, emergency shelter operators will provide clients with information on drop-in programs and other services with hygiene facilities that clients can access during daytime hours.</p> <p>In addition, shelters will provide information on recreation and community-based activities that clients could access during the day, for example, use of libraries, recreation centres, seniors programming, connections to programming at non-profit organizations or religious centres of a client’s choosing.</p> <p>During Cold Weather or Heat Alerts, it is necessary that all shelters attempt to relax service restrictions and extend daytime access hours wherever possible to minimize risk factors to people experiencing homelessness. When unable to admit a client during a Cold Weather or Heat Alert emergency shelter operators will provide clients with information on drop-in programs and warming and cooling centres.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing beds and common areas during daytime hours, including accommodation guidelines. This policy will be explained to clients at intake and made available to them in writing if requested.

3.4 Curfew and Overnight Passes	
Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelters may require clients to return to the shelter to access their bed by a certain time. Curfews are a tool for managing safety, reducing interruptions during the night for clients, and managing shelter occupancy. Emergency shelters are intended to support clients without any other options for safe accommodations, therefore emergency shelter operators may require clients to return to access their shelter bed on a nightly basis until they have found housing. Failure to return to shelter may result in a client being discharged from shelter. Each shelter will post their curfew policy, which includes information on extensions and overnight passes. Staff will explain the rules at check-in or at the next available opportunity.</p> <p>In shelters where a nighttime curfew exists, provisions will be in place to accommodate clients who expect to be late for reasons such as work, accessing medical services, family reunion, etc. Emergency shelter operators may grant extensions to curfews or overnight passes to accommodate clients at their discretion. Clients are required to notify shelter staff when they anticipate they will be unable to return by curfew. Due to limited shelter beds within the homeless-serving sector, emergency shelter operators may re-allocate a shelter bed if a client has not been approved for a curfew extension or overnight pass.</p> <p>Whenever possible, shelter staff will provide clients being discharged with information on alternate options when available.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curfews, which includes information on extensions and overnight passes.

3.5 Length of Stay	
Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelters are intended to provide temporary shelter, support for meeting basic needs, and housing-focused supports. People experiencing homelessness may face complex circumstances that impact their length of stay in emergency shelter. Emergency shelter operators will use a person-centered approach to determine the length of stay based on each client’s unique strengths and support needs. These decisions are to be made using factors which include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The safety needs of the client and their dependents. • The level of support needed to exit homelessness successfully. • Availability of affordable, suitable, and adequate housing. • Client’s level of engagement toward achieving housing goals. • Upcoming admission to transitional or permanent housing. • The length of time the person has been homeless. <p>A comprehensive, housing-focused plan should be developed within 14 days of admission to shelter. These plans may evolve over time as client circumstances and goals change.</p> <p>Documentation of a stay should include all consecutive days that a client is booked into a shelter from book in to book out.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How maximum lengths of stay will be determined. • <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> and applicable data entry guidance.

3.6 Capacity Limits	
Standard Statement	<p>The level of need for emergency shelter varies based on community realities and conditions outside the control of the homeless-serving sector. Unfortunately, shelters may not always be able to accommodate all requests for shelter. Emergency shelter capacity limits adhere to local building code and are designed to maintain safety for clients, staff, and guests.</p> <p>Shelters may exceed their capacity in cases of Cold Weather Alerts, Heat Warnings, or unforeseen emergencies, however, will not exceed capacity if doing so would compromise the safety of other clients, staff, etc. Shelters may need to reduce their</p>

	<p>capacity in response to health and safety circumstances (e.g. infectious outbreaks). Emergency shelter operators will notify the City when their capacity must be reduced or is at risk of being reduced.</p> <p>At times emergency shelter operators may reach capacity and be unable to provide shelter for all individuals seeking emergency shelter. In these instances, where possible, shelters will assist clients with referrals and transportation to other emergency shelters, drop-in programs, or support services.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for supporting clients when shelter is at capacity, including overflow spaces and referrals to other shelters. • <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> and applicable data entry guidance.

3.7 Service Restrictions

<p>Standard Statement</p>	<p>Service restrictions are primarily utilized in situations where other interventions and responses do not resolve behaviours or circumstances that pose significant risk to the safety and well-being of the client, other shelter stayers, staff, shelter property and/or the community. Service restrictions may also be issued due to ongoing behaviours which interfere with shelter operations, illegal activities, court order, significant damage to property, or prolonged refusal to engage with program requirements. Emergency shelter operators must balance the well-being of individual clients against risk of harm to other clients, staff, guests, volunteers, and neighbours, as well as their obligations under the <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act</i>.</p> <p>All emergency shelters will follow the City of Hamilton’s service restriction policy and appeal process. The service restriction policy provides guidance for emergency shelter operators and staff on best practices and considerations when issuing restrictions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for approving, reviewing, documenting, and appealing service restrictions. • Informing clients of the service restriction policy and appeals process at intake, or as soon as is feasible. • How and when clients will be informed of a service restriction, including information on re-accessing shelter services. • How data on service restrictions will be collected and analyzed with homeless-serving sector leadership. • Expectations during cold alerts and heat warnings to relax restrictions where possible. • Using a trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, gender and equity lens, recognizing the systemic barriers faced by women, trans, gender-diverse or non-binary people, and those experiencing intersecting oppressions including, but not limited to, race/ethnicity, substance use, mental health, disability, gender identity, and sexual orientation. This approach will include the following practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When an Indigenous person is restricted from emergency shelter, shelter staff will work in partnership with the client’s identified Indigenous service provider. If they are not yet connected to one, the shelter will provide a referral at the client’s request. ○ When a youth is restricted from emergency shelter, shelter staff will work with the client to find alternate shelter options through family or emergency shelters in other municipalities.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whenever possible shelter staff will attempt to refer clients to supports (e.g. a referral to another shelter) before discharge or at the request of the client.
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Service Restriction Policy.</i> • <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> and applicable data entry guidance.

4. Services Provided

- 4.1. Housing-Focused Supports and Case Management
- 4.2. Basic Needs
 - 4.2.1. Bedding
 - 4.2.2. Hygiene
 - 4.2.3. Laundry
 - 4.2.4. Clothing
 - 4.2.5. Nutrition
 - 4.2.6. Pets
- 4.3. Health Supports and Partnerships

Intent: This section of the standards outlines best practices for delivering basic needs services offered by emergency shelter operators as part of their housing-focused shelter model. In addition, this section emphasizes the importance of Hamilton’s coordinated approach and partnerships to meet a broader range of health and social needs.

