

EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTER

(Funded by the Province of Manitoba)

STANDARDS

AS OF AUGUST – 2009

Emergency Homeless Shelter

Standards

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The *Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards*, and the accompanying *Emergency Homeless Shelter Manual*, are to be used as a guide for operation of emergency homeless shelters in Manitoba. Both documents contain information on items such as governance, financial and program accountability, admission and discharge, shelter networking and resident rights and responsibilities as well as accommodation, health and safety standards.

The standards itemize and define the roles and responsibilities of the Province of Manitoba and its partners in the management and delivery shelter programs and services. They are intended to set a minimum level of service delivery and outline the responsibilities of each shelter provider in terms of accountability to clients, the funding agency and the public. It is expected that emergency homeless shelters receiving provincial funding will, to the best of their ability, adhere to the standards and consider implementing the information contained in the manual. The Manitoba *Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards*, and *Emergency Homeless Shelter Manual* documents are based on recommendations from similar residential regulations and on emergency shelter standard documents from other jurisdictions. For issues that are not fully covered by the *Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards* and *Emergency Homeless Shelter Manual* shelters are expected to use their judgment and consult Province of Manitoba staff where necessary.

The *Emergency Homeless Shelter Manual* is intended to supplement the standards by providing more information to assist with the implementation of the standards.

The development of provincial standards arose from an acknowledgment that individuals with the greatest housing need and fewest options are entitled to a safe and healthy living environment, even though emergency homeless shelters are intended for temporary and/or emergency use. Emergency homeless shelter service providers were requesting direction regarding service expectations and consistency in service delivery across shelters.

Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards

All policies, procedures and protocols outlined by the emergency homeless shelter must be available upon request by Manitoba. Emergency homeless shelters may want to collaborate with each other on the development of operating procedures.

A) DEFINITIONS

Contrabands are defined as any and all items deemed illegal and/or banned by the emergency homeless shelter in regards to policies created there in.

Emergency homeless shelter is defined as the provision of mat or bed, in a safe and secure site, to individuals experiencing homelessness on a short-term or infrequent basis.

Homeless is defined as having no physical shelter and/or without access to safe and accessible accommodations. This includes those living outside, in hospitals, staying with friends and in emergency homeless shelters.

Incident in this document is defined as an act that is not ordinary (in regards to personality or character) or of a criminal, endangering, or aggressive nature. This would include but is not limited to theft, uttering threats, arguments between residents and/or employees, and unusual activities or deteriorating health.

Service Purchase Agreement (SPA) is defined as a contractual agreement between the Province of Manitoba and a service provider which sets out the terms, conditions and service expectations by which Manitoba agrees to purchase, within funding guidelines, specified services from the service provider and the service provider agrees to provide the specified services.

Substances are defined as illegal drugs and alcohol or gasoline, cleaning solvents, aerosol disinfectants or other inhalants used for the purpose of intoxication.

The Standards are defined as the *Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards* as set forth by the Province of Manitoba.

The Manual is defined as the accompanying *Emergency Homeless Shelter Manual* document to the *Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards*.

B) GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The *Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards* are grounded in the following principles. They are intended to promote a philosophy for service provision. These principles are not *Emergency Homeless Shelter Standards*, but rather help guide the delivery of emergency homeless shelter services.

