

# Minimum Shelter Standards

## City of Lloydminster

Prepared by the Lloydminster Housing Working Group

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The City of Lloydminster acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 Territory, and the City of Lloydminster respects the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The City of Lloydminster expresses gratitude to the members of various organizations and groups who actively participated in the development of the City's Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards.

- Saskatchewan Health Authority;
- Alberta Health Services;
- Individuals with lived experience in the shelter system;
- Residents in Recovery;
- Thorpe Recovery Centre;
- The Olive Tree Community Centre;
- Emergency shelter providers including Lloydminster Social Action Coalition Society and SPARK Foundation of Lloydminster;
- Lloydminster RCMP;
- Lloydminster Native Friendship Centre;
- Affordable housing groups including Lloydminster Métis Housing Group, Lloydminster Region Housing Group, Carleton Housing, and Lloydminster Housing Authority;
- Lloydminster Community Youth Centre;
- Lloydminster Chamber of Commerce;
- Downtown Area Redevelopment Committee (City of Lloydminster Appointed);
- Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Lloydminster;
- Lloydminster Concerned Citizens for Seniors Care Society;
- Representative from Border City Connects Society for Accessibility;
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Society of Lloydminster;
- Libbie Young Centre.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The City of Lloydminster's Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards aim to combat homelessness in our community by illustrating how emergency shelters can prioritize accessibility and housing-focused solutions. These standards, developed with insights from our local partners, establish baseline operating, service-delivery, and infrastructure criteria. They serve as a benchmark for emergency shelters to assess their effectiveness in assisting individuals in overcoming homelessness, fostering safer and healthier lives. Moreover, they provide valuable guidance for funders and other stakeholders in Lloydminster's homeless-serving system to shape future discussions on the role of emergency shelters in addressing homelessness.

These standards are intended to be aspirational in nature, providing advice and guidance to existing and future emergency shelters to improve the shelter experience for guests. The City of Lloydminster recognizes that funding and available resources may limit a shelter site's ability to achieve all elements. The City of Lloydminster lacks authority or responsibility over shelter operations, however, as the backbone support for the Social Policy Framework (SPF) the City of Lloydminster is in the best position to "hold space" for the ongoing work of the SPF Housing Working Group, and to provide oversight through data management, research, and policy coordination. More information can be found in the Lloydminster Housing Needs Assessment and Strategy.

The Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards outline optimal practices for walk-up, overnight emergency shelter services specifically tailored for individuals experiencing homelessness in Lloydminster. These shelters are distinct from facilities catering to those fleeing domestic violence, youth shelters, and short-term/transitional housing options, which may require unique service delivery models and referral-based intakes.

Grounded in guiding principles, the standard encompasses operational, service-delivery, and infrastructure best practices for emergency shelter operators to adopt and learn from. It prioritizes client-centered and trauma-informed approaches, ensuring essential services and connections to social support systems are provided in a manner that minimizes harm for individuals experiencing homelessness and the broader community.

For clarity, a comprehensive glossary of terms and definitions is provided. It is recommended that the standard undergo periodic review and updates every three years to incorporate the latest research findings and adapt to changes within Lloydminster's emergency shelter landscape.

## 2. SYSTEM DEPENDENCIES

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Emergency shelter services serve as a vital gateway for Lloydminster residents to access housing, healthcare, and other essential programs necessary to address homelessness. While emergency shelters in Lloydminster can adopt housing-focused, trauma-informed, and accessible care systems within their facilities, it's crucial to recognize that alignment with other systems, such as healthcare, justice, and housing, is essential for guests to transition successfully from shelter to stable and suitable housing solutions.

Throughout the engagement process, stakeholders underscored the significance of increasing the availability of supportive housing for individuals with complex needs who are experiencing chronic homelessness as a crucial intervention to enhance housing outcomes from shelters. Additionally, all shelter operators emphasized the importance of integrating medical support services within emergency shelters to adequately address the needs of guests. These interdependencies, along with others, necessitate ongoing collaborative efforts between relevant health and social agencies to ensure appropriate care pathways for individuals in our community who present with multiple physical, mental, and addiction-related health needs.

Our hope is that community groups will endeavor to obtain a deep understanding of available resources and collaborate effectively with other entities. Understanding existing resources entails a comprehensive exploration of local assets, ranging from governmental support to nonprofit initiatives and grassroots efforts. By recognizing these resources, groups can maximize their impact and avoid duplicating efforts. Fostering collaboration among various groups promotes synergy, leveraging each other's strengths and expertise. Whether it's pooling resources for a common goal or sharing knowledge and best practices, cooperation amplifies the collective potential to address community needs more comprehensively and sustainably. Embracing this collaborative mindset not only enhances efficiency but also cultivates a stronger sense of solidarity and shared responsibility within the community fabric.

