

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS *for Shelter Operators*

New Emergency Shelter Program Framework

A new program framework for the Emergency Shelter Program was developed in the spring of 2007 to better integrate the Emergency Shelter Program into the housing continuum, making it easier for people facing homelessness to move from emergency shelters into housing with supports.

Why develop an Emergency Shelter Program Framework?

Previously, there was no program framework to provide program standards and outcome measures for the Emergency Shelter Program. Emergency shelter providers were asking for clear standards and expectations. BC Housing worked in consultation with emergency shelter providers across the province to develop a program framework that better integrates the Emergency Shelter Program in the housing continuum.

What is new about the program framework?

The new program framework aligns emergency shelters as gateways into the housing continuum by establishing program standards for emergency shelter providers and creating consistency in program delivery. New items include:

- **24-hour operation** – All shelters with the ability to move to 24-hour operation, seven days a week will be required to do so.
- **Gateway services** – Gateway services meet the clients' *longer term* needs by offering support services that help individuals to move through the housing and services continuum.
- **Outcome-based** – An outcome monitoring and reporting process enables emergency shelter providers and BC Housing to track the difference shelters make in people's lives.
- **Requirement for written policies** – Emergency shelter providers will be required to have written policies and procedures, including a complaints

and appeals process. These policies will need to be communicated clearly to clients.

- **Staffing** – All shelters with ten or more beds are required to have at least two staff on at all times.
- **Meals** – Shelters operating 24 hours a day must provide three meals a day according to Canada's Food Guide.

How soon is the new program framework going to be in effect?

The Emergency Shelter Program Framework will be phased in over time. The exact timing will depend on your location. BC Housing will work with you to develop an implementation plan that fits the needs of your shelter and the local community.

Our shelter is not set up to provide more than a place to sleep. What do these new program standards mean for us?

If your shelter cannot physically accommodate more than providing a place to sleep, it will not be required to provide the gateway services nor will it be required to provide 24-hour access to the shelter. The other standards and requirement for written policies will apply to your shelter.

24-Hour Operation

On October 12, 2007, the Province of B.C. increased the funding for emergency shelters by \$25 million so they can more effectively work with their clients to break the cycle of homelessness. As a result, most emergency shelters will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

How is this money allocated? Can I apply?

The operating dollars announced on October 12th will be allocated to existing emergency shelters who will be transitioning to 24-hour a day, seven day a week operation. The amount of funding each shelter receives will be based on the costs they incur to operate the shelter. Staffing costs will be based on pre-determined staff to bed ratios applied consistently across the province. Minimal barrier shelters will be offered more staff per bed than higher barrier shelters.



What does being open 24/7 mean? Do I have to take in clients 24-hours a day?

Most shelters will be required to be open 24/7; this means that shelter staff are accessible to clients 24-hours a day, seven days a week. You will NOT be required to take in clients 24-hours a day; however you will be encouraged to accept clients for as large a range of time as your shelter's physical design allows.

Being open 24/7 also means that people will not have to leave the shelter every morning at a specified time. We do not expect clients to stay in the shelter all day; in fact, shelters should encourage clients to complete tasks outside the shelter that will help them stabilize their lives (i.e., medical appointments, MEIA appointments, etc.). Shelters will also continue to be able to set times when the sleeping quarters are closed to facilitate cleaning and other maintenance duties.

What if my shelter does not have the structure in place to go 24/7 right away?

Some emergency shelters will not be able to provide 24-hour service due to physical structure (i.e. no offices, no living space) or neighbourhood concerns. Please discuss this with BC Housing and we will work with you to formulate an implementation plan.

Is there funding available to help me renovate my shelter so that I am able to go 24/7?

Depending on the extent of the funds required, BC Housing may be able to provide some or all of the funding from the Emergency Shelter Program's Building Repair and Small Capital Replacement program. Please identify these needs as you discuss your implementation plan with BC Housing.

Building Repair and Small Capital Replacement Funds

On October 12, 2007, the Province of B.C. announced one-time capital funding for Emergency Shelter Program providers totaling \$1.2 million as part of the Building Repair and Small Capital Replacement fund. This fund will be available on an annual basis for emergency shelter providers to complete the necessary building repairs to shelters funded under the Emergency Shelter Program.

Emergency shelter providers can access these funds to complete building repairs required to maintain the integrity of the shelter building and/or to replace capital items that are essential to shelter services (i.e., bed frames,

dishwashers, etc.). Currently, applications for this program are accepted once a year.

How do I apply for funds to help repair our shelter?

In spring 2008, BC Housing will issue a second call for proposals for Building Repair and Small Capital Replacement projects.

BC Housing also encourages shelters to apply to other sources for funds to assist them. Often local service groups, private philanthropists and foundations will be willing to assist with capital projects such as building repair or renovations.

If a building related emergency arises, please phone your Property Portfolio Manager immediately as they may be able to assist you.

Gateway Services

The new framework calls for emergency shelters to provide gateway services to help their clients break the cycle of homelessness in addition to services they previously offered which provided overnight accommodation, and meet the basic nutrition and hygiene needs of their clients. The inclusion of the gateway services is an important new component of the Emergency Shelter Program.

What are gateway services?

Gateway services provide people facing homelessness with access to those support services necessary to help them break the cycle of homelessness, including on-site support services and direct linkages and referrals to off-site services provided by local and regional agencies.

What qualifies as support services?

The new program framework calls for emergency shelter providers to deliver support services, such as case planning and management. This involves developing a personal service plan to assist the client to reintegrate into the community. Types of services include:

- Assessment and goal setting;
 - Referrals to appropriate services (i.e., medical, mental health, alcohol and drug treatment, etc.);
 - Employment and life skills training;
 - Referral to community services;
 - In-reach services where workers from other service providers come into the shelter to provide their service on-site.
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What is the difference between the Homeless Outreach Program and having shelters provide support services?