1. Persons experiencing homelessness are entitled to emergency homeless shelter service regardless of political or religious beliefs, ethno-cultural background, (dis)ability, gender identity, communicable disease (e.g., HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis) and/or sexual orientation. All emergency homeless shelter staff and volunteers must respect and be sensitive to the diversity of residents. All emergency homeless shelter staff and volunteers will promote a culture of tolerance and respect within the emergency homeless shelter. Discriminatory and racist incidents or behaviours will not be tolerated.
2. A person's gender identity may not correspond with their physical appearance. Emergency homeless shelter providers must accept gender identity as defined by the individual rather than by the perception of staff and/or other residents.
3. The emergency homeless shelter will promote an atmosphere of dignity and respect for all residents; as such services will be provided in a non-judgmental manner and should be in compliance with existing human rights legislation.
4. People accessing emergency homeless shelters often have few resources. Emergency homeless shelters are often the final option to access safe accommodations. Issuing service restrictions in the emergency homeless shelter system must only be done as a last resort and in the most serious cases. All emergency homeless shelter providers will develop and implement a barring and restriction policy which allows residents access to a fair appeal process.
5. Emergency homeless shelters are part of a larger network of homeless services and agencies. Collaboration within this network is important to ensure effective and co-coordinated services. Emergency homeless shelter providers will strive to work in partnership.
6. People experiencing homelessness, like many members of society, may use substances to varying degrees. Emergency homeless shelter services must be accessible to all citizens regardless of substance use. In order to ensure an accessible emergency homeless shelter system a range of service models must be available which ranges from abstinence to harm reduction. Policies governing admission discharge and service restriction must not be based on substance use alone, except for those emergency homeless shelters operating on an abstinence model.
7. Emergency homeless shelters have a mandate and responsibility to assist and encourage residents toward increasing levels of self-reliance and self-determination. Emergency homeless shelter providers must take an active role in developing policies that support residents to achieve their goals.
8. Emergency homeless shelters will be sensitive to the ethno-specific and linguistic needs of residents. Staff will work with community resources to ensure residents have access to culturally appropriate services (including interpretive services).
9. Persons of Aboriginal descent comprise a disproportionate percentage of the homeless population in Manitoba. As such emergency homeless shelter providers will collaborate with Aboriginal service providers to develop and implement culturally appropriate programs, services and referral networks for Aboriginal residents.

10. It is recognized that emergency homeless shelter residents have expertise to offer in the development and evaluation of emergency homeless shelter programs and services. Emergency homeless shelter providers will make an effort to include residents in the planning and provision of programs and services.
11. Where children and youth are residing in emergency homeless shelters, school-related, recreation, nutritional and treatment needs must be met on-site or through referral to community-based services.

C) ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS

1. Organizational Status for Emergency Homeless Shelter Providers

- Organizations operating an emergency homeless shelter must be incorporated as a non-profit organization under the laws of Manitoba and Canada, and must be registered as a Canadian Charity under the *Income Tax Act*.
- All organizations are required to comply with the agency reporting requirements within Family Services and Housing (Agency Accountability Unit). The following are required as part of the financial reporting requirements: annual report which includes the Revenue Canada Business number; identifying information which includes the agency purpose/mission; contact information for the Executive Director and Board; any changes to the agency bi-laws; the organization's Articles of Incorporation; and most recent bylaws.
- Organizations must adhere to the Manitoba Human Rights Code in the provision of service.
- Organizations must have for Manitoba upon request a copy of any and all policies and regulations for review, as per section 3.03 of the Service Purchase Agreement (SPA).

2. Governance

- Emergency homeless shelters must be operated by a volunteer board of directors that are in compliance with *The Corporations Act*. The board must have a sufficient number of directors with a range of skills required to fulfill this role.

3. Financial Accountability

- On an annual basis, all emergency homeless shelters must provide program and financial information to Family Services and Housing as per section 7 in the SPA.
- An annual service agreement is developed for all organizations with an expiry date see section 6.02 and 14 of the SPA.
- Service agreements must be signed by a board member with organizational signing authority.

- Bookkeeping and financial records must be set up according to current accounting procedures, and an annual audit must be conducted by a qualified independent auditor. All financial records, including resident information for per diem must be kept for a minimum of seven years for financial audit purposes see section 8.03 of the SPA.
- Random audit checks of emergency homeless shelters must be conducted. This will require daily logs to be provided upon request by Manitoba. Daily logs must be kept for a minimum of seven years for financial audit purposes as outlined in section 8 of the SPA.