4.1 Housing-Focused Supports and Case Management	
Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelter operators are part of a larger network of homeless-serving agencies operating in the context of a housing crisis with limited availability of affordable housing. Emergency shelter operators will maintain a housing-focused approach, following Housing First principles recognizing that stable housing is the primary need shared by all people experiencing homelessness with health and social supports offered in addition as needed to support housing access and retention.</p> <p>Housing-focused sheltering begins at intake, and all emergency shelter operators will offer housing-focused case management to their clients. Case management activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing housing expectations and planning how to pursue goals via progressive engagement with housing options. • Supporting clients to access identification, income, and applications for financial benefits and/or subsidized housing to enable their ability to obtain housing. • Sharing information on the Coordinated Access system and how participation facilitates connections to appropriate housing supports. • Assessing client needs using assessment tools and community prioritization criteria. • Addressing barriers to housing through service coordination and referrals to health and social supports. • Shelter staff will work with case managers from housing support programs to ensure that clients receive warm transfers when entering those programs. <p>Clients do not need to demonstrate any preconditions to take part in case management or housing support programs.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> and applicable data entry guidance. • <u>Hamilton’s Coordinated Access System Process Guide.</u> • <u>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Triage and Assessment Policy.</u> • <i>Hamilton’s Coordinated Access Case Management Policy.</i> • <u>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Consent and Intake Policy.</u> • <u>Hamilton’s Coordinated Access Prioritization Policy.</u>

4.2 Basic Needs

<p>Standard Statement</p>	<p>Emergency shelters are primarily focused on providing clients experiencing homelessness with temporary accommodation and assistance finding housing. People experiencing homelessness often have few resources to meet the basic necessities of life, such as: meals, hygiene products, laundry services, clothing, etc.</p> <p>4.2.1 Bedding</p> <p>Each client will be offered, at minimum, a bed with a mattress, pillow, and necessary bedding. Necessary bedding consists of a minimum of two sheets, a blanket, and pillowcase. A minimum of one shower towel will be provided to each new client upon admission and bedding/towels will be changed weekly or whenever these articles become soiled.</p> <p>4.2.2 Hygiene</p> <p>Emergency shelters will, at a minimum, have a supply of soap, shampoo, shaving products, and menstrual hygiene products for emergency use by clients. Menstrual hygiene products will be made available at all shelters.</p> <p>4.2.3 Laundry</p> <p>Shelters with laundry facilities may require that clients launder their own bedding, towels, and clothing. Emergency shelter operators may limit access to laundry facilities if required to maintain peace overnight or if operating laundry machines requires staff supervision.</p> <p>4.2.4 Clothing</p> <p>Emergency shelters will help clients obtain basic clothing and footwear for all seasons by using internal resources and/or connecting clients with other community agencies and resources.</p> <p>4.2.5 Nutrition</p> <p>Emergency shelters which serve meals to clients will follow the nutritional requirements outlined below. Some emergency shelters provide clients with meal cards or financial support to obtain their own meals and are not required to follow the nutritional standards outlined here. Adult clients will be served three meals and at least one healthy snack per day or provided with resources to access food where units have their own kitchens. Where parents are not providing food for the family unit, children under the age of 16 will be offered three meals and two to three healthy snacks per day.</p> <p>Each meal will be of a size, quality, variety, and nutritional value to meet the recommended daily intake based on Canada's Food Guide.</p>
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	<p>A poster stating that shelters cannot guarantee allergen-free food (e.g., peanuts, nuts, eggs, and shellfish) should be posted in the dining area.</p> <p>4.2.6 Pets</p> <p>Animal companions may add great value to an individual’s emotional well-being and feelings of safety, however most services for people experiencing homelessness are not designed to accommodate pets. Reluctance to give up a pet may cause people to stay in unsafe situations, including sleeping unsheltered. The City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators will continue to explore ways to design programs which can accommodate pets, however there are significant barriers to adapting existing shelters to safely provide shelter to pets.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will support clients with pets through the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information to pet owners on the community services that accept pets and offer pet-related supports (e.g., pet food, veterinary services, emergency boarding). • Offering support in finding alternative accommodations for their pets and should record what alternative arrangements have been made for the client’s pet so that clients can be supported in getting their pet back from emergency accommodations.
Policy	Not applicable

4.3 Health Supports and Partnerships	
Standard Statement	<p>Although the primary focus of emergency shelters is housing, housing-focused sheltering takes a wholistic view of the client as a person with complex and diverse needs. Collaboration within the network of health supports is important to ensure effective and coordinated services.</p> <p>To help clients meet their health needs, emergency shelter operators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer support with navigating access to physical and mental health services, including providing referrals to health care providers in order to facilitate clients’ health needs. • Host health care professionals onsite and continue to connect clients to primary care within the community. • Consider the client’s stated health care requirements and any recommendations by a clinician or health care professional when determining whether the client is eligible for service. Clients may have a support person to assist, whether a family member or home and community care. • Work in collaboration with community health care providers to support optimal function and well-being of shelter residents. Emergency shelter operators will assess their ability and resources to meet the needs of residents with complex physical and/or mental health needs. • Ensure that all clients are aware of these potential health supports by informing people at intake and posting information throughout the shelter. Partnerships with health and cultural supports will be informed by the needs of people with living experience.
Policy	Not applicable

5. Addressing Indigenous Homelessness

5.1. Indigenous Persons

Intent: This section acknowledges the City of Hamilton’s distinct commitment to Indigenous Peoples in recognition of their inherent Rights as well as the historic and ongoing social, economic, and political programs in Canada that have led to the disproportionality of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness in Hamilton. While acknowledging the successes of local Indigenous leadership in addressing and preventing Indigenous homelessness in Hamilton, the homeless-serving sector remains cognizant of historic underinvestment in Indigenous communities as well as systemic discrimination, which requires intentional and sustainable investments specific to redressing the causes and experiences of Indigenous homelessness. In addition to the recommendations identified in this section and throughout the Standards, the City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators shall:

- Work in partnership with the Indigenous Community Entity and local Indigenous agencies to address and prevent Indigenous homelessness in ways that advance and grow the autonomy and capacity of urban Indigenous leadership.
- Recognize Indigenous homelessness as distinct throughout development, implementation and review of emergency shelter policies, priorities, and practices.
- Foster more inclusive environments through signage and programs that reflect the causes, experiences, and needs of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness.
- Continually work to ensure Indigenous leadership and experiences are appropriately supported to continue co-developing the City of Hamilton’s homelessness response.

5.1 Indigenous Persons	
Standard Statement	<p>Colonialism continues to negatively impact Indigenous individuals, communities, and families in many ways. One consequence of colonialism is that Indigenous peoples experience homelessness, as well as other forms of social exclusion, at a higher rate than the general population. The City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators work closely with Indigenous leaders and community agencies to respond to the needs of Indigenous clients with culturally appropriate and Indigenous specific supports through the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency shelter operators will incorporate Indigenous cultural competency training into staff training resources. Having this understanding and perspective can lead to building stronger rapport with clients and a greater understanding of their unique needs when offering services.

