



Housing Services: Shelters

SECTION A: ROLE

The primary role of shelter services is to provide a safe refuge and support for abused women and their children. The length of stay is usually 6 to 8 weeks and is dependent upon the individual needs of a woman.

To achieve this role shelters will:

- ensure the environment is supportive, empowering, and non-judgemental
- provide a setting where a woman can begin to make decisions for herself and re-gain control of her life
- make specific efforts to ensure the physical setting is safe and secure
- provide information, support, short term counselling, and referral for abused women
- attempt to meet the distinct needs of children from abusive environments
- inform and educate the community and professionals on the needs and realities faced by abused women
- participate in community efforts to eliminate abuse of women
- recognize the criminal nature of wife abuse, through the approach with abused women and by supporting the efforts of the criminal justice system
- advocate for, and foster the development of, services for abused women and their children
- provide non-residential and crisis support
- be sensitive to different cultures and the needs of immigrant women

SECTION B: REFERRALS AND ADMISSION

Shelters will accept referrals from anyone within the community, including a woman herself.

Any abused woman, threatened with abuse or abused emotionally, psychologically, physically, or sexually may be referred. The threat of abuse or actual abuse does not have to be verified nor do there have to be any physical indicators of abuse.

The abused woman's children may be referred with her or later during her residency. Children under 16 years and females over the age of 16 may be admitted with their mother. Children under 16 years of age may not remain in the shelter after their mother leaves.

Referral sources should advise women that substance abuse cannot occur in the house and if it does, a woman may be asked to leave. In the event of a psychiatric problem, staff may request a letter advising of the name of the doctor or psychiatrist and may require medical involvement if the problems prevent a woman from dealing with the abuse or living in the shelter.

Referrals are made by calling the shelter directly. If an advocate is calling on behalf of a client, the shelter worker will ask to speak to the woman directly to obtain the following information:

- Woman's name
- Number and ages of children
- Address
- Specific issues and needs at the time of referral (ie. medical, support etc.)
- Legal information re charges, court orders, if available

Women can access the shelter on a non-resident basis for an appointment to obtain information, support and have their needs assessed.

**1. RE-ADMISSION**

There is no limit to the number of times a woman may be admitted and the same criteria for re-admission applies as for admission.

For women who have been abused after leaving the shelter, re-admission to the residential program rather than the follow-up or ex-resident programs, is encouraged.

SECTION C: IN-HOUSE SERVICES

A safe and protected environment, with services that may include:

- 24-hour crisis line and 24-hour day staffing
- emergency accommodation and room and board
- supportive short-term counselling for women and children
- non-resident short term counselling and referrals for long term counselling
- information and referrals an ex-resident follow-up program and support group advocacy

SECTION D: IN-HOUSE POLICIES

The shelter maintains as confidential all information received by a woman and/or recorded in files. Confidentiality may be overridden if files are subpoenaed or if workers suspect child abuse and C.A.S. (Children's Aid Society) is informed.

With the support of staff, woman are expected to share the responsibility for the running of the house. Women are expected to be responsible for their own children.

Specific safety and security policies exist and must be respected by all residents.

SECTION E: LINKING WITH OTHER SERVICES

If possible, the referral source and/or the woman herself should indicate to staff the services or individuals who are presently working with the woman and her family. Shelter staff will work co-operatively with other services during the woman's stay at the shelter. Due to the short period of time a woman may reside in the shelter it is important for agencies to continue providing service to the woman, in order to provide a collaborative effort at attempting to ensure her safety.

Staff at the shelter will photograph or document physical injuries. Staff also work co-operatively with individuals within the criminal justice system. This then ensures that staff can effectively assist a woman and the woman is informed and can make choices. It is important that professionals within the justice system inform the woman and/or staff about the developments in legal/criminal issues.