### 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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1. Advocate for inclusivity and extend a welcoming embrace to all individuals in need of services, regardless of their gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or cognitive and physical abilities.
2. Maintain a housing-focused strategy in delivering shelter services, acknowledging that stable housing stands as the fundamental requirement for all individuals facing homelessness. Other health and social challenges are better addressed once housing stability is achieved.
3. Provide services with an approach rooted in trauma awareness, emphasizing safety, autonomy, and empowerment of the guest. This includes recognizing and addressing specific historical traumas experienced by Indigenous communities.
4. Acknowledging the disproportionate representation of Indigenous peoples among the homeless population, prioritize addressing their specific needs by implementing culturally appropriate operations and support services tailored to Indigenous clients.
5. Honour clients' cultural and spiritual identities and, upon request, facilitate connections to services that align with and respect their cultural backgrounds.
6. Offer services and/or referrals to a comprehensive range of addiction and recovery services, spanning from harm reduction to programs centered on abstinence. Respect and uphold a client's autonomy in choosing which services they wish to access, providing support accordingly.
7. Engage in partnerships with various service providers and stakeholders within the realms of homeless support, healthcare, and justice. This includes but is not restricted to income and employment support programs, mental health services, addiction and recovery programs, and collaboration with the RCMP.
8. Ensure that information regarding the facility and its operations is communicated in a manner that is easily understandable, transparent, and accessible to both guests and staff. Clearly outline behavioural expectations and the related policies and procedures with defined consequences.
9. Build rapport with the community surrounding the facility and create transparent communication channels with neighbours.

## 4. OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

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This section will establish minimum operational standards for day-to-day operations of emergency shelters in Lloydminster. These standards are designed to increase accessibility for guests who may otherwise avoid shelter due to operational barriers.

### OUTCOME STATEMENT

The successful implementation of the operational standards described in this section are expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase the number of shelter spaces in Lloydminster that are considered to be low barrier.
- Reduce the number of individuals choosing to sleep rough when there is available shelter space.
- Minimize, or reduce, the number of critical incidents occurring at shelters.

### Hours of Operation

Emergency shelter operators should provide true 24/7 support to guests and not require them to leave the property for operational purposes (such as converting a space from sleeping services to meal services). To achieve this, there must be a clear separation of day-services space (including communal eating spaces, offices, and activity areas) from overnight sleeping space to allow guests to move from one space to another throughout the day.

### Safety

The purpose of this safety standard is to ensure the protection and well-being of individuals seeking refuge in emergency shelters during times of crisis or disaster. It outlines guidelines and procedures to mitigate risks and create a safe environment for occupants and staff.

#### 1. Fire Safety

- Emergency shelters must be equipped with fire detection and suppression systems that meet local building codes and standards. Monthly fire drills for staff should be carried out.
- Adequate fire exits, clearly marked and unobstructed, must be provided throughout the shelter. "Muster Point" should be clearly marked.

#### 2. Sanitation and Hygiene

- Adequate sanitation facilities, including toilets, handwashing stations, and waste disposal facilities, must be provided and maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Daily cleaning and disinfection of communal areas, sleeping quarters, and sanitary facilities should be conducted to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

### 3. Security

- Security measures, including surveillance cameras, monitored alarms systems and perimeter fencing should be in place to ensure the safety and security of occupants and staff.
- Access to the shelter should be controlled to prevent unauthorized entry and ensure the safety of those inside.
- Ensure all staff are trained in conflict de-escalation and violence prevention techniques.

### 4. Zero Tolerance Policy

- Enforce a zero-tolerance policy for any form of violence or harassment within the shelter, with clear consequences for offenders.
- Display prominently and communicate the policy to all occupants.
- Establish clear procedures for responding to incidents of violence or threats, including immediate intervention, and involvement of appropriate authorities.

### 5. Emergency Preparedness

- Emergency shelters must have a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan in place, outlining procedures for responding to various types of emergencies, including natural disasters, fires, medical emergencies, and security threats.
- Staff should receive training on emergency procedures and be prepared to implement them effectively in the event of an emergency.

### 6. Accessibility

- Emergency shelters should be accessible to individuals with disabilities, including provisions for wheelchair access, accessible facilities, and accommodations for sensory impairments.
- Staff should be trained in providing assistance to individuals with disabilities and ensuring their safety and comfort during their stay in the shelter.