- Creating welcoming spaces for Indigenous clients through highly visible cultural signage and art posted throughout the shelter to help communicate to Indigenous persons that they are able to share information about their Indigenous ancestry throughout their shelter stay, not just intake, and shelter staff will support with referrals to Indigenous services if requested.
- Ongoing Indigenous cultural training will be required for all shelter staff, volunteers, students, leadership, and board of directors.
- With the benefit of Indigenous training, staff may be better capable of appropriately inquiring during intake whether a person identifies as having Indigenous ancestry and will inform clients of opportunity to be referred to an Indigenous organization of their choice.
- At intake and throughout the shelter stay, emergency shelter operators will support clients in maintaining possession of, and using, their sacred items and traditional medicines.
- Shelter staff will inform Indigenous clients that they are not required to use mainstream triage and assessment tools in order to receive homeless/housing services or be prioritized for housing supports through the Coordinated Access system. An alternative process to the "Common Assessment Tool" developed by the Indigenous Community Entity will be offered as an option to Indigenous clients. Indigenous clients' names are not required to appear on the By-Name List (BNL) or By-Name-Prioritization-List (BNPL) to be prioritized for service.
- Indigenous clients will be made aware of resources and services offered specifically to Indigenous individuals at intake and throughout a person's stay, both verbally and through signage posted in common areas of the shelter.
- Recognizing that there is a high number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, girls, 2-Spirit, men, and boys; shelters will have a protocol with Hamilton Police Services (developed in partnership with CHIL, HRIC, and the HPS Indigenous Liaison), which will include relevant procedures to respond to missing Indigenous persons, including their dependents. This protocol will be led by the Indigenous Community Entity, being considerate of the history of policing and the Indigenous community. Ongoing, regular training as recommend by the Indigenous Community Entity will be provided to all shelter staff.

The City and emergency shelters commit to continue working with the Indigenous Community Entity to explore how to best deliver culturally safe supports and the resources that are required to make that happen.

	<p>The City and emergency shelters commit to partnering with the Indigenous Community Entity respond to Indigenous homelessness in ways that respect the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, reflect their unique experiences and needs, and continuing to work in ways that respond to the spirit and intent of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports that will be provided to Indigenous persons and dependents accessing shelter services.

6. Supporting Diverse Communities

- 6.1. Children
- 6.2. Youth
- 6.3. Health and Accessibility
- 6.4. Substance Use, Harm Reduction and Safer Use
- 6.5. 2SLGBTQIA+
- 6.6. Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Status
- 6.7. Gender
- 6.8. Religion
- 6.9. Owners of Service Animals

Intent: This section emphasizes the importance of understanding the unique needs of our diverse community when developing and delivering emergency shelter policies, programs, and services. Hamilton’s homeless serving sector recognizes that people experiencing homelessness are impacted by intersecting aspects of their identities, especially race, gender, age, religion, orientation, substance use, and disability. While acknowledging the strength and resiliency of unique populations, the homeless-serving sector is aware of the differing structural and institutional barriers that are linked to systemic racism, discrimination, and oppression. Understanding and being prepared to meet the unique needs of people experiencing homelessness is essential for helping them find and maintain housing.

In addition to the recommendations outlined in this section and throughout the Standards, the City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators will:

- Strive to apply an equity lens to all activities to identify and remove barriers and to support best practices in planning, budgeting, delivery and evaluation of programs and services.
- Work in partnership with the Indigenous Community Entity, local Indigenous agency representatives, and other systems to determine emerging best practices for combating discrimination and developing approaches that support the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- Foster more inclusive environments through signage and programs that welcome the unique populations accessing shelters.
- Recognize that power and privilege are inherent to relationships between shelter staff, management, and clients and use the Standards to ensure clients receive respectful and equitable service.
- Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and discrimination for staff and clients.

6.1 Children	
Standard Statement	Children have their own set of requirements and standards set out by various levels of government to ensure that children are well cared for and that services are designed for their unique needs. Children who experience homelessness are at greater risk of a number of long-term consequences, including chronic homelessness, violence, exploitation, mental health, substance use, dropping out of school and criminality. ³

³ Homeless Hub. *About Homelessness: Topics: Child, Youth, and Family Programs*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Retrieved on April 20, 2023 from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/service-provision/child-youth-and-family-programs>

	<p>Where families are being served parents are responsible for meeting the wellbeing, supervision, and basic needs of the children. Parents may reach out to staff for support, guidance, and referrals.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will support children through the following activities and practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are trained in their obligations under the <i>Child and Family Services Act</i> to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. • Staff will actively work with parents/guardians to promote positive parenting techniques and share information on a variety of age appropriate play experiences for children and dependent youth within the shelter or off-site. • Staff will provide information on, and referrals to, available community resources. • Any program plans and/or outlines of planned activities are shared with parents/guardians and conducted with written parental/guardian consent when safe, or appropriate. • Staff will work with parents/guardians and/or school boards to encourage children’s regular attendance at school when safe, or appropriate. • Shelter staff are not obligated to provide child minding. In the case where child minding is provided, there will be a policy in place for situations where a parent does not return, which will be explained to parents at intake. • Sleeping arrangements and children’s equipment is monitored for age appropriateness and is well-maintained. Cribs, appropriate bedding, car seats, strollers, highchairs, toys, and playpens should reference specifications approved by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
Policy	<p>Emergency shelters operators that offer child minding will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How child-minding support will be offered, including instances where parents do not return at the agreed upon time.

6.2 Youth	
Standard Statement	Youth presenting to shelter independently have their own unique needs and are at greater risk of a number of long-term consequences, including chronic homelessness, violence, exploitation, mental health, substance use, dropping out of school

	<p>and criminality.⁴ In particular, youth aged 16 to 17 may experience homelessness differently than youth over 18 due to factors such as involvement with child welfare systems, requirements related to attending school, and differences with financial assistance programs. As a result, the homeless serving sector in Hamilton has developed programs to support youth outside of the adult sector when possible.</p> <p>Youth emergency shelter operators will support youth through the following activities and practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth shelters will work to divert youth from shelter whenever possible. When safe, shelter staff will work with youth to support reconciliation and return to living with their family or guardians. • Youth shelters will not take children under the age of 16. Shelter staff will consult, report, refer and collaborate with Child Welfare agencies if children under the age of 16 come to shelter independently and it has been deemed that they need support and or are at risk of or homelessness. • Staff will be trained on their obligations under the <i>Child and Family Services Act</i> and the Duty to Report regulations. • Staff will provide or refer youth to age appropriate recreation activities. • Staff will provide information on, and referrals to, available community resources. • Staff will work with parents/guardians and/or school boards to encourage youth’s regular attendance at school when safe, and appropriate.
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Consent and Intake Policy.</u>

6.3 Health and Accessibility	
Standard Statement	Those experiencing homelessness often live in conditions that adversely affect their overall mental and physical health. Disability and mental illness are connected to an increased risk of homelessness. Being unhoused makes it difficult to access general

⁴ Homeless Hub. *Child, Youth And Family Programs*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Retrieved on April 20, 2023 from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/service-provision/child-youth-and-family-programs>

health care and mental health services, or follow-up care after receiving treatment or hospitalization, and care is often only accessed through hospital emergency departments. Mortality and morbidity are higher amongst people experiencing homelessness than housed people, as are substance use and mental health issues. Emergency shelter operators and the City of Hamilton work towards creating barrier free environments for people with all types of disability, however many shelters are limited by physical facilities which do not have the capacity for all accessibility features (e.g., elevators).

