

# LOST in the Shuffle:

IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN IN TRANSITION



Parent Resource Manual & Workshop

# LOST IN THE SHUFFLE:

## In Support of Children in Transition

### Resource Manual & Workshop Guide

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**Social Planning Toronto (SPT)** is a non-profit community organization committed to building a civic society in which diversity, equity, social and economic justice, interdependence and active civic participation are central. SPT works with diverse communities, promotes civic engagement, engages in community-based research and conducts policy analysis with the aim of improving the quality of life of all Toronto residents.

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## About this Resource

### What it is:

*Lost in the Shuffle: In Support of Children in Transition* is a resource manual and a workshop guide that aims to build a greater understanding of the barriers children living in shelters face in their attempts to be successful in school and provides strategies for school and shelter staff to assist children. The workshop explores the underlying context of the lives of many of the children who live in shelters.

The purpose of the resource manual and workshop guide is to:

- Help parents to better understand students and their families who are struggling with multiple transitions,
- Give parents tools to build children's emotional resilience and reduce the emotional impacts they experience,
- Share promising practices from the community.

In 2007, the report, *Lost in the Shuffle: The Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto*<sup>1</sup>, explored the experiences of children living in shelters and the connections between homelessness and school success. Among its many recommendations the report identified the need for a workshop guide on children's emotional impacts and consequent behaviours. *Lost in the Shuffle: In Support of Children in Transition* was created in response to this need.

### Why use it:

58% of elementary school children living in shelters attend three or more elementary schools, with approximately 4,000 children living in Toronto spending at least one night in a shelter every year. Some families may have to make the decision to move into shelters because of economic hardship. While the median income of Toronto families is declining, the cost of rent is increasing. Consequently, some families may be forced to move into shelters or seek refuge with friends until they can find an affordable housing option. Other families, usually female-led, may have to move to a shelter because they are fleeing a situation of domestic violence and need to leave their home out of fear for their personal safety and/or the safety of their children.

When living in a shelter children experience disruptions in their education and they face stress associated with residential instability and upheaval in their family and school life. They often change schools frequently, causing a loss or erosion of

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<sup>1</sup> Decter, A. (2007) *Lost in the Shuffle: The Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto*. Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. A summary of the original report appears in Appendix A

friendships and support networks. School performance and self-esteem suffer. Children's mental health is affected, as they can also be stigmatized for being in a shelter. Due to the high incidence of witnessed violence among homeless children, many suffer emotional impacts and may act out in class where a teacher has not been trained to identify and deal with these effects.

**How it works:** *Lost in the Shuffle: In Support of Children in Transition* is both a resource manual and a workshop guide. The workshop guide involves the use of case studies, video, discussion and storytelling to help staff build awareness, develop strategies and share practices that will help children who are dealing with a great number of stresses. The resource manual includes workshop guide materials but also contains additional information that examines the factors underlying the state in which these children find themselves and shares information about the school and shelter context to help parents have a better understanding of relevant policies from each other's work environment.

The resource manual consists of four sections:

- Strategies for Assisting Children
- Navigating the School System
- Navigating the Shelter System
- Resource List for Parents

**Who it's for:** Teachers and Teachers-in-training  
Shelter Staff and Administration  
Child and Youth Workers  
Guidance Counsellors  
Professional Support Services such as Social Workers and Psychologists  
School Board Superintendents, Principals and School Office Staff  
Trustees  
Parents

## Section 1: Strategies for Assisting Children

- ▶ **Key Points and Questions**
- ▶ **Glossary of Terms and their Impact on Families**
- ▶ **The Potential Impacts of Trauma on Children**
- ▶ **Roles Children May Play within Families**
- ▶ **Children’s Coping Skills and Staff Strategies**
- ▶ **Strategies for Promoting Resiliency**
- ▶ **Case Study**
- ▶ **Promising Practices**
  - Promising Practices in Schools
  - Promising Practices in Shelters
  - Promising Practices for both Schools and Shelters
  - A Day in the Life of a School Liaison Worker
  - Sample School Liaison Worker Job Description
  - Sample Student Academic Profile
- ▶ **Additional Resources**



## Key Points and Questions

### KEY POINTS

- The stigma attached to labelling children.
- Impact of abuse on a child's view of the world as a safe/predictable place.
- The roles children may play when exposed to domestic violence.
- Impact on children's self-esteem and socialization.
- Supporting the development of coping skills in children.
- Children see, children do!
- Effects on children's style of coping and survival.
- Impacts on school performance.
- With support children can become resilient in the face of upheaval.
- Resiliency can be nurtured in schools.