### 7. Health Services

- Basic health services, including first aid and access to medical care, should be available within the shelter or in close proximity.
- Adequate provisions should be made for individuals with chronic medical conditions or special healthcare needs.

### 8. Child Protection (Family Shelters)

- Measures should be in place to ensure the safety and protection of children in the shelter, including designated safe areas, supervision, and protocols for addressing child protection concerns.

- Staff should receive training on child protection issues and be alert to signs of abuse or neglect.

#### 9. Communication

- Effective communication systems should be in place to provide occupants with timely and accurate information during emergencies, including evacuation procedures, weather alerts, and other important announcements.
- Information should be provided in multiple languages and formats to ensure accessibility for all occupants.

#### 10. Collaboration and Coordination

- Emergency shelters should collaborate with local authorities, emergency services, and community organizations to ensure a coordinated response to emergencies and provide necessary support services to occupants.
- Regular coordination meetings and drills should be conducted to foster collaboration and ensure readiness for emergencies.

#### 11. Continuity of Operations

- Emergency shelters should have contingency plans in place to ensure the continuity of operations during emergencies, including provisions for staffing, supplies, and services.
- Regular assessments and updates of emergency plans should be conducted to address changing needs and circumstances.

#### 12. Grievance Policy:

- Emergency Shelters must have a clearly defined grievance policy to ensure that clients can voice concerns and seek resolution in a fair and transparent manner. This policy should outline the process for filing complaints, expected response times, and available avenues for appeal. The policy should be easily available without requiring a request from staff.

### **Sleeping Accommodations**

Dignified sleeping quarters should be provided to ensure guests can maintain healthy sleep hygiene for the duration of their stay in shelter. Sleep hygiene is a critical component of an individual's overall physical and mental health. Dignified sleeping accommodation includes:

- Private or semi-private sleeping spaces where possible;
- A bed off the ground, with bed rails or lower heights for low-mobility guests or those impaired by substance use;
- Separation from communal eating or activity areas;
- Day-sleep spaces, if necessary.
- 4 feet between beds, if in a congregate setting (although this is not a preferred setting).

Operators will make reasonable efforts to accommodate client preference on sleeping location, when necessary.

### **Storage for Guests**

Emergency shelters should ensure guests have safe and secure storage options for their belongings and should not confiscate or ban items from being stored unless they pose a life-safety risk to staff and other guests. Rules around accessing storage, like what can and cannot be stored, how often a person can access their items if stored in a locked storage room, and how long an item will be stored before it is discarded should be posted publicly, with storage records kept by operators.

Some examples of storage solutions include:

- **Lockers or trunks:** a 24/7 storage solution that allows clients to safely lock up and access their own clothing, shoes, hygiene products, and other small personal items.
- **Amnesty Totes or Safe Keeping Boxes:** a storage system that allows staff to store a clients items prohibited from shelter that might otherwise prevent them from being able to access services. These items can be stored in opaque bags for the guest to check out upon leaving the shelter.
- **Secure Bike Options:** bicycles are a common mode of transport for individuals experiencing homelessness; a locked bike facility should be well designed to prevent theft.

### **Hygiene Services**

Operators will provide a minimum of one shower stall for every twenty persons (per industry standards), and 1 toilet/sink for every 10 persons staying overnight (per National Building Code, Alberta Edition). A minimum of one washroom that is barrier-free, fully accessible and marked as gender neutral must be provided. Access to showers by clients should be available on demand.

Basic hygiene and toiletry products should be provided to clients who cannot provide their own, including towels, soap, shampoo, deodorant, comb/brush, a toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving products, menstrual hygiene products, and incontinence products as appropriate.

### **Bedding & Laundry Services**

Operators should provide bedding, towels, and laundry services for clients. Operating hours, sign-up sheets, time for servicing and cleaning - should be posted where guests and/or community members can read and understand it.

## **Nutrition**

Nutritional needs are dependent upon the individual needs of each client and food provision is an essential health service that should be included in shelter. Food service delivery that requires line-ups does not promote dignity for those accessing food services and are known to cause unrest and frustration.

Instead, food services that offer guests' meal options at all times of the day are preferred, as both a health intervention, for guests who have underlying health conditions like diabetes, and as a way to increase accessibility for guests who may try to access shelter outside of pre-set mealtimes.

## **Pets**

Emergency shelters should establish a pet policy that ensures that there is a plan in place to support people with pets who need to stay at the facility. If pets cannot be accommodated, emergency shelters should refer guests to a shelter that meets their needs and arrange for transport.