Emergency shelter operators will support client health and disability needs through the following activities and practices:

- Prior to intake, shelter staff will assess the health needs of clients and determine if the shelter has the capacity to accommodate the clients' ailments or illnesses, if present.
- The shelter operator will ensure staff are able to assist clients in obtaining access to a physician or health care centre and appropriate referrals to essential health care services, when required, including mental health and addictions support services; and obtaining home-care services, or emergency nursing care.
- Shelter operators will be conscious of discrimination and racism that clients may have experienced in accessing healthcare services and will work with clients to ensure that they are able to get access to services in a safe and culturally appropriate way.
- The shelter will allow such home care services or nursing care to be provided as the shelter can reasonably accommodate (refer to the *Health Insurance Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.6*, as amended, and its regulations, for a definition of home care services).
- Where possible, programs and clinics should be offered on-site; and when not possible, clear referral pathways and connections with the healthcare system should be established.
- Shelter staff will respect a client's right to choose to access health services, however if refusing health services results in harm or significant risk of harm to other clients or staff, shelters may be unable to support a client with accessing emergency shelter. In these instances, emergency shelter operators will work with the client to find alternative accommodations whenever possible.
- A person with a disability will be supported to receive shelter services unless there are accommodation restrictions such as the need for a level of personal attendant care that cannot be

	<p>accommodated by shelter staff, etc. Where access to a shelter is limited due to a disability, shelter staff will attempt to find alternative housing, shelter arrangements, or will work with health care providers when admission to hospital is required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency shelter operators will provide access to safer sex supplies on-site or referrals to community services if unable to provide safer sex supplies.• Emergency shelter operators will provide a minimum of one washroom that is barrier-free, fully accessible and marked as gender neutral. <p>Considerations for service accessibility include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing people who have serious health conditions with the option to remain in the shelter during day.• Materials are made available in large print, in accordance with AODA regulations.• Striving to remove communication barriers through technology and interpreters when possible.• Training for staff on disability accommodations. <p>Shelters will have policies regarding the handling of client medication. Policies should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the protection of all clients, medication held by staff will be kept in a secure location such as a locked cabinet in an office.• Clients are fully responsible for taking their own medication; however, some shelters may provide assistance with medication storage and monitoring.• Shelters that choose to provide some assistance with medication will encourage clients to properly self-administer.• Where possible and with client consent, staff may consult with a nurse, psychiatrist, physician, or pharmacist to coordinate access to medication or in any situation where they are concerned about the safety of a client taking medication.• Shelters that document medication will maintain a consistent method of documentation.• All sharps will be placed in a regulation sharps container which should be kept in a secure location and out of reach of children.• All expired or unclaimed medications will be returned to a pharmacy for proper disposal.
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Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling of client medication.
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6.4 Substance Use, Harm Reduction and Safer Use	
Standard Statement	<p>The homeless-serving sector actively works with clients, community partners, and the health care sector to operate emergency shelter services in ways that minimize the harmful effects of substance use rather than ignoring or condemning these activities.</p> <p>A harm reduction philosophy is essential for effectively supporting individuals engaging in substance use; however, to meet the needs of diverse clients in complex journeys with substance use Hamilton’s homeless-serving sector offers a broad range of services across the harm reduction continuum, which includes withdrawal management, treatment options, provision of harm reduction supplies, referrals to safe consumption service, and addiction services.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators reduce the risks associated with substance use through the following best practices and recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency shelter operators will have a harm reduction policy and harm reduction procedures in place that will make explicit that the shelter operates using a harm reduction approach. The policy and procedures will include, but not be limited to, responding to overdose; wellness checks; how harm reduction supplies are distributed, collected, and disposed of. • Harm reduction services and resources should be delivered in combination with other services to reduce stigma and increase accessibility of harm reduction programs. • Emergency shelter operators will have a policy and procedure in place that outlines under which circumstances it is and is not appropriate to contact Child Welfare Services when clients have dependent children. The policy will indicate that substance use alone is not sufficient cause for contacting Child Welfare Services. • During client admission/intake, and periodically throughout a shelter stay, shelter staff will explain what harm reduction

	<p>services are available at the location and will make explicit that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The site is a harm reduction positive location○ Harm reduction supplies are readily available, onsite or through mobile community services○ Naloxone is readily available○ Staff are available to help with safety planning and arranging post-drug use safety checks within the scope of their roles. <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ensuring naloxone kits are available at all sites for staff to administer and for client use. All staff will be trained in overdose prevention, recognition, and response, including the administration of naloxone. All clients will be offered an active referral for naloxone kit and training on-site or to a community-based organization.● Posting signage in communal, semi-private and private washrooms and washroom stalls and other visible areas (e.g. hallways, entrances, stairwells, etc.) noting the overdose prevention initiatives available onsite, availability of naloxone and other available harm reduction supplies, and encouraging substance users to let someone know they are using.● Providing safer drug use equipment, and related information on appropriate use (if qualified to do so) or a referral to a community service if the shelter does not provide the requested equipment.● Shelters will monitor the number of suspected overdoses to inform the development of harm reduction strategies and programs. Emergency shelter operators will work with the City and Public Health to share records when appropriate and in accordance with MFIPPA legislation.● Referring clients, when appropriate, to programs that offers addiction supports, detox, harm reduction supplies, training, and related support services.● Ensuring that shelter staff have training and access to updated resources on programs and services that support harm reduction for clients and provide referrals as needed (e.g. opioid agonist treatment, supervised consumption sites).● Installing sharps containers are secured against tampering and available throughout a site. Shelter staff will inform clients of the presence of fixed sharps containers and availability of personal sharps containers and how to use them.● Maintaining a regular schedule of monitoring sharps containers and ensuring a contract is in place with a biohazardous waste disposal company to replace them when they are full.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting clients to maintain possession of safer drug use supplies and/or safer sex products. • Emergency shelter operators will comply with their legal obligations, while maintaining the clients’ right to privacy and property. • Supporting clients who wish to engage in harm reduction programs by offering public transit fare to attend such programs or related appointments. • Not discharging or impose service restrictions on the basis of substance use alone. • Supporting client-led or community-based harm reduction initiatives (e.g. peer-led programs, safety plans, etc.).
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm Reduction Policy. • <i>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Service Restriction Policy.</i>

