

Summary of Emergency Shelter Best Practices

Example Policies

- Establish clear and transparent behavioural expectations for individuals using shelters.
- Establish system-wide barring/banning policies that consistently define consequences of policy violations for both guests and staff.
- Create reintegration paths/policies for individuals who have been previously banned from a shelter or program.
- Implement admittance policies that accommodate couples sleeping together or people with pets and establish safe spaces for people who identify as LGBTQ2SA+.

Program Requirements

- Services should be client-focused to address the mental and physical health needs of guests, including addressing substance use.
- Indigenous services and programs should be offered with a trauma-informed lens and include staff representation.
- All programs in shelters should be established with a clear housing focus and the success of shelter services should be evaluated on the number of clients transitioned to permanent housing regularly.
- Diversion services should be available to minimize a person's length of stay in a shelter by locating safe, appropriate alternatives to a shelter once a person has become homeless.

Operations

- Expand to 24/7 shelter admissions and stay including continuous-stay enrollment to reduce the stress of daily shelter search.
- Provide dignified sleeping accommodations by replacing the use of mats with mattresses and bunks and consider private sleeping spaces where possible.
- Develop immediate and transitional storage practices and capacity for belongings that allow guests to keep personal items in their possession while in the shelter.
- Collaborate with crime prevention and police services to conduct security audits to develop strategies that can address the incidence of theft and create a sense of security and calm for guests and staff.