## **Applicable Laws**

These Standards are meant to supplement, not to displace, any applicable laws, statutes, regulations, bylaws, policies and equivalents thereto.

Operators shall adhere to all applicable laws, statutes, regulations, bylaws, policies, and equivalents thereto.

## **Neighbourhood Impacts**

All shelters must develop a Good Neighbour Commitment that lays out specific measures and actions that will be implemented by the operator to mitigate and minimize the impacts of the shelter operation on neighbouring properties, businesses, and residents.

In order for a Good Neighbour Commitment to be acceptable in form and content to the City, it must include service standards, 24/7 on-site contact, and an issue resolution process that is clearly communicated with nearby residents and businesses. Public sidewalks and building frontages should not be relied upon for queueing or smoking areas.

## 5. SERVICE DELIVERY STANDARDS

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This section will establish minimum expectations for service delivery and programming for emergency shelter operations in Lloydminster.

### OUTCOME STATEMENT

The successful delivery of the programs and services described in this section are expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase the number of individuals securing permanent housing from shelter.
- Increase the number of individuals being diverted to temporary housing options that are more suitable for their circumstances.
- Reduce the average length of stay for regular shelter guests.

### Expectations of Shelter Guests

Operators should develop an Admissions Policy that includes behavioral expectations of guests accessing overnight sleep space, day sleep space, and day space. The expectations must be posted transparently throughout the emergency shelter and communicated verbally to guests during admission to emergency shelter.

These expectations should include (but are not limited to):

- behavioral expectations, including a commitment to be respectful of staff and other shelter guests;
- items that are prohibited from entering shelter and options for storage of personal items (see *Storage for Guests*);
- required participation in housing programs and a commitment from guests to work on a housing plan.

Admission cannot be denied based on a guest's substance use; guests should be welcome to use emergency shelter services if they are safely mobile and are able to adhere to the behavioral expectations in place.

### Service Restrictions

Decisions on restrictions on access (sometimes called banning or barring) will be made based on a clearly defined policy and consistent set of procedures that is publicly posted for guests and staff. Banning or barring should be minimized unless individuals pose a safety threat to staff or other participants. A clear process for pursuing the removal or reconsideration of bans will also be articulated.

## Admission & Diversion

During the admissions process, emergency shelter operators should:

- Assess if the guest is a good fit for the programs and services available at the shelter.
- Provide a referral and arrange transport for guests who are best suited to a different shelter or, if possible, divert to housing, based on their needs and availability.
- Share with the guest clear expectations about the conditions for shelter use, orient guests to the space, and assign a bed.

The admissions process must demonstrate a clear pathway to intake for shelter guests, requiring that all guests participate in housing programs and can voluntarily participate in other specialized programs that support their pursuit of housing.

Diversion is the practice of referring people from shelter to safe and appropriate alternatives wherever possible. When new guests arrive, emergency shelters should have a diversion policy and process in place that works with the new guest to determine whether the shelter is an appropriate place for them to stay that night and, if it's not, work towards a better solution.

## Intake

Once guests have been admitted to shelter, a more comprehensive intake should be completed within one to three days and added to HIFIS or similar program. While guests may not be able to do a full intake on the same day as seeking admission (often reasonably seeking to have their basic needs met first), a more comprehensive intake should be completed with guests to quickly connect them to a program that will facilitate their rapid exit from shelter into housing. Shelters should avoid the use of lengthy line ups or queues for beds.

## Specialized Program Requirements

There are four specialized program areas that Lloydminster shelter operators should develop, with corresponding policies and referral pathways, for an emergency shelter to meet Lloydminster's Minimum Shelter Standards.

Consistent with a housing focused approach, there should be an embedded housing program in every single emergency shelter and service delivery should be tied to developing a housing plan and making housing referrals as frequently as possible.

To achieve this, emergency shelter operators must ensure that all staff have a familiarity of the housing system. To maximize access to housing programs in shelters, shelters should be low-barrier and inclusive of the unique needs reflected in Lloydminster's homeless population.

In addition to a housing program, three additional program standards have been identified to increase accessibility to shelter and, by extension, housing programs.

### 1. **Diversion and Housing First Programs**

Emergency shelters must have an integrated diversion and referral program for shelter guests to access alternative housing support in Lloydminster. It should be the goal of these programs, and all programs, to help move individuals out of shelter and into safe housing quickly.

Emergency shelters can track their success in this area by measuring housing outcomes (increased) and guests' length of stay in shelter (decreased) and frequently reviewing intake information to identify individuals who are chronically in shelter. Chronic shelter users should be targeted for more enhanced housing support.

