



# WELCOME!

## A GUIDE FROM HABITAT SERVICES

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HABITAT-MONITORED BOARDING HOMES

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**HABITAT SERVICES 416-537-2721**

Habitat Services receives funding from  
Ontario Health and the City of Toronto

## What is this guide about?

This guide will give you pointers and important information about living in a Habitat-monitored boarding home and what you're entitled to as a tenant. In case you're not aware, a boarding home is a type of housing in which tenants share facilities like living and dining rooms, and receive housekeeping services and all meals. We hope this guide will answer some of your questions and help you feel more 'at home'.

## Does Habitat Services run these homes or own them?

Neither. Habitat is a community agency that works with the owners of about 45 boarding homes in Toronto to provide good quality, affordable housing available for people with mental health challenges. Habitat refers potential tenants, monitors and inspects the homes, and gives the owners a subsidy to help with the costs of running the homes and providing meals and services. This subsidy is a daily rate paid to owners for tenants with low income, and comes from the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto.

Habitat helps make the homes more affordable by setting the room and board rate that's paid by tenants on low income, including seniors and those on ODSP or OW.

## Who are these people I see in the home and what do they do?

Each home is managed by the owner or an operator; this person hires staff (the house staff) to keep it in a clean and sanitary condition, prepare meals, and ensure a safe, stable and home-like environment. (Note that Habitat-monitored homes don't have the facilities for tenants to cook their own meals). House staff also need to give tenants personal supplies, such as toothpaste and shampoo, and respond to emergencies by calling 911. Tenants should try to talk to house staff first if they have any problems with the home, like if there are maintenance issues or toiletry supplies are low.



You'll also see **Housing Support** staff visit the home. Housing Support staff come by two to three times a week and help organize tenant activities and tenant meetings. They can also help tenants with issues related to their housing and individual support needs. In some homes they work for Habitat, while in others they work for Cota. Housing support staff members' names, phone numbers and schedules should be on the home's bulletin board.

Finally, **Residential Services Inspectors** (RSIs) are members of the Contract Monitoring team at Habitat. RSIs visit regularly to make sure everything is working and that the home meets Habitat standards for cleanliness, nutrition, services and the way tenants are treated. Habitat has a procedure to make sure tenants' complaints are dealt with and resolved fairly, so you can talk to your RSI if you have concerns about or problems with the home. Page 10 of this booklet will explain what to do when you have a complaint. The RSI's number and extension should be on the bulletin board as well, but if it isn't, tenants can get it from Habitat at 416-537-2721.

## What are these Habitat Standards? Why do they matter to me?

The Habitat Standards are part of a contract that boarding home owners have signed with Habitat. They include a detailed description of all the services that the owners have to provide for tenants. See pages 6, 7 and 8 for a list of these services.

### **Note:**

When you first apply to Habitat, you can choose which boarding home might be best for you from a list of suitable homes with vacancies. However, like all landlords, the owners of Habitat-monitored boarding homes make the final decisions about who can move in as new tenants.

## Rights and Responsibilities

Rights	Responsibilities
<p>You have rights as a tenant under the law in Ontario. When you move in, the owner or house staff needs to give you a Tenancy Agreement and another document called the Care Home Information Package. They describe what you're entitled to as a tenant in the home and what your legal rights are. Keep these documents and make sure you understand them.</p> <p>The housing support staff from Habitat or Cota can go over the forms with you.</p>	<p>The landlord or the owner of the home also has legal rights and the Tenancy Agreement explains what those are.</p> <p>You should know that if you don't pay your room and board on time, if you do something illegal here, or cause damage or problems for the other tenants or staff, you can be made to leave (evicted), as long as the owner follows the legal steps. You also could have problems getting into a Habitat monitored home in the future.</p>
<p>You have the right to look for or ask for help in finding other housing.</p>	<p>Give the owner at least 30 days' notice before you move.</p>
<p>You're entitled to receive personal supplies and toiletries (see the whole list on page 6).</p>	<p>Let the staff know when you're low on any of these supplies (see page 6).</p>
<p>You're entitled to three nutritious meals daily, an evening snack, and access to a snack table from 9am-5pm.</p>	<p>If you need a meal saved for you or if you'll be missing lunch and need to take a bag lunch, let the staff know in advance.</p>
<p>You are entitled to the use of the phones, TVs and computer in the house, and you're entitled to use the laundry room and the laundry equipment and supplies there.</p>	<p>You share these facilities so be careful with them and be considerate of other tenants. If you aren't able to do your laundry yourself, the house staff can do it for you.</p>
<p>You're entitled to a home in good condition: TVs, phones, computer access, appliances, laundry machines, washrooms, lights and the heating system should all work properly; the furniture, walls, floors, doors and windows should be in good condition.</p>	<p>Make sure that you don't misuse or damage anything in the home, and let the house staff know if something is damaged or not working. Also let the staff know of any house maintenance issues.</p>
<p>You have the right to be treated with respect, dignity, and without discrimination.</p>	<p>Treat all tenants and staff as you would like to be treated, with respect and consideration.</p>
<p>You're entitled to as much privacy as possible. Staff and tenants must knock and give you time to answer the door before entering your bedroom.</p>	<p>Respect the privacy of others in the home. If you're sharing a room, be especially considerate of your roommate and their personal space.</p>
<p>When you move in, you're entitled to keys for the front door, your bedroom, and the storage space in your room (if you're in a double room).</p>	<p>Take care of your keys. There is a cost for replacement.</p>

