

Appendix "A"
Transitional and Housing Support Program

Referral Process & Protocols

Timely referrals and responsive service systems are required to effectively support individuals needing assistance. In Niagara, the five agencies delivering the Transitional and Housing Support Program are:

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| 1. Bethlehem Not for Profit Housing Projects of Niagara | 905-641-1660 |
| 2. Centre De Sante Communautaire Hamilton Niagara | 905-734-1141 |
| 3. West Niagara Second Stage Housing | 905-309-1477 |
| 4. Women's Place (St. Catharines and District) Inc. | 905-684-4000 |
| 5. Women's Place of South Niagara Inc. | 905-732-4632 |

Because of the potential difficulty in approaching an individual perceived to be at risk of being a victim of domestic abuse, the following protocols have been developed as a reference point for housing providers in supporting tenant/members:

Individual lives with partner

- approach individual with concerns regarding safety in a tactful, respectful and discreet manner
- offer information on community contacts – housing providers are provided with a list of VAW services
- refer individual to local THSP as requested and encourage individual to call for assistance
- offer quiet private place for individual to make call at the individual's convenience
- inform individual of the "Duty to Report" to the local Children's Aid Society or encourage individual to make the call themselves
- **report** situation to Family and Children's Services of Niagara if children are involved.

Individual no longer lives with partner

- approach individual with concerns regarding safety in a tactful, respectful and discreet manner
- offer information on community contacts
- refer individual to local THSP as requested and encourage individual to call for assistance
- individual may take written information away if it is safe to do so
- offer quiet private place for individual to make call at the individual's convenience
- inform individual of the "Duty to Report" to the local Children's Aid Society or encourage individual to make the call themselves
- **report** situation to Family and Children's Services of Niagara if children are involved.

Individual self identifies a need for THSP worker services

- offer information on community contacts
- refer individual to local THSP as requested and encourage individual to call for assistance
- individual may take written information away if it is safe to do so
- offer quiet private place for individual to make call at the individual's convenience
- alternatively the housing provider may make call to THSP worker services on the individual's behalf with a signed release of information form
- inform individual of the "Duty to Report" to the local Children's Aid Society or encourage individual to make the call themselves
- **report** situation to Family and Children's Services of Niagara if children are involved.

Eviction Prevention

It is in the best interest of all parties to assist tenants and their children to avoid eviction and possible homelessness or returning to the abuser. To that end, Housing Providers, Niagara Regional Housing and local THSP's will communicate and coordinate services and supports at the earliest appropriate time to prevent eviction. Eviction can occur for non payment of rent or reasons related to displaying anti social behaviours and illegal activities.

Step 1 Niagara Regional Housing

Actively encourage the victim to accept support from THSP's at the initial point of contact with Housing Access division, Niagara Regional Housing.

Step 2 Niagara Regional Housing and Housing Providers

Inform victim of her rights and responsibilities upon accepting a housing unit as a Special Priority Program Client.

Step 3 Niagara Regional Housing & Housing Providers

Niagara Regional Housing and Housing Providers will attempt to resolve any rental arrears, defaulted payback agreements or anti-social behaviours with the assistance of the THSP worker. Tenants/members will only be evicted as a last resort. Niagara Regional Housing and Housing Providers will attempt to prevent eviction by:

- Providing a welcoming attitude and continuing to connect with women as her family transitions to a new life style in order to anticipate and suggest needed supports and services.
- Encouraging referral to a THSP worker if victim has not previously been referred.
- Encouraging victim to allow Housing Provider to communicate with THSP's as appropriate by completing a release of information.
- Acting on negative issues (both rental arrears and anti-social behaviour) quickly, by providing an early notice to the victim and the THSP worker that her tenancy may be at risk.
- Meeting with the tenant/member and THSP worker to explain expectations and communicate what behaviours need to be changed in order to maintain successful tenancy.
- In cases of rental arrears or first time defaulted agreements, working with the tenant/member and the THSP worker to determine an achievable payment schedule and formalize those agreements.
- Encouraging direct rental payment where rental arrears is an issue
- Encouraging & providing contact information for "Community Start up Funding" for arrears or defaulted payback agreements.
- In cases of anti-social behaviour, working with the tenant/member and THSP worker to ensure appropriate community linkages or referrals.

Step 4 THSP Workers

Provide support to victims and activate community interventions like life skills, budget management training, and referral to community supports as required. Communicate and plan cooperatively and strategically with the social Housing Provider and other community supports in order to prevent eviction and maintain the victim in the housing unit.

Step 5 Procedures for Non-Payment of Rent

If as a last resort the tenant/member is facing eviction, the Housing Provider will:

- Notify Family and Children's Services, if there are children in the household and no appropriate arrangements have been made for shelter. Duty to Report Sec. 72(2), Sec. 72(3)(4) and Sec 72(7) of the Child and Family Services Act (Appendix 4).
- Provide information about community supports and encourage referral for special needs households requiring supports.