4. Program Accountability

- The emergency homeless shelter must not introduce any ancillary services that detract or interfere with the effective delivery of their emergency homeless shelter program, and if in doubt, should discuss such plans in advance with Manitoba.
- All emergency homeless shelters must have a system in place for recording unusual incidents and must be available to Manitoba upon request.

D) ACCESS TO EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTER

1. Admission and Discharge

- Admission and discharge records for all residents must be maintained by all emergency homeless shelter operators showing name, date of birth, reason for service, and date of admission and referral source (i.e. hospital, prison, self-referred etc.).
- Emergency homeless shelters must be able to admit new residents at all times during their hours of operation, provided that the applicant is eligible for service and space is available.
- The emergency homeless shelter must have clearly written criteria, policies and procedures for admission. A copy of admission and discharge policies must be on file with Manitoba and re-submitted if revised.
- A copy of the policies and procedures for admission must be posted in a visible area, and must be written out in an understandable form.
- Emergency homeless shelter rules and resident rights and responsibilities must be explained to all residents at admission or as soon as reasonably possible, and posted in a visible area for the resident to refer to. They must be written in a clear understandable form.
- Emergency homeless shelters that are not able to admit a person who is homeless for whatever reason must provide a referral to another emergency homeless shelter or other appropriate facility.

2. Substance Use

- With the exception of abstinence-based emergency homeless shelters, admission and discharge decisions cannot be based upon substance use alone, but should be based on behaviour.
- Emergency homeless shelters operating on an abstinence model must identify how abstinence is defined within their program.

3. Service Restrictions

- All emergency homeless shelters must have a policy regarding service restrictions, and a copy of this policy must be on file with Manitoba and re-submitted if revised.
- Policies must clearly outline the reasons for service restrictions and the internal emergency homeless shelter process to appeal, review and lift restrictions regularly, as well as in exceptional cases deemed necessary by the emergency homeless shelter.
- Residents must be made aware of the service restriction policy upon admission or as soon as reasonably possible. The service restriction policy must be posted in an area accessible to residents.
- All service restrictions issued by emergency homeless shelters must be authorized by the Executive Director, or like position.
- Emergency homeless shelter staff must inform the resident of the reason for the service restriction, the date it will be reviewed with the resident and the date the service restriction will be lifted.
- Emergency homeless shelter staff must advise the resident of possible alternatives to emergency homeless shelter and make appropriate referrals.
- Emergency homeless shelters must maintain records of all service restrictions.
- All residents who wish to appeal the service restriction must be advised of the appeal process.

4. Appeals

- Each emergency homeless shelter must have an internal process for resolving appeals, and must inform the residents of this process.
- All emergency homeless shelters must post their appeals process, keep a written record of formal complaints and a written record of the resolution.

5. Resident Rights and Responsibilities

- Each emergency homeless shelter must adopt a written policy concerning the rights and responsibilities of residents.
- The policies must be posted in a common area of the emergency homeless shelter and be communicated to residents through various ways such as intake, admission and resident meetings.

6. Duty to Report

- All emergency homeless shelters and staff are obligated to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect as per sections 17 and 18, of *The Child and Family Services Act*. All emergency homeless shelters and staff must work in compliance with child welfare agencies.
- All emergency homeless shelters and staff are obligated to report any suspected cases of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable person as per *The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act* to the Department of Family Services and Housing.
- All emergency homeless shelters and staff are obligated to report any suspected cases of abuse or neglect of a person in protected care as per *The Protection of Persons in Care Act* to the Protection for Persons in Care Office.

E) SERVICE COORDINATION

- Helping individuals exit the emergency homeless shelters system requires the coordination of housing, health and social services. A first step in this coordination effort is to ensure that emergency homeless shelter providers are communicating and sharing information about service provision, resident needs and where possible referrals to off-site support services.
- Emergency Homeless Shelters will work cooperatively and in collaboration with all relevant program partners, including Homeless Outreach Team mentors. Shelters will allow mentors access to residents in order for them to carry out their roles within the emergency homeless shelter system.
- Emergency homeless shelters are not responsible to provide all services but must work in partnership with the Province of Manitoba and other service providers for the residents well being.
- Emergency homeless shelters are not intended to be a long term primary residence for an individual. If an individual resides at an emergency homeless shelter in excess of one week, emergency homeless shelter staff must engage them in developing and implementing a discharge plan.