<p>You have the right to live in a home that is peaceful and safe. You should not have to worry about your fellow tenants, or about strangers.</p>	<p>Harassment or abuse of tenants or staff is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Follow safety procedures. Let staff know about any strangers in the house, or if you feel unsafe.</p>
<p>You have the right to live in a clean, comfortable home, free of bugs and other pests. If you wish or aren't able, the staff will clean your room for you.</p>	<p>Keep your room free of things that could attract pests, like garbage or dirty dishes. For the sake of other tenants, please shower and wash your clothes regularly.</p>
<p>You have the right to have guests during visiting hours that are set by the tenants and owner.</p>	<p>You are responsible for the behaviour of your guests at all times while they are visiting the home.</p>

## What is it like to live in a Habitat-Monitored Boarding Home?

10 Questions and Answers by the Brighter Days Committee, made up of current and former Habitat tenants.

**How long do people live in Habitat homes?** Habitat homes are permanent housing. That means people living here have rights as tenants. Sometimes tenants move from a shared room to a single room in the same house, or from one Habitat home to another, or into other types of housing. There are no timeframes; it depends on what the tenant wants.

**What are the advantages of staying in a boarding home monitored by Habitat?** You can get into Habitat boarding homes quickly, without sitting on a waiting list. It's cheaper than other housing because the houses are subsidized. It can be a good place because there's someone (the house staff) to respond to emergencies all day. There are people around to socialize with and sometimes tenants look after each other. The homes are monitored. Tenants can get involved, and get support if they want it.

**How are complaints processed? Will the owner find out if I make a complaint?** Try to talk to the owner or operator

or house staff first. If you don't feel comfortable doing that, talk to the housing support staff or the Habitat monitoring staff. The Cota or Habitat staff will make sure your complaint is anonymous if it's at all possible. You don't need to be afraid to speak about issues in the house (you can't get evicted for that), and a good time to raise issues you may have is during a tenant meeting.

### **Note:**

A 'ten-op' gives a tenant that may be having a serious problem in the home a chance to talk and work things out with the owner or operator. If the owner/operator and the tenant can come to an agreement at the meeting, the owner/operator won't go ahead with an eviction. The tenant can ask housing support staff or any of their workers to be present, and a Habitat monitoring staff (RSI) is also there to take notes and to make sure everyone gets heard and is treated fairly.

**How do tenants deal with conflict in the home?** Hopefully they will work out their own conflicts. Sometimes the house staff will try to help. You can also ask the housing support staff from Cota or Habitat to help. If the problem continues and is serious, or if one person is causing the problem and it's affecting other tenants, the owner or operator needs to call a **tenant/operator dispute meeting** or 'ten-op'.

**When does the menu get changed?** Tenants can bring suggestions for changes in the menu to the owner or operator or house staff. Talk to the housing support staff if you'd like help with this.

**Can you have a pet in your room?** It depends. Some owners will allow a tenant to have a pet. There could be a problem if anyone has allergies. You would have to get the ok from your roommate and the owner and then look after your pet.

**Are you allowed to drink alcohol in the home?** It depends; one Habitat house is dry. If you are quiet and discreet, it shouldn't be a problem in most houses.

**How about smoking?** There are some laws in Ontario which basically say you can't smoke in any common areas or areas that other people may use. So for this reason, and for the sake of the non-smokers in the house, head outside if you want to smoke.

**Can I decorate my room?** Yes.

**When is Habitat getting more single bedrooms?** Habitat can get more single rooms when it signs contracts with new owners. Houses that have joined Habitat recently have mostly single rooms. Tenants keep telling Habitat they want single rooms and the agency is working to make it happen.