The Homeless Outreach Program targets people who do not access emergency shelters (i.e., people sleeping on the street, couch surfing, etc.) to help them regain housing as well as the income and support services to maintain it. Support services in emergency shelters are intended to assist shelter clients to achieve the same goals.

How are support services funded?

Support services will be funded as part of the regular Emergency Shelter Program contract once emergency shelters have transitioned to 24-hour, seven day a week operation. Support services staff are included in the calculation of the staff to bed ratio.

Our shelter has never done any case planning. Is there any training or funds available for training to help us?

Emergency shelter providers should include a budget for staff training in their annual budgets so that training requirements can be paid for from your regular subsidies.

When are we expected to start case planning?

Each shelter should identify in their implementation plan when they can start their case planning.

Our shelter is not interested in providing support services. Does this mean we are not going to qualify for funding anymore?

BC Housing is committed to integrating emergency shelters into the housing continuum. We will work with each shelter operator to help them achieve this goal. Eventually, all BC Housing funded emergency shelters with sufficient physical facilities will be required to meet these standards.

New Staffing Requirements

For the safety of both staff and clients, a minimum level of two staff is required at any emergency shelter with ten or more beds.

What if our shelter does not have the staffing levels to fund two staff at the shelter?

BC Housing funds staffing levels according to the number of beds we fund in your shelter. Emergency shelters contracted to provide more than ten beds should have the necessary funds for two staff per shift. If your contract does not provide for two staff per shift, please contact your Property Portfolio Manager.

Three Meals a Day

The new program framework requires emergency shelters that are open 24 hours a day to provide three meals. Each meal should be prepared according to the Canada Food Guide.

Our shelter is not currently set up to provide three meals a day (i.e. we don't have a certified kitchen). What can we do?

If a shelter does not have the capacity to produce food on-site, they can contract with a third-party provider to do so (i.e., hospital, cafeteria, etc.).

If you have kitchen facilities and they simply need to be upgraded to be certified, you can apply for funding through the Building Repair and Small Capital Replacement Fund. Local service groups, private philanthropists and foundations may also be willing to provide additional funds towards such a project.

Mats Versus Beds

The new program framework calls for each client to be offered a bed with a mattress, pillow and necessary bedding. Temporary beds such as mats should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

What if my shelter still uses mats instead of beds?

In the short term, mats will continue to qualify as a shelter bed. Over time, however, mats will not be considered a shelter bed under the Emergency Shelter Program contracts.

Notify BC Housing

Emergency shelter providers are asked to notify BC Housing immediately of any event or change that affects the shelter's ability to offer contracted services (i.e., natural disaster, communicable disease outbreak, pests, staffing shortage, etc.).

Why do we need to notify BC Housing when something happens?

At BC Housing, we view our relationship with emergency shelter providers as a partnership. In order to best support you, we need to be informed when significant events happen. This allows us to provide you with timely support and examine different response options with you. It also allows us to respond to questions from both the media and the MLAs in a timely and thoughtful manner so that you can focus on serving your clients.



New Reporting Requirements

New reporting requirements are being developed and, after consultation with emergency shelter providers, will be effective April 1, 2008.

Will there be any financial support to help with the reporting requirements?

BC Housing will provide shelters converting to full time shelter service (24-hours a day, seven days a week) with additional staff to support the reporting requirements. We are also in the process of determining what IT support we can offer in the short term while we assess the long term needs.

10 Day Maximum Stay Policy

Under the new program framework, each shelter will work with the local community to develop a maximum stay policy. The previous 10 day maximum stay policy is no longer in affect. The policy was revised so that shelter staff could work with each client based on their individuals needs to establish a more permanent housing solution. BC Housing supports the development of a maximum stay that best meets the needs of the local community and the individual shelter.

How long are clients now allowed to stay?

Shelters are encouraged to develop policies on length of stay based on their local shelter resources and clients. If their policies include a prescribed length of stay, they must also have policies that guide granting extensions based on the progress of the client. BC Housing does not want to set arbitrary length of stays that may undermine the work shelter staff have done to move a homeless client towards more stable living arrangements.

Performance Based and Outcome Driven Model

The Emergency Shelter Program is moving to a performance based and outcome driven model.

What does this mean for my shelter?

Emergency shelters will be required to keep client records and report data related to the program's outcomes. To assist with this increase in reporting requirements, BC Housing is offering shelters converting to 24-hour, seven day a week operation additional staff time to support your front line workers.

What will be involved in the annual review process?

The requirements for an annual review process are currently under development at this time. We will keep you informed as more information becomes available.

How is BC Housing going to enforce the new program standards?

BC Housing will enforce new program standards in the following manner:

- Reviewing monthly and annual shelter reports;
- Reviewing financial reports;
- Site visits; and
- Reviewing policies and governance practices.

Policy for Establishing a New Shelter

BC Housing does not currently have a call for proposals for new shelters. We encourage emergency shelter providers to work in partnership with their local community and municipality to be prepared to respond to a call for proposals. This includes identifying potential operators and locations for a new shelter. The new shelter should also be designed to provide service to all the homeless people in the local community. In locations considering the development of their first emergency shelter, single gender and high barrier shelters are strongly discouraged. All new shelters will be required to operate under the Emergency Shelter Program Framework as soon as they are open.

Acknowledging that shelters are the gateway to the housing continuum, potential developers of new shelters are encouraged to consider including transitional or supportive housing in their project development plans.

For more information

More information on the Emergency Shelter Program is available at www.bchousing.org or by emailing homeless@bchousing.org