6.5 2SLGBTQIA+	
Standard Statement	<p>Despite significant advances towards 2SLGBTQIA+ equality, homophobia and transphobia are still deeply ingrained in our everyday behaviours, language, and in the policies of many institutions. Due to underreporting of incidents, discrimination against queer and trans individuals remains largely invisible to shelter workers and management, policy makers, and City management, at a time when 2SLGBTQIA+ youth homelessness, in particular, is on the rise.⁵</p> <p>The risks encountered on the streets and in the shelter system by 2SLGBTQIA+ homeless individuals versus heterosexual and cisgender homeless individuals differ largely due to frequent incidents of homophobic and transphobic violence. Not only are the risks and barriers encountered different, but the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals differ from those of their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will support 2SLGBTQIA+ clients through the following practices:</p>

⁵ Homeless Hub. *Solutions: Priority Populations: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transexual, Queer, Questioning and 2-Spiritd (LGBTQ2S)*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Retrieved on April 20, 2023 from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/priority-populations/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-transsexual-queer-questioning-and-2>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will provide an atmosphere of dignity and respect for all clients and provide services in a non-judgmental manner. • Establishing clear policies that reflect inclusiveness of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals to ensure safer spaces for non-binary and gender diverse people in emergency shelters. • Respecting and accepting the self-defined sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression of an individual, including their pronouns. • Ensuring that transgender individuals are able to access services in the shelter sector that reflects their gender identity. • A confidentiality strategy that works with clients to ensure that staff do not “out” their gender or orientation. Staff will be aware of what information about a client’s gender/orientation/transition experience is not to be disclosed. • Providing clients with options for private access to hygiene facilities to reduce the risk of violence and harassment which 2SLGBTQIA+ persons are at higher risk of experiencing. • Treating hormones that belong to trans clients as any other medication. Clients will be given privacy to self-administer hormones. • Emergency shelter operators are encouraged to seek partnerships with 2SLGBTQIA+-positive health/services providers. Emergency shelter operators will make information on 2SLGBTQIA+-positive health/ services providers available to all clients and facilitate referrals as needed.⁶ • Providing and education on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues for staff, volunteers, management, and other residents. • Hiring employees to reflect gender and orientation diversity.
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusiveness policy.

6.6 Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Status	
Standard Statement	<p>Black, racialized, newcomer, immigrant, and refugee individuals and families experiencing homelessness often face additional barriers, experiences of discrimination, and challenges when attempting to access services, including emergency shelter. Although the City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators strive to provide equitable</p>

⁶ Shelter, Support & Housing Administration. (2023). *Toronto Shelter Standards, Version 5*, City of Toronto.

service to everyone experiencing homelessness, systemic racism influences all institutions and levels of government. From microaggressions to overt forms of racism to stereotyping, racism impacts all areas of racialized people’s lives culminating in a higher risk of homelessness.

Emergency shelters will support racialized and newcomer clients through the following practices:

- Where possible and requested, translators will be used to assist with communication.
- Emergency shelter operators will not request or collect immigration status information in order to determine service eligibility as part of a shelter’s intake or admission process, unless approved by the City of Hamilton.
- Providing information on legal and community resources for newcomer clients as needed.
- Responding to and addressing complaints of racism or discrimination reported by clients, staff, volunteers, and management.
- Communicating to all clients that racism, discrimination, and hate speech are against the law and shelter policy.
- Providing ongoing training and education for all staff, volunteers, management, and other residents on anti-racist, including anti-Black racism, and anti-oppression practices and considerations.
- Hiring employees to reflect racial diversity.

Emergency shelter operators and the City of Hamilton should develop policies and practices that take into consideration the following recommendations for combating racism in the shelter system:

- Anti-oppression and anti-racism training for all staff, leadership, and board of directors.
- Work with Black and racialized community leaders and clients to gather input through engagement activities.
- Apply an equity, diversity, and inclusion analysis to current Human Resources policies and practices (hiring, retention, promotion, performance evaluation, and workplace culture initiatives) to support the implementation of processes to address unconscious bias and systemic anti-Black racism, as well as intentional hiring and advancement opportunities for racialized clients and staff.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support clients with accessing health and mental health supports and services that are culturally responsive when requested and available. • Facilitate and build partnerships with community organizations, racialized and Black community leaders, advocating for the rights of racialized community members and learn from best practices.
Policy	Not applicable

6.7 Gender	
Standard Statement	<p>Gender-based discrimination and violence continues to impact cis and trans women as well as gender diverse individuals, especially during experiences of homelessness. The unique needs of those marginalized due to gender include increased risk of violence, caregiver responsibilities, and pregnancy.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators support women and gender diverse clients through the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting gender identity as defined by the individual rather than by the perception of shelter staff and/or other clients. Sometimes this may not correspond with a person’s physical appearance. Emergency shelter operators will ask all clients for their gender and pronouns at intake rather than assume and will include a line on intake forms indicating that the shelters welcome trans and gender diverse clients. • Supporting the choices of transgender clients to access designated sleeping areas that will best preserve their safety and dignity. In instances where a transgender client expresses concerns about their safety or dignity, emergency shelter operators will accommodate requests for a bed in a gender neutral/private room, if possible. • Providing information on and referrals to reproductive health services. • If a client discloses that they are fleeing gender-based violence or intimate partner violence shelters will provide information on Violence Against Women services and shelters, as well as engage in safety planning if requested. • If possible and available, emergency shelter operators will create safer zones such as semi-private rooms.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing harassment of transgender and gender diverse clients by focusing on the inappropriate behaviour and enforcing rights and responsibilities. • Enforcing policies around confidentiality that do not require transgender individuals to disclose their status. If they do disclose, emergency shelter operators will maintain confidentiality and ask the individual how they would like the topic to be addressed if it is raised. • Having a notification process for when men will be entering private shelter spaces of women, trans, and gender diverse persons. • All shelters will provide menstrual products for clients who menstruate. • A minimum of one washroom that is barrier-free, fully accessible and marked as gender neutral will be provided. Emergency shelter operators will provide options for private bathroom access whenever possible. • Emergency shelter operators will provide staff training on safety planning and resources to connect with a VAW shelter for support for gender based or domestic violence considerations.
Policy	Not applicable

