



Everyone needs a home

HFS Shelters' Access, Intake, and Assessment Policy

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Homes First Society promotes a high and consistent level of service by responding to requests for support services in a respectful, empathetic, and timely manner.

Shelter Descriptions and Eligibility Requirements:

All Shelters are required to accept walk-ins and City referrals. Savards and Strachan House are niche shelters, and as such, have limited vacancies, most of which are filled through referrals. The St. Clair Avenue East Shelter (often referred to as the “Scarborough Shelter”) is a basic shelter, typically serving individuals, both male and female, who become homeless and reside in the shelter until stabilized, and are often rehoused. The Kennedy Road Shelter is also a basic shelter, but for women only.

Kennedy Road Shelter:

The Kennedy Road Shelter is an emergency shelter for 90 women. At the invitation of the City of Toronto, Homes First has agreed to operate the shelter for the period of December 20, 2016 through to December 31, 2017.

The bulk of the referrals for the Kennedy Road Shelter are from the City of Toronto’s Central Intake office.

St. Clair Avenue East Shelter:

The St. Clair Avenue East Shelter (often referred to as the “Scarborough Shelter”) is an emergency shelter for 67 men and women who may be single or in couples. Before HFS began managing this shelter, it primarily served temporarily homeless working people and still includes many. HFS has broadened this shelter’s mandate to ensure that it is in keeping with Toronto Shelter Standards; specifically, ensuring access for individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, or who have mental health issues.

The bulk of the referrals for this Shelter are from the City of Toronto’s Central Intake office. In addition, we receive a significant number of walk-ins and self-referrals (people who know present residents, or who have stayed there in the past). We also receive a number of referrals from police, courts, as well as from the Agincourt Community Services Association’s Outreach program.

Savards Women's Shelter:

The population mix at Savards is made up of 30 single-adult women with an emphasis on those with histories of long-term homelessness and mental health issues. The residents of Savards are usually women with: extreme mental health issues; concurrent disorders (mental health and addiction issues); moderate developmental delays and addiction issues; moderate developmental delays and mental health issues; and/or undiagnosed/untreated mental health issues.

The primary sources of referrals for Savards is City of Toronto's Central Intake office, Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Center, other shelters and self-referrals. Savards' mandate is well known and well understood and, for that reason, women presenting to other shelters who are exhibiting mental health issues are often referred to Savards. In addition, we also receive referrals from discharge planners at hospitals, as well as external support workers.

Strachan House:

The population mix at Strachan House is of 88 adults who have a history of homelessness and are considered "the hardest to house" with severe mental health and/or addiction issues, and who have difficulty maintaining housing and are very street-involved. The "hardest to house" at Strachan is often meaning people with very complex mental health and concurrent addiction issues.

Strachan House is increasingly looked to by the City of Toronto, CAMH, and all major hospitals within the City, as the only program willing to, and capable of, housing residents with the most extreme complex issues and difficult needs.

We receive referrals for individuals with extensive histories of homelessness, institutionalization, or street-life that would benefit from a tolerant, congregate living environment, either as a stabilization period while waiting for independent living or as a "for now" solution until a sufficiently supportive housing model can be found. Strachan currently receives the bulk of its referrals from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), St. Joseph's Health Centre Mental Health and Addictions Division, as well as other hospitals dealing with individuals with mental health needs. We have also received several referrals from Streets to Homes for residents who tend to have extreme physical health issues combined with mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

A special partnership with the City of Toronto, through Streets to Homes, was developed to designate a unit at Strachan House for residents on the City's top 20 most difficult-to-serve. The goal is to engage these residents and get them off the street and into the shelter room where we can begin working with them and connecting them to the supports they need and, eventually, moving them into a permanent unit with Strachan House.

Placements coming through the hospitals from Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team referrals are often initiated by Case Conference meetings with hospital discharge planners, doctors, CCAC, and ACT Team members.

Referrals are usually made to Strachan House for the reasons noted above, and because Strachan House provides 24-hour-a-day staffing that is vital to housing success. Strachan House also receives a significant number of self-referrals, from people who seem to seek the level of security provided by having this 24-hour-a-day staffing.

Policy:

Every shelter must be prepared to respond to requests for support services made by phone or in person, 24-hours-a-day. Shelter staff endeavor to respond to telephone requests for service in real time.

If there are no beds available at the shelter, staff will offer to find the resident an available bed at another shelter using the Shelter Management Information System (SMIS) (please see the “HFS Shelters Referral Policy”).

HFS shelters will take all reasonable measures to accommodate a resident with a disability and/or residents who are accompanied by service animals or emotional support animals. (Please see “HFS Shelters Pet Policy and Procedures”.)

Staff will explain the collection of personal information prior to completing a resident’s SMIS intake.

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- As per Toronto Shelter Standards, 2016: Sections 8.1(a)(i) and 8.3(a)(i).
 - Created on February 24, 2017.
 - Approved by HFS Governance and Nominating Committee on April 12, 2017; to be reviewed in 2022.
 - Approved by HFS Board of Directors on April 26, 2017.
 - This Policy applies to all Homes First Shelters.