Region of Waterloo Emergency Shelter Program Framework Summary

Summary for community service providers about
the new policy direction for the Emergency Shelter Program

Region of Waterloo
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Between 2013 and 2016, the Region of Waterloo led a number of activities to support learning about the role that shelter plays in preventing and ending homelessness. This work informed the development of a new Emergency Shelter Program Framework that came into effect April 1, 2017.

The Emergency Shelter Program Framework outlines the purpose, description, and policy direction for shelter. It applies to Emergency Shelter Program providers funded by the Region and was written primarily for these providers. It also offers a common point of reference for other service providers that connect with the Emergency Shelter Program and members of the broader community who want to learn more about how shelter works in Waterloo Region.

What is the Emergency Shelter Program?

The Emergency Shelter Program provides a safe, temporary place where people can stay while they work to find housing. It offers immediate access when people have no other safe and appropriate place to stay. Participants receive services to meet basic needs and help them move forward with the next steps in their individualized Housing Plan. Stays are tailored to a Housing Plan or extreme weather event.

Shelter service objectives include the following:

1. Offer immediate access to people with no other safe and appropriate options.

2. Provide temporary stays.

3. Meet basic needs.

4. Support the next steps in a Housing Plan.

What are the seven steps of shelter service?

1. **Explore where else people can stay that is safe and appropriate** through diversion conversations when people have an imminent need for shelter (now or any point within the next few days). Prevent homelessness wherever possible.

2. **If people have no other options, offer shelter** and provide information about what the Emergency Shelter Program is all about. Refer to other sites or motels, as needed due to capacity, service restrictions, or planned intakes. At intake, begin to tailor services to individualized shelter stays.

3. **Within 48 hours, develop or update Housing Plans in a meeting.** If participants already have support workers from other programs, engage these workers in the housing process. If need for more housing support is identified during an intensive diversion effort or if it is a repeat intake, assess eligibility for more support during this meeting.

4. **Have daily intentional housing conversations** that help to identify and implement Housing Plan next steps. Refer to the on-line Renter's Toolkit, on-site Housing Help Hub, and Housing Resource Centres for information, tip sheets, and work sheets. Tailor housing search approach by type of shelter stay. If participants are more street-involved, refer to Street Outreach.
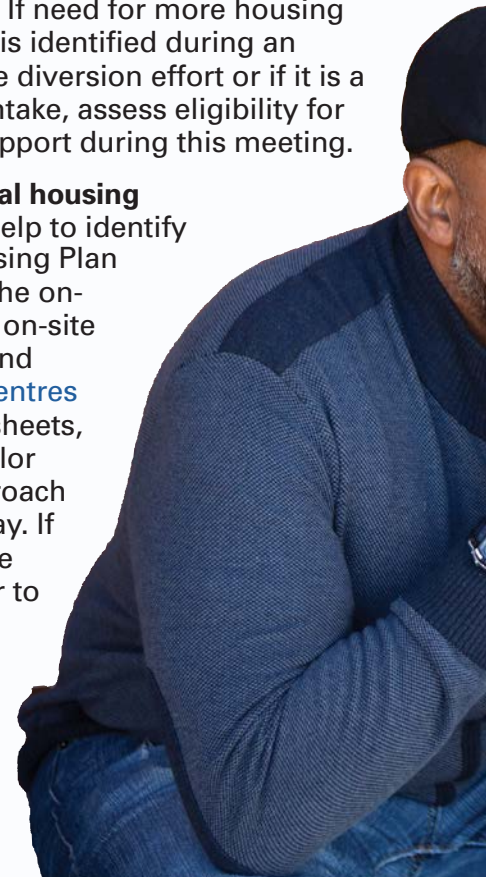
5. **Monitor Housing Plan progress** and keep Housing Plans current:
   - After the first week of a first stay, shelter workers and participants review the Housing Plan and adjust next steps in a meeting. Need for more housing support is assessed or confirmed during that meeting.
   - If participants qualify for more housing support, shelter workers help with the application process.
   - Continue to review Short Term Contracts and Critical Safety Plans, where applicable.
   - Where appropriate and as part of a Housing Plan, manage any financial contributions to stays.

6. **As needed, engage circles of support for finding housing.** If participants are offered more housing support during their stay from another program, transition the lead for housing search support activities from the shelter to the new housing support worker. Refer to other community resources that can help participants to find housing, including those that help with addressing more complex issues.