6.8 Religion	
Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelters serve clients from a wide array of backgrounds, experiences, and religious affiliations. It is important to acknowledge that people experiencing homelessness may have experienced persecution based on their religious affiliations or may have had traumatic experiences stemming from exposure to or involvement with a particular religion or religious organization. To provide a respectful environment for people practicing many different religions emergency shelter operators will ensure that their spaces, staff, and clients are welcoming and provide a respectful environment for people affiliated with all religions.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators support religious diversity through the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that respect for religious differences is maintained through anti-discrimination policies, made clear in written shelter policies and practices, but also posted in visible locations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocating space for religious practice, such as a quiet space or prayer room with a closed door, is important to allow clients to maintain religious observation. • If requested, provide information on local religious communities or congregations that clients can access for support and community building is important for building up local support systems and community connections. • Allowing for flexibility at mealtimes for emergency shelters that provide food to accommodate religious fasting (e.g. during Ramadan). • Not requiring clients to participate in or attend any religious services or activities offered by the shelter.
Policy	Not applicable

6.9 Owners of Service Animals	
Standard Statement	<p>According to the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</i> (AODA), clients are permitted to bring service animals into areas that are open to the public unless the animal is excluded by another law. In cases where another law prohibits service animals from entering the premises, emergency shelter operators will provide another way for clients to access services or facilities. Emergency shelter operators will accommodate service animals, however, may refer clients to alternative services if a service animal’s behaviour is compromising the safety of staff or clients.</p> <p>Clients must provide documentation from a regulated health professional for their service animal or an identification card from the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General for people who are blind and use guide dogs.</p> <p>Clients are responsible for managing the behaviour of their service animal, arranging veterinary care, and meeting the basic needs of their service animal.</p> <p>If a client requires a service animal, emergency shelter operators should support clients in connecting with appropriate health supports when a service animal designation is needed and advocate for accommodation in housing options for clients with service animals.</p>
Policy	Not applicable

7. Shelter Operations

- 7.1. Training Requirements
- 7.2. Neighbourhood Relationships
- 7.3. Facility Ratios

Intent: This section details requirements related to the daily operations of emergency shelters, including staff training, facility ratios, and neighbourhood relations.

7.1 Training Requirements	
Standard Statement	Emergency shelter operators will have a written policy that outlines the orientation procedure and mandatory training for all its new employees, peer workers, volunteers, and Board of Directors members.

The training requirements outlined below may change to meet new and emerging needs in the homeless-serving sector. Emergency shelter operators will work with the City to identify and implement new training as required.

The minimum mandatory training for shelter staff includes:

- Ongoing Indigenous cultural competency and accountability
- Shelter Diversion practices
- Housing-Focused Case Management Supports
- Discharge planning
- Serious Incident Guidelines and Reporting
- Service Restriction Guidelines and Reporting
- Single Facilities Incident Plan (Emergency Contingency Plan)
- VI - SPDAT (City to provide training)
- HIFIS and/or applicable HMIS and data entry guidance (City to provide training)
- Anti-racism, anti-oppression (AROP)
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) measures
- Standard First Aid/CPR (at least one person per shift is certified in Standard First Aid/ CPR) and health and safety training (in accordance with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act)
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) (for those exposed to hazardous materials in accordance with Regulation 101 under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act)
- Safe Food Handling Certificate (for any staff serving food for over 10 people in accordance with Ontario Food Premised Regulations 562/90)

Shelters will also ensure that their volunteers, employees, Board of Directors, or agents, who deal with members of the public, receive training in the following areas:

- Suicide intervention; crisis intervention; de-escalation
- Provision of services to persons with disabilities, in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)*
- Harm reduction education including overdose risk assessment, referral to receive naloxone kits and training for staff and clients
- Regular ongoing equity training
- Training and education for staff and clients on experiences and issues related to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for safety planning, or connect with a VAW shelter for support for gender-based or domestic violence • Training on the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation procedures and mandatory shelter staff training.

7.2 Neighbourhood Relationships	
Standard Statement	<p>The City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators recognize that emergency shelters operate within and for the Hamilton community, which requires respectful and responsive relationships with properties, businesses, and residents that neighbour shelter facilities.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will develop a good neighbour commitment that outlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How emergency shelter operators will mitigate and minimize the impacts of shelter activities on neighbouring properties, businesses, and residents. • How to contact the shelter to report incidents or concerns and when to contact police/bylaw for issues outside of shelter scope. • Provide community members with information on the complaints policy.
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints policy.

7.3 Facility Ratios	
Standard Statement	<p>Clients accessing emergency shelters are entitled to adequate and appropriate sleeping facilities, washrooms, and bathing facilities. Emergency shelter operators are accountable to the City of Hamilton – Property Standards, zoning requirements, and provincial fire code.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will ensure clients have reasonable accommodations to meet their basic needs by:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that ratios for amenities follow the Ontario Building Code, emergency safety planning guidelines, and Zoning by-laws as applicable. • Providing a minimum amount of space per person in the sleeping area, in accordance with Ontario Building Code, to decrease the potential spread of illness, to enhance personal security and to decrease altercations resulting from a lack of personal space. • Beds, cribs, and bassinets will be arranged in a manner that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitates clear walking paths and sightlines for emergency evacuations. ○ Does not block air vents, windows, doors, plumbing, or access panels. ○ Does not expose a client to existing or potential danger. <p>To assist clients in meeting their hygiene and sanitary needs, each shelter will provide a minimum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One toilet for every 15 clients up to the first 100 clients and one toilet for every 30 clients thereafter (urinals may replace up to half the number of required toilets). • One washbasin for every 15 clients (with liquid soap and paper towels). • One shower for every 20 clients.
Policy	Not applicable

8. Health and Safety

- 8.1. Infectious Disease Prevention and Management
- 8.2. Cold Alerts and Heat Warnings
- 8.3. Safety Planning
- 8.4. Serious Incidents

Intent: This section details key areas of health and safety concerns which impact the operations of emergency shelters. Information in this section clarifies how emergency shelter operators prepare and respond to serious health and safety concerns in the shelter environment.