- Emergency homeless shelter are required to provide assistance and facilitate access to housing, medical services, mental health and addictions treatment and employment and life skills training.
- Emergency homeless shelters that have the capability and access to on-site and off-site services must offer case management services in partnership with Manitoba and other service providers to all residents interested, and those residing in the emergency homeless shelter for more than one week (7 days). Residents exceeding the one week period shall be referred to the Homeless Outreach Team.
- Emergency homeless shelters not capable of supporting on-site services must assist residents by providing appropriate off-site referrals and links.
- Emergency homeless shelter providers must develop and maintain relationships with their local Health Authority and other supporting agencies in their community.
- Emergency homeless shelter providers must document their formal and informal agreements with other agencies.

F) CONFIDENTIALITY

- All emergency homeless shelters are required to have a written policy regarding the collection, use and disclosure of resident information as per section 12 of SPA.
- Emergency homeless shelters must have written policies concerning the privacy, security and confidentiality of residents maintained on electronic format (e.g., password protected, use of mobile devices, remote access, etc.).
- Personal information about a resident must not be disclosed without a signed consent from the resident.
- The importance of sharing information with relevant health and social service providers must be discussed with the resident and only disclosed with signed resident consent. The resident must fully understand what information is being disclosed, why it is being disclosed, and to whom it is being disclosed.
- Files containing resident information should be kept in a secure location and locked to maintain confidentiality.
- Policies in regards to taking resident information off site must be in place and adhered to as there is a risk of breaching confidentiality.
- Emergency homeless shelters must adhere to *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) and *The Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA) where applicable (see Appendix H for the appropriate link).

- Emergency Homeless Shelters shall comply with any lawful requirements made by an organization which is carrying out duties as defined by law (i.e., child and family services, police service).

G) STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

- Emergency homeless shelters must have a staff code of conduct outlining professional behaviour for emergency homeless shelter staff.

H) ACCOMMODATION, HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS

- Emergency homeless shelters must also develop and implement policies in regards to: record keeping where first aid is required, health and safety of residents, health and safety of staff, and other matters related to the operation.
- Emergency homeless shelters must maintain an accurate, up to date operations log to record incidents related to the safety of residents or staff and other matters related to the operation of the emergency homeless shelter.

1. Accommodation Standards

- All emergency homeless shelters must have current documentation verifying that they meet all current health, fire, and building and zoning regulations. Proof of fire and health department approvals must be submitted to Family Services and Housing by July 31st of each year.
- The premises are to be clean, sanitary, safe and free of hazards.
- All emergency homeless shelters must provide the following:
 - After April 1, 2009, all new or expanding emergency homeless shelters must ensure that beds/mats are at least .76 meters (2.5 feet) apart. Shelters funded prior to this date are expected to ensure beds/mats are positioned in a manner that allows for the safety and well-being of clients and staff;
 - With the exception of individuals utilizing mats, each resident is to be provided with clean sheets, pillowcases, bedding and towels daily;
 - Mattresses are to be made of or covered with flame retardant materials, and moisture resistant;
 - The facility must be in compliance with local Building Code specifications including washrooms, ventilation, natural light, and ratio of fixtures per residents;
 - Facilities for safe storage for resident's belongings;
 - A common area for residents is to be available;
 - Appropriate sleeping arrangements must be provided for all children less than two years of age (i.e. crib, playpen etc.) and must conform to specifications approved by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or other government agency.