## A List of Services for Tenants in Habitat-Funded Homes

Talk to or call the Habitat RSI if you're not receiving any of these.

**Meals:** Tenants are to receive three meals and an evening snack per day made from first-quality food. A snack table needs to be available every day from 9am to 5pm. Menus need to be posted in a prominent place and meals must match menus. Any changes to the menu must be noted on the menu before the meal is served. Tenants who drink milk can receive at least two cups of fresh milk daily. Meals must be saved for tenants as long as they ask the house staff to do this before the time of the meal they'll be missing. Box lunches need to be provided, as long as tenants give notice in advance. Special diets and supplements need to be provided on the direction of a doctor. Tenants can help plan menus and make menu suggestions. Tenants can use the microwave oven to reheat food.

**Personal Supplies/Toilet Articles:** The following supplies are to be given to tenants free of charge:

- Hand and bath towels
- Face cloths
- Toilet tissue
- Hand soap
- Denture cleaner
- Tampons
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Facial tissue
- Toothpaste
- Sanitary napkins
- Tooth brushes
- Deodorant
- Sun screen
- Razors
- Shaving cream
- Moisturizing lotion

Towels and face cloths need to be washed at least once a week (more often if necessary).

**Furnishings, Decoration and Windows:** Tenants are entitled to a bedside lamp, chair and dresser or bedside table, all of reasonably good quality and residential in style. All windows must be covered with working drapes or blinds that provide privacy. Windows must be washed every 6 months, and must be screened from May 31 – October 1. Tenants may arrange their bedrooms to suit their taste, subject to fire and safety regulations. Tenants may hang pictures in their bedrooms.

**Bed Linen:** Tenants are to be supplied with clean bed linens, including: pillow, pillow slip, flat and fitted bed sheets, two blankets and one bedspread, all in good condition and without logos. Bed linens must be washed by staff at least once a week; if they wish and are able, tenants can and are encouraged to do this themselves.

**Staffing and Support:** Although they are not responsible for the personal support or care of tenants, house staff need to be available to respond to emergencies throughout the day. There has to be at least one staff member in the home 24 hours a day, and enough trained house staff on duty at all times to ensure the safety, security and stability of the home. Owners and operators and house staff are required to follow the "Standards of Conduct" of the owners' contract with Habitat Services.

**Support Services:** Tenants have access to housing support services from Habitat and Cota. Tenants also have access to the Residential Service Inspector from Habitat who visits to check on conditions in the

house and standards of care. Other support workers, such as case management, home care or personal care, must have access to the tenant they're coming to see (as long as the tenant has given consent).

**Telephone:** Tenants are to be provided with free use of a touch tone telephone for local calls, and there must be a separate telephone line for every 20 tenants.

**Tenants' Meetings:** Housing support staff try to organize regular meetings for tenants to get together as a group to plan activities, discuss living in the home and raise any concerns or ask questions.

**TV, Common Spaces and Amenities:** There needs to be one colour television in good working order for every 15 tenants. Televisions are located in common areas, must be at least 55 inches in size, and must have cable/satellite service offering a broad variety of channels to cover a range of interests. Current magazines and games suited to the tenants' interests and ages must be available, and there needs to be a newspaper subscription for every 20 tenants. A bulletin board must be posted in an area available to all tenants, and must include the address of the nearest health centre.

There needs to be safe and usable outdoor furnished space adjacent to the house. This outdoor space will include seating and a shaded/covered area for tenants to use, as well as equipment for outdoor activities, including a barbeque in good working order.

The owner shall provide internet service to a common area of the home. The internet service will have Wi-Fi capability and be made available to tenants. The owner will provide tenants with the login/password information in order to access the internet/Wi-Fi. Tenants are also to be provided a minimum of one stationary desktop computer in a common room with internet service and in good working order. The minimum size of the computer monitor screen shall be 22 inches.

**Housecleaning:** The owner and house staff are responsible to keep the home in a clean and sanitary condition at all times, and to ensure washrooms are cleaned daily. House staff are also responsible for cleaning bedrooms, but tenants can and are encouraged to clean their own rooms if they are able.

**Washroom Facilities:** Each washroom needs to have a supply of toilet paper, soap and towels at all times. Toilets, sinks, showers and bathtubs have to be kept in good working order.

