



City-Led Temporary
Accommodation for
Individuals Experiencing
Homelessness

Operational Standards

Affordable Housing and Homelessness
Social Development Branch
Citizen Services

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BACKGROUND

During an extreme cold weather event in 2020, the City of Edmonton activated a low-barrier overnight winter shelter at Commonwealth Recreation Centre. The shelter was well received by the homeless serving sector for its adaptable and low barrier policies, which was further evidenced by a high number of clients who returned night after night.

In exit interviews, clients cited some reasons they preferred the City-led shelter to other sites:

"[Place was] nice and cozy, different. I actually slept."

"Like the system here, get to shower and go to sleep."

"I like it better than [other options]. The beds are good."

Edmonton City Council has directed Administration to open a 24/7 low barrier temporary accommodation by October 30, 2020 for individuals experiencing homelessness in our city. The City of Edmonton, alongside community partners, have done significant research on the reasons people in Edmonton sleep outside instead of accessing existing emergency shelter services. It is critical that this research, and experiences from other jurisdictions across Canada, inform the operations of the City's temporary accommodation.

Operational Standards Objectives

The goal of this document is to provide City-contracted operators with a set of clear guiding principles and expectations about service delivery and facility operations management for overnight accommodations for people experiencing homelessness.



There are an estimated 600 people sleeping outside. The majority of those individuals have a combination of health and addictions needs. 63% of those individuals are Indigenous.

Guiding Principles

A number of key service delivery principles will guide the policy and operational decisions of those who are operating the Temporary Accommodation to ensure residents are treated with respect and, in turn, are respectful of others.

Operators of the City of Edmonton Temporary Accommodation will:

- Welcome all who need respite regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or physical ability.
- Maintain a housing focused approach to shelter service delivery, recognizing that stable housing is a homeless individual's primary need, and that issues such as substance use or mental illness can be better addressed once this need is satisfied.
- Provide service delivery grounded in a trauma-informed approach, that prioritizes the client's safety, choice, and control, including specific Indigenous historical trauma.
- Respect clients' cultural and spiritual identities and, if requested, connect them with pathways to access culturally appropriate support services.
- Provide access to a full spectrum of recovery and addictions services, from harm reduction to abstinence based programming, and will respect and support a client's choice to access these services.
- Collaborate with other service providers across the homeless serving and health sectors to develop case management plans for clients that lead to the best outcome.
- Communicate information to clients about the facility and operations in a way that is accessible, transparent, and emphasizes that every person has a right to services within the facility.
- Develop relationships with the community where the facility is situated and be responsive to communications from neighbours.

Minimum Shelter Standards

This section of the Operational Standards will establish minimum expectations for service delivery as it relates to the physical infrastructure provided for clients using the Temporary Accommodation.

Sleeping Space

Operators will ensure clients are provided with a sleeping space that is:

- Following trauma informed protocols.
- A cot or bed off the ground unless a mat on the ground is required for harm reduction purposes.
- Separate from communal eating or activity areas.
- Suitable for couples, if needed.
- Aligned with Alberta Health Services shelter guidelines regarding distancing between beds (although increased distancing and privacy is encouraged where possible).

Storage

Operators will ensure clients have a safe and secure storage option for their belongings, and will not confiscate or ban items from being stored unless they pose a life-safety risk to staff and other clients.

Bedding & Laundry Services

Operators will provide bedding, towels, and laundry services for clients (both commercial and self-serviced). Basic hygiene and toiletry products will be provided to clients who cannot provide their own.

Toilets & Hygiene

Operators will provide one shower stall for every twenty persons, and 1 toilet/sink for every 10 persons staying overnight. At least one shower and toilet stall must be barrier free. Basic hygiene and toiletry products will be provided to clients who cannot provide their own.

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Nutrition

Operators will provide food service delivery to clients three times a day (TBD).

Health and Safety (COVID19)

Operators will adhere to preventative cleaning measures and strategies to prevent the spread of COVID19 in the City's Temporary Accommodation as outlined in [Alberta Health Services' Shelter Guidance: Preventing, Controlling and Managing COVID-19](#) (July 2020).¹

Minimum Service Delivery Standards

This section of the Operational Standards will establish minimum expectations for service delivery and programming within the Temporary Accommodation.

Admission & Service Restrictions

Operators will provide the City of Edmonton with an Admissions Policy that includes details on access to overnight sleep space, day sleep space, and day space. Admission decisions will not be made based on a client's substance use. Decisions on restriction to access, or banning, will be made based on a set of policy and procedures that have been previously approved by the City of Edmonton.

Length of Stay

There is no prescribed limit to the length of stay; however, Operators will track length of stay data in order to evaluate and improve housing outcomes.

Specialized Program Requirements

Consistent with a housing focused approach, program and service delivery should be tied to developing a housing plan and making housing referrals where possible. Operators should ensure that all staff have a familiarity of

¹ Alberta Health Services may update this document over time to reflect the current state of the public health pandemic. Operators are responsible for ensuring cleaning and shelter standards are aligned with the most up to date version of this document.

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the housing system and are prepared to engage with clients in housing focused discussions.

Indigenous Clients

The City of Edmonton recognizes that the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in vulnerable populations due to effects of historical trauma requires Indigenous people to lead program delivery and support. Operators are expected to work or partner directly with Indigenous organizations and individuals to ensure that program delivery and engagement is culturally competent and trauma informed. Examples of this may include:

- Conducting spiritual ceremonies, including smudging, establishing a tipi, sacred fire, and other teachings and protocols that can restore and support cultural healing from the effects of historical trauma.
- Involving Elders in the planning and implementation of support services ie. Elders counselling/guidance
- Demonstrating how program and service delivery is aligned with the UNDRIP and Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

LGBTQ2S and Youth Clients

Operators will outline for the City of Edmonton clear policies that reflect inclusiveness of LGBTQ2S individuals to ensure safer spaces for non-binary gendered people in the Temporary Accommodation, as recommended in the [LGBTQ2S Youth and Housing Shelter Guidelines](#). Operators are required to respect and accept the self-defined sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression of an individual, including their pronoun. Operators will make appropriate referrals to youth programs and services, as the Temporary Accommodation is primarily meant for adult clients.

Partners and Pets

Operators will ensure couples are able to sleep adjacent to one another and will make reasonable efforts to accommodate client preference on sleeping location. Operators will also work to establish a pet policy that ensures that there is a plan to support people with pets who need to stay at the facility.

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Mental Health and Addictions Supports

Operators will assist clients in obtaining appropriate mental health and addictions support services, which will include respecting client choice to access services from the full range of the addiction recovery spectrum. In addition, operators will:

- Advise clients prior to entry what substances are prohibited from being used on site.
- Provide medical & disposable sharps containers throughout the facility.
- Direct clients to resources that reduce the spread of communicable diseases as it relates to substance use, including the provision of clean and safe injection equipment.
- Provide information to clients about where Supervised Consumption Services and other harm reduction programming can be accessed.
- Ensure staff are trained to administer naloxone and ensure an adequate supply of naloxone kits at the facility at all times.
- Make warm hand-offs to appropriate support services when services in the facility are inadequate or unavailable.

Reporting & Communications

TBD