



HFS Shelters' Service Restrictions, Planned, and Unplanned Discharge Policy

General Principle

The Homes First Service Restriction Policy is based on defined, short-term restrictions not intended as a punishment, but as a conflict management tool. As such, it should only be used when a situation is escalating to the point where violence may erupt or when the situation is seriously impacting on the rights of other residents or the operation of the shelter. The intent is to assist the residents in maintaining their shelter status by making the service restriction as short as possible.

Policy

HFS staff are authorized to issue service restrictions for a maximum of 72-hours pending review by Chief Executive Officer or designate. This applies only in cases where:

- a resident poses immediate danger to themselves, staff, or other residents
- a resident's behaviour compromises the health and safety of the residents and/or staff

and/or

- there are repeated violations of shelter rules.

Management is authorized to issue service restrictions up to three months (90 days). Any restriction longer than 90 days must be approved by SSHA.

Staff will endeavour to locate an available bed for a resident who is being service restricted (see "HFS Shelters Referrals Policy").

Discharges and/or service restrictions from a HFS shelter will be documented in SMIS and Pirouette in real-time. Service restriction documentation will include:

- The reason for the service restriction
- The date the service restriction will be reviewed with the client
- The date the service restriction will be lifted
- The name of the staff member who issued the service restriction

A resident who is being service restricted will be informed both verbally and in writing at the earliest possible opportunity. This notification will include:

- The reason for the service restriction

- The date the service restriction will be reviewed with the client
- The date the restriction will be lifted
- Information about the resident's right to initiate an appeal of their service restriction

HFS shelter staff and management will take all reasonable measures to ensure the resident understands the service restriction and the appeals process.

Service restrictions will be temporarily suspended in cases of extreme weather alerts (i.e., cold alert, extreme cold alert, heat alert, smog alert), or when directed by SSHA. The only exceptions are cases where it has been determined that the service-restricted individual poses an immediate threat or danger to the safety or security of the shelter and/or the staff and/or other residents.

If emergency personnel are called to assist with an incident resulting in a service restriction, staff must complete a HFS Incident Report.

Service Restrictions:

A service restriction may only be issued as a last resort to address:

- Incidents involving violence, threats of violence (including threatening behaviour)
- Serious occurrence arising from behaviours that cause dangerous circumstances for others
- The violation of significant shelter rules
- A client's continued refusal to work with staff on their service plan

If a situation is dangerous, it is permissible to discharge the resident without approval.

Serious issues include:

- Intimidation, credible verbal threats, damage to property
- Violation directed at others
- Possession of weapons
- Threatening with non-weapon object (i.e., chairs, etc.)
- Continued racial or sexual harassment
- Continued derogatory comments towards others
- Drinking, smoking, or using illicit drugs on premises
- Selling medications or other drugs in or around the building

A relocation may range in duration from two hours for minor issues (including escalating arguments) to an overnight for more serious issues such as drinking, smoking, or drug use on premises, or overt hostility towards specific residents or staff. A relocation may last two or three nights for repeated instances of serious issues (including overt violence or threatening behaviour). A service restriction of three nights or more may be followed up by a requirement to sign a behaviour contract. Refusal to accept such a contract may result in discharge to another shelter.

Long-Term Service Restriction

A long-term (90-days or more) service restriction can only occur when the direct safety of a resident, staff, or the shelter are impaired by the continued residence of the individual and will normally include police involvement. Hostel Services will also be notified.

Incidents which would result in a long-term (90 days or more) service restriction would include, but are not limited to: starting a fire, assault of staff or resident(s), or extreme ongoing disruption of the shelter that interferes with the stability of other residents.

Appeals

If a resident wishes to appeal a service restriction, they may do so through the HFS Complaint Procedure. Staff will provide a copy of the Complaint Form upon request to a resident wishing to appeal a service restriction, and will provide the phone number for Hostel Services if requested.

Planned and Unplanned Discharges:

Homes First will ensure that discharged clients have a discharge plan in place (e.g., to housing, to treatment, to hospital) whenever possible. In addition, discharge plans will be developed in collaboration with clients whenever possible.

Exceptions are permitted in cases of unplanned discharge, which may result from a failure to return to shelter by curfew or a service restriction from the shelter.

Storage Policy

When a resident leaves the shelter, belongings will be stored for 72 hours, after which they may be disposed of, with the exception of medication; when a resident has been discharged from the shelter and has not returned for their medication(s) within one week, medication(s) will be marked as “for disposal” and returned to the pharmacy.

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- As per Toronto Shelter Standards, 2016: Sections 8.4(a)(i), 8.4.2(a)(i), and 10.2.3(a)(i).
 - Created on February 16, 2017.
 - Approved by HFS Governance and Nominating Committee on February 25, 2017; to be reviewed in 2022.
 - Approved by HFS Board of Directors on March 28, 2017.
 - The Policy applies to all Homes First Society shelters.