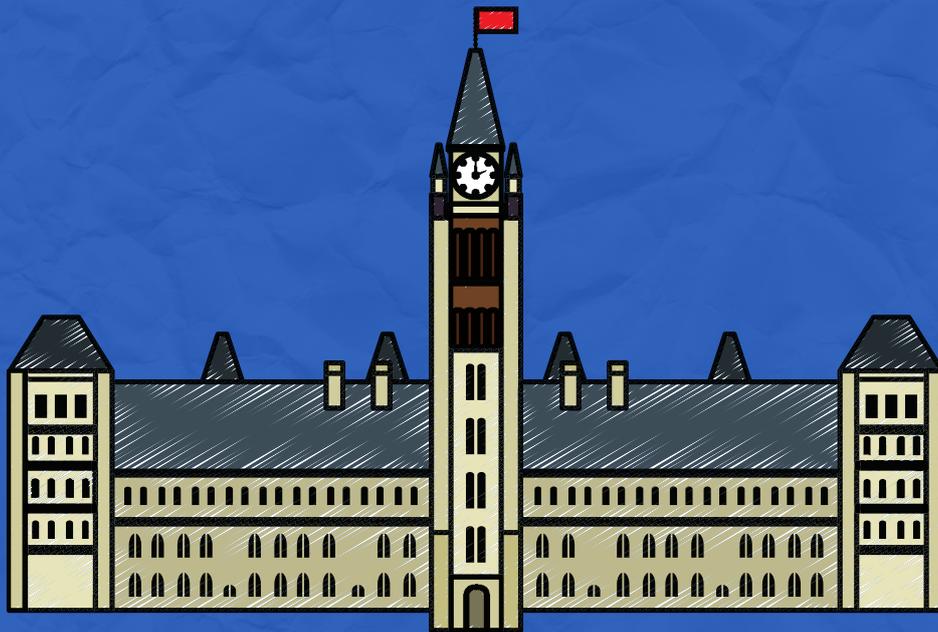


ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS- BASED, GENDER-SENSITIVE STANDARDS FOR EMERGENCY SHELTERS



THIS TOOLKIT PROVIDES:

- An overview of some solutions that shelter providers can implement to improve their service delivery and processes in a way that upholds the rights and dignity of shelter residents.
- Helpful resources to support shelter providers, advocates and lived experts in advocating for rights-based, gender-sensitive shelter standards with each level of government.



Canadian
Centre for
Housing Rights



THE NATIONAL
RIGHT TO HOUSING
NETWORK



WOMEN'S NATIONAL
HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS
NETWORK

IMPROVING SHELTER SERVICES IN CANADA



Shelter providers have a central role to play in improving the living conditions of people experiencing homelessness, and supporting them on their path toward secure and stable housing.



The successful implementation of rights-based, gender-sensitive standards in emergency shelters relies on an increased capacity of shelter providers to meaningfully engage shelter residents in decision-making, integrate principles of inclusive design in their facilities, create culturally-appropriate and gender-sensitive service delivery processes and adopt principles of trauma-informed care.



WHAT SHELTER PROVIDERS CAN DO

TO MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE SHELTER RESIDENTS IN DECISION-MAKING:



Shelter leadership and staff promote the development and funding of a resident support program that has decision-making authority.



Third party mediators are available to protect against power imbalances and lived experts are adequately compensated for their work.



Shelters foster inclusive hiring and recruitment practices to help build a robust and diverse workplace and lived experience is listed as a strong asset in every job description.

TO INTEGRATE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE DESIGN



Emergency shelters work with local architects, designers and occupational health specialists to make their facilities more accessible and inclusive of people with experience of trauma.



Emergency shelters implement procedures for clients to request disability accommodations, through the resident support program, and ensure that their protocols are flexible enough to uphold residents' choice and agency.



Coordination systems, like a shelter navigation centre, are established for enhanced collaboration between shelters, hospitals, municipalities, and other service providers to improve communication and service access.



Emergency shelters provide information, resources and services in plain language and accessible format where possible. Information for residents is available in official languages, languages of local cultural and Indigenous communities, braille, and sign language.

TO PROVIDE GENDER-SENSITIVE AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES:



Emergency shelters require all staff to undertake gender sensitivity, intersectionality, anti-oppression, and cultural sensitivity training in service delivery.



Emergency shelters proactively include practices of local cultural and Indigenous communities in their operations and service delivery.



TO PROVIDE TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE:



Shelter staff receive training on trauma-informed care, compassionate methods of crisis intervention/conflict resolution and impacts of barring practices, to ensure sensitivity in communication and de-escalation practices.



Emergency shelters have banned exclusionary policies and have implemented low- or minimal-barrier access processes.



Emergency shelters refrain from evicting residents into unsheltered homelessness and clear procedures are established so that evictions are used only in exceptional circumstances and all feasible alternatives are explored with impacted residents.



Emergency shelters provide information and education on tenant rights so that shelter residents are aware of their rights and resources when transitioning to more permanent housing.

ADVOCATING FOR BETTER SHELTER SERVICES



To bring about change in the way that emergency shelters in the homelessness and VAW sectors are designed and operate, communities must mobilize across Canada to advocate for rights-based and gender-sensitive shelter standards. In addition to mobilizing at the community level to ensure adequate representation of historically marginalized groups, there are mechanisms to engage with each level of government and encourage them to adopt the recommendations provided in this toolkit.

The following resources provide guidelines for how renters and community leader can engage with different levels of government to advocate for their housing rights. Although they do not directly speak to the experiences of shelter residents, the same actions are applicable for advocating with the government on various housing and homelessness issues.



- [Engaging with your municipal/local government](#)
- [Engaging with your provincial/territorial government](#)
- [Engaging with the Federal Housing Advocate](#)

“Advancing the Right to Housing for Women & Gender-Diverse Persons: Developing National Rights-Based Shelter Standards using a GBA+ Framework” is a project that received funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the NHS Solutions Labs, however, the views expressed are the personal views of the author and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