7. **Support discharges.** Some participants will leave shelter on their own when they transition to housing or other accommodation (a voluntary discharge). Others will leave when they are no longer eligible for a continued stay because of a planned discharge or service restriction. To support planned discharges, give a discharge notice and support next steps. The discharge date outlined in the notice may be extended under two conditions: to align with move-in date to an address or if an active housing search is sustained. Before discharge, update the Housing Plan.
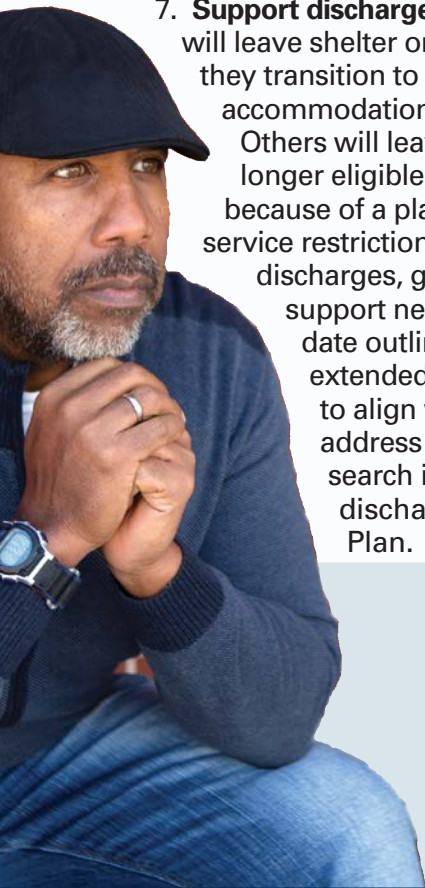
Want more information?

- For more information about the local Emergency Shelter Program, please visit the Region of Waterloo website **www.regionofwaterloo. ca/communityservices** (search "Emergency Shelter"). Here you will find progress updates related to implementation of the Emergency Shelter Program Framework. You will also find a **Housing Stability Pocket Card** with contact information for shelters in Waterloo Region and an **online catalogue** that provides more detailed information about local shelter providers.

- To access the local **Renter's Toolkit**, please visit the Region of Waterloo website **www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communityservices** (search "Renter's Toolkit"). Here you will find key resources like the Housing Plan, plus tip sheets and work sheets to support the housing process.

Preparing for Housing Search

Preparing for housing search

Searching for Housing

Searching for housing

Securing Housing and Making it a Home

Securing housing and making it a home

We believe everyone should have a safe and accessible place to go when in need

We believe emergency shelter provides an essential service – helping people meet their basic needs and find a permanent home

We believe having adequate housing and support reduces the need for emergency shelter

The ABCs of Shelter Policy

3 Parts	5 Policy Categories	15 Policy Statements
"A" **A**VOID A SHELTER STAY WHEREVER POSSIBLE	**A**lign policies and practices to prevent homelessness	• Explore diversion to other safe and appropriate options before offering shelter • Don't create incentives to access shelter • Engage other systems in homelessness prevention
"B" **B**RING TOGETHER QUALITY SHELTER SERVICES	**B**e housing-focused	• Reinforce the purpose of shelter as a process to find housing • Tailor length of stay and services to strengths, depth of need, and barriers related to housing • Expect and support active engagement in the housing search process • Connect to other community resources • If there is limited progress with a Housing Plan, explore need for more support
	Be accessible, safe, and strengths-based	• Never turn people away because the shelter system is "full" • Practice harm reduction and prioritize safety • Coach participants through the next steps in their Housing Plan
	Balance shelter demand with limited shelter resources	• Maximize use of existing shelter resources • Invest in the Emergency Shelter Program as part of a plan to prevent and end homelessness
"C" **C**OMMUNITY RESOLVES COMPLEX HOUSING ISSUES	**C**ollaborate to address unmet housing stability needs	• Engage in service resolution when all shelter options have been exhausted • When coordinating access to more support, prioritize participants who need it the most

The following agencies work together to provide emergency shelter service in Waterloo Region

YWCA | A TURNING POINT FOR WOMEN   Lutherwood Caring people. Strengthening lives.   The Working Centre   Argus   CAMBRIDGE SHELTER Embracing Hope   House of Friendship   oneROOF YOUTH SERVICES

With funding through:

Region of Waterloo COMMUNITY SERVICES   Ontario Ministry of Housing

Development of the Emergency Shelter Program Framework
was informed by the Housing Stability System Working Group.
Thank you to local service providers who contributed to the work and also to
OrgCode Consulting for their support throughout the process

To request more copies or alternate formats, please contact housing@regionofwaterloo.ca