**Laundry and Laundry Facilities:** Laundry facilities are free to all tenants. If asked, house staff will assist or do the laundry for tenants unable to do it themselves. Use of a washer and dryer, along with detergent, an iron and ironing board with a cover or pad, must be provided free of charge. Tenants are to receive containers for dirty laundry. All dryers must be vented to the outside.

**Locks and Keys:** Tenants must receive keys to the front door, their bedrooms and their storage space when they move in. Keys are provided at no cost; if they're lost, replacement keys will be provided at a reasonable cost.

**Storage:** Each tenant needs to have a lockable storage space in their bedroom for personal use. There is also a common lock-up storage space for the use of tenants.

**Medication:** Tenants may keep their medications in their rooms. If they prefer, tenants may ask the owner or operator to keep their medications in a locked storage cupboard or refrigerator that are accessible only to house staff. House staff don't administer medication, but can provide it to tenants when the tenant asks. A fully-stocked first aid box must be accessible by all tenants.

**Interior and Exterior Maintenance:** All equipment and appliances must be kept in good working order. Equipment or appliances, including mops and any out-of-order equipment or appliances, cannot be stored in common areas or tenants' bedrooms. Tenants may be involved in the upkeep of the house and yard if an arrangement can be made with the owner.

**Visitors:** Tenants' families and friends need to be able to visit in a private area during reasonable visiting hours, including evenings and weekends; tenants and the owner or operator together decide visiting times. Each tenant may invite a visitor for a meal twice a month with prior notice; tenants and the owner or operator jointly decide the amount of notice to be given.

**Personal Mail:** All mail must be given to tenants unopened on the day it is delivered.

**House Temperature:** Minimum temperature in the home must be 21°C. There must be a cooling room for the use of all tenants from May 1 to September 30 which has a maximum temperature of 26°C.

**Fire Safety:** Fire drills happen each month; for their safety, all tenants are encouraged to take part.



## Boarding Home Staff Code of Conduct

All boarding home staff must follow the Ontario Human Rights Code and the standards of conduct that Habitat has outlined. Talk to or call your Habitat RSI if you feel mistreated by the boarding home staff, or if you feel they are not following the code of conduct. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind:

- The boarding home or rooming house must provide an atmosphere of dignity and respect for all tenants to live peacefully, and provide services in a non-judgemental manner.
- Every tenant has the right to privacy, independence, and autonomy.
- All tenants have the right to service, no matter who they are. Racist or other discriminatory remarks or behaviours are not acceptable.
- Tenants must be treated equally and protected from harassment and abuse.
- Every tenant has the freedom to be themselves, and to have their identities respected.
- Boarding home staff cannot impose their religious, political, or any other beliefs upon you.
- Relationships between tenants and staff must be professional and honest.
- Staff cannot listen in on tenants' private conversations.
- Tenants are in charge of their own money and belongings. Staff are not allowed to borrow, take, or accept any gifts of money or goods from tenants (e.g. TTC Presto Pass).
- Tenants and staff cannot buy from or sell things to each other.
- Any safety concerns, including abuse and harassment, must be addressed by the staff.
- All tenant information must be kept confidential, except as permitted by law.

## What to do when you have a complaint

### If your complaint is about the services or staff at the boarding home you live in:

- Speak to a member of the boarding home staff or the operator. This gives them an opportunity to address your concerns.
- If you feel you cannot speak directly to staff or the operator, speak to the Residential Services Inspector assigned to your home. They will take the details of your complaint. Their number should be on the notice board in the common area.
- If you don't know the name of the Residential Services Inspector, please call the Habitat office at (416) 537-2721. Press "0" and the receptionist will assist you.
- If you wish to make your complaint anonymously, Habitat staff will protect your name. **Your name will not be used unless you give us consent to do so.**
- Please be specific in your complaint. It is easier for us to investigate complaints if we have as much detail as possible.
- Tell us how you would like your complaint to be handled. **If you wish us only to document your concern, we will do so.**

### If your complaint is about the services or staff at Habitat Services:

- If you have a complaint about the Habitat Contract Monitoring Program services or Residential Services Inspectors, please call Clare Nobbs at (416) 537-2721, extension 252.
- If you have a complaint about the Habitat Housing Support Program (Site Support) services or staff, please call Rebecca Norlock at (416) 537-2721, extension 249.
- If you have gone through the above channels and still feel your complaints have not been fully addressed, you may call Habitat's Executive Director, Chris Persaud at (416) 537-2721, extension 232.

### If your complaint is about the services or staff at Cota:

- If you have a complaint about the Cota site support services or staff, please call (416) 785-9230