8.1 Infectious Disease Prevention and Management	
Standard Statement	Emergency shelter operators will follow all directions and standards for infectious disease prevention and management set out by Health Canada and Infection Prevention and Control Canada. In the event

	of an outbreak or public health risk, emergency shelter operators will follow directions from Hamilton Public Health and the Ministry of Health.
Policy	Not applicable

8.2 Cold Alerts and Heat Warnings	
Standard Statement	When the City’s Medical Officer of Health issues a Cold Alert or Heat Warning recreation centres, social service agencies, and the homeless-serving sector respond as they are able to the needs of homeless and vulnerable residents by expanding service hours, easing service limitations/caps, and ensuring locations offer a welcoming space for individuals and families to stay out of the cold. More information on cold alerts and heat warnings can be found online (Cold Alerts: http://hamilton.ca/cold , Heat Warning: http://hamilton.ca/heat).
Policy	Not applicable

8.3. Safety Planning	
Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelter operators undertake safety planning with clients for a number of reasons. Safety planning is a component of trauma-informed care and may be done at the request of the client when entering shelter and reviewed regularly throughout a shelter stay as needed. Emergency shelter operators and clients will build safety plans together which leverage available resources and reflect shelter limitations related to staffing and physical facilities. In some cases, emergency shelter operators may be able to offer interim safety measures until a more secure arrangement can be made.</p> <p>Safety planning is done in response to a risk assessment and for a variety of reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting client safety in cases of conflict between residents or from an outside aggressor. • Protecting client safety in known incidents or suspected risk of human trafficking. • Protecting client safety related to harm reduction planning in cases where substance use may be a consideration for clients. • Protecting client safety in cases where suicide risk or self-harm may be a consideration.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing trauma-informed care for clients who have experienced abuse, trauma, and/or gender-based violence. • As a means of supporting clients engaging in sex work. • Connecting clients with health or mental health considerations to resources in the community. • Doing community safety planning when a risk may be posed to the surrounding community. • Having a documented approach for how emergency shelter operators and staff will support a client and modify approaches as may be needed to aid in de-escalation. • Maintaining safety at the shelter in accordance with the <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act</i>. <p>Safety plans should be time limited and reviewed regularly.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety planning.

8.4 Serious Incidents	
Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelter operators will have a system in place for recording unusual incidents. The recording of the incident should include identifying any residents and staff who were involved in or witnessed the incident in the event of a criminal investigation.</p> <p>An incident report will be completed within 24 hours of all serious incidents involving fire, death, severe assault/accidental injuries and/or attempted suicides requiring medical assistance, and occurrences involving a firearm. One copy of the Serious Incident Report will be forwarded within 24 hours to the City of Hamilton.</p> <p>Shelter providers will make grief and loss support available to staff and clients following a client death or serious incident. Support may include de-briefing, healing circles, one-on-one counselling, and peer-to-peer supports.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious incident policy.

9. Accountability and Governance

- 9.1. Program Accountability
- 9.2. Board Requirements
- 9.3. Finance
- 9.4. Relevant Legislation

Intent: Emergency shelter services are shaped by and responsible to numerous external stakeholders. This section clarifies how emergency shelters are held accountable and governed through a combination of internal organizational structures, relevant legislation, and funding agreement requirements.

9.1 Program Accountability	
Standard Statement	The City of Hamilton and emergency shelter operators work in collaboration to ensure that shelter services are delivered in accordance with the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards.

Emergency shelter operators and the City of Hamilton are held accountable through the following mechanisms:

Governance and Partnerships:

- The City of Hamilton convenes regularly with emergency shelter operators and Indigenous Community Entity to review emerging issues in the homeless-serving sector, including but not limited to:
 - Reviewing the size and composition of the emergency shelter sector to determine if adjustments are needed to the number of beds and supports available.
 - Reporting and reviewing service restriction data on a quarterly basis.
 - Reviewing best practices and developing partnerships to meet client needs.
 - Strengthening and growing their relationship with Indigenous Community Entity to support Indigenous clients by exploring how to best deliver culturally safe supports and identifying the resources that would be required to make that happen.
 - Sharing feedback from PWLE engagement activities regarding system gaps, suggestions, and feedback.

Contract Requirements:

- Funding contracts will be maintained and monitored by the City of Hamilton. Program reviews will be conducted as required by funding contracts or at the request of the City of Hamilton.
- Emergency shelter operators will submit information as outlined in funding contracts.

Communicating Policies and Expectations:

- Emergency shelter operators will explain at intake (or as soon as possible) and post the following policies and expectations in a visible area of the shelter: Client rights and responsibilities, curfew policy, policies related to storing personal belongings, service restriction policy, and complaints policy. If requested, shelter staff will provide clients with a written copy of any shelter policy.

Information Management:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency shelter operators will fully participate in Hamilton’s Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS), as outlined in Section 10: Information Systems of the standards. • Information management will be assessed in accordance with the applicable policy and guidance as available via HMIS for auditing including but limited to data field completion, user access and activities, attestations, and staff role assignments. System reporting will be assessed in accordance with the applicable policy and guidance as available via HMIS for reporting including but limited to service reach, client demographics, service outcomes, client follow ups, time to service, and service types. <p>Complaints Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a client, advocate, or community member feels that emergency shelter operators are not meeting their obligations as outlined in the Standards, they may follow the process outlined under Section 2.3: Complaints Process. • Complaints which are not resolved by the shelter operator may be escalated to the City of Hamilton as outlined in the complaint resolution process (pending City Council approval September 2023). The City of Hamilton will report back to emergency shelter operators a summary of complaints received after emergency shelter operators complete their internal complaints process. <p>Applicable Legislation and Bylaws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency shelter operators and their Board of Directors are responsible for ensuring that their organization complies with all relevant and applicable federal, provincial, and municipal legislation, including but not limited to those outlined in Section 9.4: Relevant Legislation of the Standards. • Emergency shelter operators will work with the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Public Health to respond as needed to infectious disease situations.
Policy	Not applicable

9.2 Board Requirements	
Standard Statement	<p>Not-for-profit organizations funded to provide emergency shelter services will be governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.</p> <p>At a minimum, the Board of Directors is responsible for:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the mandate, mission, values, and strategies of the organization are followed. • Setting agency priorities. • Reviewing and approving policies. • Evaluating services. • Ensuring that the organization meets funder expectations and contract conditions including compliance with the Standards. • Reviewing budgets and expenditures. • Reviewing and approving accounting and reporting procedures. • Selecting and conducting an annual performance review of the Executive Director.
Policy	Not applicable

9.3 Finance

Standard Statement	<p>On a monthly basis, all shelters will provide program and financial information to the Housing Services Division in a format specified by the City of Hamilton. All annual budget submissions will be submitted, in the specified format, to the City by a date determined by the City of Hamilton.</p> <p>Agencies will invoice the City in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding agreements.</p> <p>Bookkeeping and financial records will be set up according to generally accepted accounting procedures, adhering to the terms and conditions of the funding agreements, and an annual audit will be conducted by a qualified independent auditor. All financial records will be kept for a minimum of seven years for financial audit purposes.</p>
Policy	Not applicable

9.4 Relevant Legislation

Standard Statement	<p>Emergency shelter operators and their Board of Directors are responsible for ensuring that their organization complies with all relevant and applicable federal, provincial, and municipal legislation, including but not limited to:</p> <p>FEDERAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada Consumer Product Safety Act <p>PROVINCIAL</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act • Child and Family Services Act • Ontario’s Homelessness Prevention Program, including its guidelines • Employment Standards Act • Fire Prevention and Protection Act • French Language Services Act • Health Protection and Promotion Act • Health Insurance Act, R.S.O. 1990 • Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act • Occupational Health and Safety Act • Ontario Building Code Standards • Ontario Fire Code • Ontario Human Rights Code • Ontario Food Premises Regulation • Personal Health Information Protection Act • Smoke Free Ontario Act • Workplace Safety and Insurance Act <p>MUNICIPAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Maintenance By-laws • Property Standards By-laws • Zoning By-laws <p>In the event of any legal conflict between the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards and applicable legislation, the legislation shall prevail to the extent of the conflict.</p> <p>Shelter providers and their Board of Directors will consult qualified legal professionals about any and all legal and financial obligations related to their operation as a shelter.</p>
Policy	Not applicable

