

Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum Meeting

Date: Monday, November 8, 2021

Time: 1:30pm-3:30pm

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83212576340>

1. Introduction and Housekeeping

- Ashleigh Dalton, Manager, Strategic Policy and Service Planning, SSHA
- Mark Aston, TAEH Co-Chair and ED, Covenant House

2. Welcome and Land Recognition

- Kira shared the following video on the importance of treaties and reconciliation: [Indigenous Voices on Treaties - Maurice Switzer](#)
- Terry also shared that November 8 is National Aboriginal Veteran's day. For further information, please see: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/news/regional-news/western-sentinel/2021/11/nov-8-marks-national-aboriginal-veterans-day.html>

3. Learning more about Indigenous Peoples' Experiences in Toronto

- Kira led a roundtable discussion on this topic. Questions included: How can TAEH can better engage on this issue? How can we improve the experience of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness? What can non-Indigenous providers do to continue serving Indigenous people better?
- Kira and fellow colleagues at TAEH have connected with various stakeholders, including but not limited to Indigenous leaders and an Indigenous advisory committee at the City of Toronto, to identify ways in which to move forward.
- Based on discussions with these stakeholders, Kira suggested that TAEH create a sub-committee committed to identifying and developing learning opportunities on this subject, and that the sub-committee host learning events for TAEH members approximately four times per year.
- The following members volunteered to participate in the sub-committee: Veronica Snooks, Nadine Sookermany, and Harmy Mendoza.
- If you are interested in participating in the sub-committee, please contact Kira Heineck.

4. SSHA Items and Updates

COVID-19 Hotel Transition Plan

Presenter: Amy Buitenhuis (Manager, COVID-19 Transition, SSHA)

- **Hotel transition and relocation plan:** 26 temporary COVID-19 response sites are currently operating. SSHA is working to extend leases until at least April 2022 to mitigate transitions during the winter season. There is a dedicated project

team leading the relocation plan. Transition scenarios are being developed, that response to a variety of pressures and restraints to inform a detailed work plan over the next 12 months.

- **Physical distancing and shelter capacity:** Timelines to decommission any of the COVID-19 response programs will depend on any future changes to physical distancing public health guidance, availability of additional affordable and supportive housing opportunities, availability of temporary hotel spaces, and indicators of shelter demand. The Ministry of Health's guidance for congregate living settings related to physical distancing has not changed at this time.
- There are a number of moving parts that will need to be considered as we prepare for this transition. Key considerations include: a potential increase in the number of refugees entering Toronto and accessing the shelter system in the coming months; the movement of shelter users, shelter capacity, future of programs and staff at current sites, site restoration, etc.
- **Housing and service user transition plans:** profiles of clients and their needs at each of the temporary response sites will be assessed. Matching and referral to available housing opportunities will occur through new affordable and supportive housing, the Rapid Rehousing Initiative (TCHC), and portable housing benefits in private market rentals. Engagement
- **Temporary COVID-19 sites:** 26 sites are currently active. Of these:
 - 10 hotels were leased before March 2020 and were converted to COVID-19 response sites. We anticipate that they will be available after 2022 as well. The nightly occupancy of these sites of 1700 per night.
 - 12 hotels were leased for COVID-19. This group of hotels will be the focus for the transition plan in 2022, due to the contractual relationship with hotel owners. Where possible, leases will be extended till April 2022 onward. Current occupancy of these sites is 1300 per night.
 - 4 non-hotel sites were leased for COVID-19. These are congregate settings, and their occupancy is 300 per night.
- Over the last year, about 300 people have become chronically homeless each month. About 200 of these people are moving into permanent housing. There is a gap of approximately 100 people. This demonstrates a need to address the growing number of people experiencing chronic homelessness.
- In the coming weeks, SSHA will be reaching out to temporary sites to learn more about them, determine what a transition plan will look like for each of these sites, and identify what service providers will need. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Access to Housing / RGI Centralized Waiting List

Presenters: Yolisa de Jager, Manager, Access to Housing, SSHA and Kay Hodge, Housing Consultant, Access to Housing, SSHA