2. Health Standards

- All emergency homeless shelters must implement procedures and policies based on *The Workplace Safety and Health Act* (part 7.4) and Regulation, and must have an up to date copy of *The Workplace Safety and Health Acts* and Regulation.
- At least one staff person certified in First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) must be on duty at all times in the emergency homeless shelter.
- In accordance with Part 5, Schedule B of the Workplace Safety and Health Regulations, an appropriate number of approved first aid kits must be available in each emergency homeless shelter and a portable kit must be taken on outings
- Emergency homeless shelters must have a contract with a licensed pest control operator, and have a scheduled inspection and treatment plan.
- Within 10 days of the start of employment, all staff must be provided with information/orientation on the following topics:
 - Prevention of transmission of infection within the emergency homeless shelter through use of routine practices and additional precautions (formerly known as universal health precautions) such as hand-washing, personal hygiene, housekeeping practices, food safety and use of personal protective equipment as per the Workplace Safety and Health Regulation (part 6);
 - Information on specific diseases such as TB, HIV, hepatitis B and C, and in the case of emergency homeless shelters with children, childhood diseases;
 - Procedure for dealing with occupational exposure to blood or body fluids; and
 - Information on community health care resources such as Manitoba Health, Public Health contact numbers.
- Educational updates on the above topics must be provided as often as necessary to reinforce safe work practices.
- Written policies and procedures must be developed in consultation with Manitoba Health and Healthy Living - Public Health Division for all licensed medical practitioners for preventing, handling and reporting communicable diseases.

3. Safety Standards

- Emergency homeless shelters must develop safety procedures and training procedures in accordance *The Workplace Safety and Health Act* (part 4).
- Violence of any kind must not be tolerated. Harassment and Violence prevention policies are to be developed in accordance with Part 10 and Part 11 of The Workplace Safety and Health Regulation.

- Entrances to the emergency homeless shelter must be secured. Emergency exits must be monitored to alert staff of unauthorized comings and goings.
- All emergency homeless shelters must designate an evacuation site. Staff must be educated on evacuation plans and explain to each resident upon admission or as soon after as possible.
- Evacuation plans must be posted in a visible area for all residents and visitors to see.
- Emergency homeless shelters must have a plan for the continuity or restoration of business functions identified as critical at the time of an emergency.
- Emergency homeless shelters must ensure that environmental hazards such as chemicals and cleaning compounds are safely stored. Hazardous materials and objects must be handled properly in accordance with part 36 of the Workplace Safety and Health Regulation

4. Resident Prescription Medication

- Emergency homeless shelters must have policies regarding the storage and administration of resident prescription medications.
- If the emergency homeless shelter's policy is for clients to self-manage their medications, the shelter must advise clients of their responsibilities regarding the safe storage and administration of their medication.
- Emergency homeless shelters must have policy and procedures in regards to sharps and their storage and disposal in accordance with *The Workplace Safety and Health Act* (part 45.1) and Regulation (part 39.8).
- Emergency homeless shelters that choose to provide assistance with prescription medication are to keep an accurate and up to date log (see manual for more information). Unless there is a licensed nurse on staff emergency homeless shelters can not administer medication, they can only assist (i.e. daily reminders and safe storage)

5. Weapons

- Illegal substances and/or contrabands as defined in part III section 84 (1) and part XII.1 section 462.1 of The Criminal Code (see manual Appendix I) are not allowed in the emergency homeless shelter.
- Emergency homeless shelters must create policy in regards to contraband and confiscation of unsafe items brought in by residents, as well as the record keeping and returns of such items.
- Where kitchens are located onsite, all utensils (i.e. knives) must be safely stored when the when not in use.

I) STAFFING

1. Training

- Emergency homeless shelters must develop their own training program and timeline (see manual) for more information.

2. Staffing Standards

- All emergency homeless shelters must have written policies and procedures regarding employment practices that comply with Provincial and Federal laws.
- Where children are frequenting emergency homeless shelters, all staff must obtain a current Child Abuse Registry check as part of their employment as well as a criminal record check.
- The emergency homeless shelter must have adequate staff for the number of residents accommodated, to ensure the safety of residents and staff at all times.