10. Information Systems

- 10.1. Client Database Information Management Systems
- 10.2. Consent
- 10.3. Confidentiality
- 10.4. Storing Information

Intent: This section outlines how information about people experiencing homelessness will be recorded, including the process for obtaining consent from clients. Shelter operators and the City of Hamilton are responsible for maintaining records which include sensitive and personal information and as a sector, strive to maintain information in ways that are client centred and reflect best practices for maintaining the privacy and dignity of clients.

10.1 Client Database Information Management Systems	
Standard Statement	Emergency shelter operators are directed to fully participate with Hamilton’s Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS), including participation in HIFIS-related activities, data collection, and reporting cycles. Programs are directed to use HIFIS or any other designated system to collect, manage, and share data at the direction of the City of Hamilton with the consent of the client for the purpose of providing clients with housing supports and helping clients find and maintain a place to live.
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> and applicable data entry guidance. • <i>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System – HIFIS Confidentiality and User Agreement.</i> • <u>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Consent and Intake Policy.</u>

10.2 Consent	
Standard Statement	<p>Shelter staff will obtain informed consent from persons and dependents accessing shelter services, prior to consulting with or providing referrals to other service providers. Consent can change over time and shelters may review consent with clients periodically or at client request.</p> <p>Individuals must provide consent to have their personal information stored in the Homelessness Management Information System (HIFIS 4.0 and the By-Name List). All new clients are required to review and sign the Consent to Share Personal Information with Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System. In cases of declined consent, no</p>

	<p>information will be added to HIFIS and the client’s name will not appear on the By-Name List. Staff will make every attempt to progressively engage clients to help them understand the benefits of participating in the Coordinated Access system of care and to obtain consent.</p> <p>Progressive engagement to obtain consent should be conducted according to agency practice in a way that is culturally considerate and respects individual autonomy. Consent must be provided in order for a client to be known to the homeless-serving system to be referred to additional supports through Coordinated Access. However, clients who decline consent still have full access to emergency sheltering, outreach, and drop-in services without restriction. The use of declined consent in HIFIS is used in exceptional circumstances and requires City approval. Referrals of Indigenous clients and other clients who do not consent to be added on HIFIS but do consent to their information being shared with the City and/or a specific program, can be made through the City of Hamilton based on the Urgent Health and Safety or Missing/Inaccurate Information criteria in the Coordinated Access Prioritization Policy.</p> <p>Indigenous clients are not required, but may choose, to consent to their information being stored in HIFIS and on the By-Name List (BNL). Indigenous clients are not required to complete a VI-SPDAT or SPDAT.</p> <p>This also applies to consent for data storage outside of HIFIS including other databases, tracking sheets, and paper records.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Consent and Intake Policy.</u>

10.3 Confidentiality

<p>Standard Statement</p>	<p>Emergency shelter operators have access to detailed and highly sensitive personal information about clients. Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of shelter clients and their personal information is of the utmost importance.</p> <p>Each shelter operator and its staff will keep in confidence the personal information of clients to which it has access as part of the <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System.</i></p>
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	<p>All emergency shelter operators will comply with applicable municipal, provincial, and federal legislation relating to the collection, storage, and sharing of client personal information and in so doing will take all reasonable precautions to protect all personal information from any unauthorized use, disclosure, copying, modification, and destruction.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will notify clients that personal information collected in HIFIS may be shared with designated parties for the purposes of providing and funding ongoing or future housing supports. Emergency shelter operators will inform clients at intake of the process for requesting access to their personal file and will provide access within a reasonable timeframe of a client request for their file.</p> <p>Emergency shelter operators will develop a confidentiality strategy that works with clients to ensure that staff do not disclose personal information that a client wishes to remain private. Shelter staff will explain the limits of confidentiality to clients at intake, or as soon as possible.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> and applicable data entry guidance. • <i>Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System – HIFIS Confidentiality and User Agreement.</i>

10.4 Storing Information	
Standard Statement	<p>As per the <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i> the HIFIS Community Coordinator (The City of Hamilton) is responsible for the secure storage of all HIFIS data collected from the service providers. The HIFIS Community Coordinator will ensure that the data is backed up daily and stored in a secure location.</p> <p>It should be made clear to clients, through the signing of the Consent to Share Personal and Health Information with the Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System, where the client’s information will be stored, and which community partners have access to that information. For all new clients who sign the Consent form, staff will scan the signed copy of the consent on a secure scanning device</p>

	<p>and upload it to HIFIS, delete the electronic copy of the consent, and then retain the physical signed copy of the form in a securely locked cabinet.</p> <p>This also applies to storage methods outside of HIFIS including other databases, tracking sheets, and paper records.</p>
Policy	<p>Emergency shelter operators will develop or adhere to the following policies related to this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where and how hard copies/files are stored securely, for how long, and who has access to those files.• Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Consent and Intake Policy• <i>HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System</i>

11. Standards Administration

11.1. Review History and Approval

11.2. Related Documents

11.1 Review History & Approval			
Revision Number	Revision and Approval Date	Description of Change(s)	Process Approval Name & Position
0	October 2008	Creation of the first Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards.	City of Hamilton – Housing Services Division
1	July 2023	<p>Creation of the revised Hamilton Emergency Shelter Standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Sections created. Major additions to Sections 3, 5 and 6. • Updated all existing sections to add clarification on expectations and best practices related to the homeless-serving sector. • Endorsed by all sectors including men’s, women’s, family, youth, and Indigenous community. 	Michelle Baird, Director, Housing Services Division
Next Review Date: January 2027			

11.2 Related Documents

The following policies and guides related to Hamilton’s homeless serving system referenced in the Standards can be found online: <https://www.hamilton.ca/people-programs/housing-shelter/preventing-ending-homelessness/resources-homeless-serving-partners>.

- *City of Hamilton complaint resolution process*
- *Hamilton’s Coordinated Access Case Management Policy*
- *Hamilton’s Coordinated Access Prioritization Policy*
- *Hamilton’s Coordinated Access System Process Guide*
- *Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Consent and Intake Policy*
- *Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System HIFIS Confidentiality and User Agreement*
- *Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Service Restriction Policy*
- *Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System Triage and Assessment Policy*
- *HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol for Hamilton’s Homeless Serving System*