An embedded housing program should mandate that:

- guests have engaged with a housing worker within 48 hours of entering an emergency shelter;
- guests develop a housing plan within one week of entering shelter; and
- if the housing program in shelter is not an appropriate fit, guests are referred to appropriate housing programs as quickly as possible.

### 2. **Mental Health and Addictions Program**

Operators will assist clients in obtaining appropriate mental health and addictions support services, which includes respecting client choice to access services from the full range of the addiction treatment and recovery spectrum. Provide a clear referral pathway and connections to the healthcare system should be established and tracked. This program should include:

- Clear protocols for guests prior to entry that explain what substances are prohibited from being used on site and corresponding storage options;
- Provision of medical and disposable sharps containers;
- Direction to resources that reduce the spread of communicable diseases as it relates to substance use, including where to access clean and safe injection equipment or information on where to obtain it;
- Information on available Supervised Consumption Services and where other harm reduction programming can be accessed;
- Staff training in overdose prevention and a clear protocol on how to respond to an overdose with provision of the appropriate tools;
- Referral pathways with warm hand-offs to appropriate support services when services in the facility are inadequate or unavailable.

### 3. **Indigenous Support Program**

The City of Lloydminster recognizes that the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in vulnerable populations due to effects of historical trauma requires Indigenous people to lead program delivery and support services wherever possible. Operators are expected to work or

partner directly with Indigenous organizations and individuals to ensure that program delivery and engagement is culturally competent. Examples of this may include:

- Referral to local Indigenous support programs.
- Involving Elders in the planning and implementation of support services (i.e., Elders counselling/guidance).
- Access to translation services to support personalized service delivery.
- Diversion efforts that seek to connect people to their families and home communities, wherever they may be.

#### 4. **LGBTQ and Youth**

Operators will establish clear policies that reflect inclusiveness of LGBTQ individuals to ensure safer spaces for non-binary gendered people in Emergency Shelters. Operators will make referrals to youth programs and services for those who are not appropriately supported in adult-focused emergency shelters.

## 6. INFRASTRUCTURE STANDARDS

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This section will outline infrastructure standards for shelter operators pursuing modifications of an existing building or building a new facility.

### OUTCOME STATEMENT

That emergency shelters in Lloydminster adopt best practices as outlined below when redesigning an existing shelter space or building a new shelter to improve service delivery, decrease negative community impacts, and increase accessibility for guests, in line with the Guiding Principles.

### Built Form Considerations

Emergency shelters should have:

- day space, separate from sleeping quarters, that provides areas for: communal meals, housing work, and staff offices.
- barrier free and gender-neutral washrooms.
- a predictable lay-out, with minimal sharp corners and rounded walls to prevent individuals from bumping into one another.
- enhanced materials used throughout to prevent noise transfer between spaces.
- a private and thoughtfully placed outdoor smoking area with no roof.
- safe parking and storage for bikes.
- increased ventilation and sanitation to support public health.
- trauma informed design.

## 7. TERMS & DEFINITIONS

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**Anti-Racism:** Anti-racism is usually structured around conscious efforts and deliberate actions to provide equitable opportunities for all people on an individual and systemic level. It can be engaged by acknowledging personal privileges, confronting acts and systems of racial discrimination, and/or working to change personal racial biases (*Safer For All Report, March 30, 2021*).

**Harm Reduction:** A client-centered approach that seeks to reduce the health and social harms associated with addiction and substance use (*Harm Reduction, Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario, 2021*).

**Housing Focused Shelter:** A housing-focused shelter is unrelenting in its pursuit to make homelessness as brief as possible while returning people to permanent accommodation. From the moment an individual or family pursues shelter, there are efforts to ensure a safe and appropriate exit from shelter. Housing focused shelter does not operate other programming that can interfere with ensuring stays are short-term with a return to housing rapidly. (*Housing Focused Shelter, OrgCode Consulting Inc. in partnership with the Canadian Shelter Transformation Network and Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, March 2019*).

**Low-Barrier Shelter:** Low barrier shelters ensure that every reasonable barrier to shelter access (and by extension housing access) has been removed (*Housing Focused Shelter, OrgCode Consulting Inc. in partnership with the Canadian Shelter Transformation Network and Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, March 2019*).

**Trauma-Informed Care:** Services are provided in ways that recognize the need for physical and emotional safety, as well as choice and control in decisions affecting one's treatment. Trauma-informed service delivery creates an environment where service users do not experience further traumatization or re-traumatization (*Trauma-Informed Care Overview, Community Mental Health Action Plan, 2021*).