



How Toronto is Solving Family Homelessness

The City of Toronto, through the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division, assists families facing homelessness by funding or directly providing services that range from eviction prevention and housing help to shelters and transitional housing. Specialized programs serve the needs of children, newcomers and young pregnant mothers.

A Snapshot of Family Homelessness

Here are some basic facts about family homelessness in Toronto:

- As of February 2009, the number of individuals and families on social assistance rose to 83,915, up 13 per cent - or nearly 10,000 people - from a year earlier.
- According to Statistics Canada, Toronto is home to more than 60% of low-income families living in the Greater Toronto Area.
- As of February 2009, 67,143 households (including seniors) were on the waiting list for social housing. 23,160 of these were households with dependents.
- Since 2000, the average nightly occupancy in family shelters has fluctuated. It reached a peak in 2001 when the average was 1918.
- In 2008 the average nightly occupancy in family shelters (including motels) was 1069. In 2007 it was 826.
- The 2008 statistics for Central Family Intake, which coordinates access to family shelters, show the three most frequently cited reasons for needing shelter as abuse, eviction and being a newcomer to Canada.
- In 2007, housing help workers in shelters provided support to 10,475 households (including single adults). Of these, 4,300 secured housing.
- In 2007, housing help workers outside shelters provided support to approximately 15,000 households. Of these, 4,100 secured housing.
- In 2007, Rent Bank assisted 600 households at risk of eviction. Eviction was avoided in 400 cases (67%).

Emergency Response

The City assists families who are displaced by small and large scale emergencies such as apartment building fires. Shelter, Support and Housing Administration coordinates the City-wide assistance to evacuees and their pets with shelter, food, clothing, registration and inquiry, and personal services.

Eviction Prevention

Shelter, Support and Housing Administration provides funding to several programs that help prevent families from becoming homeless.

- Rent Bank provides interest-free loans to families facing eviction for rental arrears.
- Tenant Hotline provides information on tenant rights and responsibilities and other housing issues.
- Tenant Defence Fund provides financial and organizing support for tenants who want to challenge rent increases above the guideline, demolitions or condo conversions.
- Central Family Intake helps families by providing information and referrals to community services and mediating with landlords.
- Housing Assistance programs are in place to assist families affected by the 2009 recession.

Housing Help and Follow-up

Hostels to Homes

This provincially-funded pilot is managed and administered by Shelter, Support and Housing Administration in partnership with Toronto Employment and Social Services. Housing support workers provide extensive follow-up to help people move towards stable housing.

to help vulnerable families

22 of the 340 allocations went to families. As of July 2008, 88% of those who moved into the community remained housed.

Housing Allowance Program

The Canada-Ontario-Toronto Housing Allowance Program (HAP) is a supplement paid to the landlord on behalf of households in need of rental assistance. So far, 234 households from shelters have secured housing under this program.

Housing Help Services

These services help people to find and keep housing. Housing help workers provide information about housing that's available, help fill out applications, give advice on housing issues and help mediate with landlords.

- Nine housing help centres are located throughout Toronto.
- Housing help workers also work in many emergency shelters, providing assistance to homeless families, adults and youth.
- Specialized housing help services are provided to families by seven agencies serving newcomers, young parents and aboriginal clients.

Additional assistance is provided by programs that coordinate or deliver services such as life and parenting skills or those that provide the basic items needed to furnish a home.

- June Callwood Centre for Women and Families (Jessie's Centre for Teenagers), Housing Access and Retention for Young Families
- Oolagen Community Services, Jordan's Legacy
- Oolagen Community Services, The Wraparound Process for Young Homeless Families
- Furniture Bank and West Hill Community Services



Family Shelters

Shelters provide emergency accommodation, food, counselling and support services. Shelter, Support and Housing Administration directly operates three shelters for families and administers the funding for five more run by community agencies. Because the family shelter system uses motel rooms to meet the need for additional spaces, capacity is not fixed.

Central Family Intake (CFI)

- Helps callers maintain or secure housing by providing information and referrals. Also oversees access to family shelters.
- In 2008, there were 1816 admissions to family shelters through CFI.

City-operated shelters:

- Birkdale Residence - 160 beds, plus expandable motel program for mothers and children and refugees. Refugee Claimant Family Program, Children's Resiliency Program, childcare.
- Family Residence - 150 beds, plus expandable motel program for families. Pregnancy Support Program, Rapid Housing Team, childcare.
- Robertson House - 90 beds for mothers and children. Specialized Parenting Support Program, medical support, life skills, childcare and children's program.



Community-operated shelters:

- Red Door Family Shelter - 106 beds for women fleeing abuse, and refugees. ESL classes.
- YWCA Beatrice House – 80 beds of transitional shelter for mothers and children.
- Christie Refugee Welcome Centre - 79 beds for refugee claimants.
- Sojourn House - 50 bed shelter and transitional housing for refugees and refugee claimants.
- Toronto Community Hostel - 24 bed shelter for adults, families and refugee claimants.

Programs for Children

Children in shelters have access to a wide range of supports and programs. These include resiliency programs, after school programs, homework clubs, social activities and community outings. Shelters also partner with the Toronto District School Board in a liaison program designed to help meet the needs of school-age children.

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing provides families with a range of supports as well as a safe place to stabilise before moving on to permanent housing.

- Humewood House Association, 1900 Sheppard Housing for young mothers.
- Massey Centre, pre-natal residence and transitional housing for young mothers and children.
- Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Native Women's Transition House helps Aboriginal mothers and children.
- Nazareth House, supports formerly homeless women and their children.
- Sojourn House, transitional housing and emergency shelter for refugee families and single adults.

Newcomer/Settlement Services

- Multilingual Community Interpreter Services, Central Language Service delivers language interpretation services which facilitate access to community supports.
- St. Christopher House, Newcomer Settlement Opportunities increases the capacity of shelters to provide accessible, culturally appropriate and sensitive services to homeless immigrants and refugees.