- **RGI Policy Changes:**
 - **Single offer rule:** the current state of three refusals will change to a single refusal (single offer) on Jan 1, 2022.
 - **RGI simplification:** the current state of various income documents being used to calculate rent will change to a Notice of Assessment being required for rent calculation. This is effective as of July 1, 2021.
 - **Note:** the City of Toronto has made an exemption for applicants experiencing homelessness and victims of domestic abuse/human trafficking. These applicants are not required to provide an NOA to accept an offer; however, an NOA will be required annually thereafter.
- **RGI System Changes**
 - **Waiting List for RGI Housing:** the Toronto Applicant Waiting List (paper-based) is moving to MyAccesstoHousingTO (online only). The Access to Housing team is issuing letters to Access to Housing Applicants to help them transition from the paper system to the online system. The partner/provider/staff portal was launched in April 2021, and the applicant portal was launched in July 2021.
 - **RGI Allocation System:** will be changing from a direct allocation model (calling clients with offers) to a choice-based allocation model (clients will be invited to view vacancies, and express interest and choose a vacant unit). Further information on this process will follow.
- For further information and/or to access the MyAccesstoHousingTO portal, visit www.toronto.ca/accesstohousing. This website also includes information on how to set up your portal, documentation required, instructional videos, and more.
- **Choice-Based Access Model for RGI:** is a method of allocating Rent-Geared-to-Income housing that applies to the CWL. It can be accessed online by providers, applicants, agencies, and staff. It provides applicants with more information about the vacancies (e.g., photos of the units, amenities, location information, etc.) so they can make an informed choice and express their interest in units they would like to rent. Vacancies are posted every two weeks. The model matches households who are ready to move with available vacant units. If the applicant is at the top of the expression of interest list, ideally the housing provider will initiate a unit viewing and this will progress to a lease signing, and identification of a move-in date. This model will be piloted in November 2021.
- **How you can help:**
 - Encourage applicants to register if they have an application on the centralized waiting list. Applicants will receive a registration or p-code in the mail. Direct applicants to Toronto.ca/accesstohousing for more information.
 - Remind applicants of the annual NOA requirement and Single Offer Rule.
 - Encourage applicants to be document read

- Direct applicants to resources for computers access/portal login
- Direct applicants to a nearby Housing Help Centre or Tax Clinic

5. Toronto's Shelter System Flow Data – review of current data dashboard

- This is a recurring agenda item. This item will resume next month. If you are interested in reviewing this month's Toronto Shelter System Flow Data, please visit: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/research-reports/housing-and-homelessness-research-and-reports/shelter-system-flow-data/>

6. Housing Secretariat Items and Updates

- Staff from the Housing Secretariat division sent their regrets for this meeting. This agenda item will be parked this month and resume next month.

7. TAEH Items and Updates

See it. Face it. End it.

Presenters: Mark Jordan, tiptap Foundation, and Kira Heineck, TAEH

- Mark Jordan provided an update on the See it. Face it. End it. campaign.
- The tiptap Foundation, in partnership with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH), is raising funds using its touchless payments™ technology to support local organizations fighting homelessness in the city.
- All funds collected through the *See It. Face It. End It.* campaign will be directed to local Toronto organizations including Homeless Connect Toronto, Red Door Shelter, and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre.
- For more information, visit: <https://www.tiptapfoundation.com/seeitfaceitendit/>
- The campaign has launched and has been successful so far. Touchless payment™ devices are already available in high traffic areas such as Eaton's Centre, certain banks, etc.
- Members are encouraged to order and display free tiptap touchless giving™ displays and devices at their sites. Members are also encouraged to tap / donate to support the movement.

Beyond Housing Pilot Project

Presenter: John Ecker, Unity Health Toronto

- Welcomed Savannah Wilson as a new member of the team
- The Beyond Housing Pilot Project is a 3 year project under Principal Investigator Dr. Stephen Hwang.
- This project has received funding from various sources and will target those on the City of Toronto's prioritization. Specifically, the populations of interest include

those who are experiencing chronic homelessness, Indigenous people, and youth.

- There are three components to this project: a conference table, a wellness team, and a case management (longer term) approach.

8. Emerging issues/priorities

- Kira asked attendees to identify what items they would like to see on future agendas, and what emerging issues or priorities they would like to discuss. Suggestions included:
 - Consider if there are opportunities to connect organizations who need support with their workload PWLE (people with lived experience) who have the skills and experience to help?
 - Group information classes to ensure agencies with higher workloads can be supported
- The next TAEH meeting is on December 13th from 1pm-3pm. From January onward, meetings will be held on Wednesdays from 10am-12pm.