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. What are some of the "behaviours" that you see in your class/at the shelter?
2. What are some of the possible triggers in their environment?
3. In what ways can "behaviours" be used as protective mechanism (coping skills) by the child?
4. What are some strategies that you might be able to use with children in order to facilitate their protection and support their success in the class/at the shelter?
5. What are some of the violence prevention practices in your school/shelter?
6. How does your school/shelter model inclusiveness?

7. What are some ways in which you can create positive experiences to promote security, self-esteem and learning?
8. What must life be like for the child who has just arrived in a new school and shelter having left all his/her family, friends, belongings, etc.?
9. What are some ways in which you can create positive experiences to promote security, self-esteem and learning?
10. What are some of the practices you could implement that would help smooth the transition for children entering your shelter/school?
11. What would you like the school/shelter to know about children's learning needs and the environment in which learning occurs? For example, does the child have access to a quiet space, computer, paper, pencils, etc.? Is the environment stress-free?
12. Share best practices for providing emotional supports and creating welcoming environments for children.
13. How can we work to strengthen connections between service providers, educators and shelter workers?

## A Glossary of Terms and their Impacts on Families

\* Definitions from Oxford Dictionaries online, [oxforddictionaries.com/](http://oxforddictionaries.com/).

The following are words that families feel can define them in negative terms. It is important to be aware of language when speaking to families so individuals do not feel defined by their circumstances (e.g. homelessness).

### HOMELESS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Definition:</b>  | The state of being without a home, typically needing to live on the streets   |
| <b>Through the Eyes of Families:</b>                        | Families look upon it as a labelling and stigmatizing term and often feel their entire way of life gets defined by their loss of a stable home.   |
| <b>What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:</b> | <p>“I just had something terrible happen to me but I haven’t changed as a person.” (Shelter Resident-Parent)</p> <p>“And the attitude towards the people who are homeless – it shouldn’t even be mentioned, you know? It should be seen as a child is a child in need, you know?” (Shelter Worker)</p> <p>“I would want the teachers to know that my daughter has been through some things, but she’s still a child and still needs to be treated like the other kids in that school. I don’t want her to be centered-out or ostracized or stigmatized, none of those things! Yeah, she’s been through some things, but she still needs to be treated well. She still has rights.” (Shelter Resident- Parent)</p> |

### SHELTER

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Definition:</b>                   | A place giving temporary protection from bad weather or danger  |
| <b>Through the eyes of families:</b> | Parents often feel stigmatized and worry their children are being mistreated because of their precarious living conditions. |

**What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:**

“You know, this word ‘shelter’, I don’t understand it! I really don’t! I’m new in this shelter and to me – what is shelter? I think the idea of shelter turned into a negative thing. But when you look at the definition of shelter, it’s some place where you can put a roof over your head, while instead when some people say shelter it’s now come to mean homelessness. It’s how people perceive it..... drugs and alcohol ...” (Shelter Resident- Parent)

“This place goes beyond just being a roof over our heads. It’s a shelter, but not what people think, not what people perceive a shelter to be.” (Shelter Resident- Parent)

“They should know the child as an individual, not as a shelter child. We are not shelter people; we are only in the shelter for a period.” (Shelter Resident- Parent)

“Oh, if they knew, the teachers, they would treat my child with dignity and respect and give her the attention that she needs, not just pass her by as the shelter kid, you know? Because some people are very ignorant, they don’t understand why you have to live in a shelter.” (Shelter Resident- Parent)

## **BEHAVIOUR**

**Definition:**

The way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others

**Through the eyes of families:**

Parents encounter many difficulties in dealing with the range of behaviours expressed by their children. Families often feel their children’s behaviours get taken out of context and that educators and shelter staff lack awareness about the issues faced by children on a daily basis.

**What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:**

“You start getting all sorts of attitudes from the kids, but you’re in the shelter. It’s not like you’re at home. How you discipline changes!”  
(Shelter Resident-Parent)

“I think it’s just a lack of awareness from their perspective. Teachers are coming from an academic perspective, right? So they just want to teach. They want well-behaved children who will learn and when they don’t get that well-behaved child, they become frustrated. They’re not taught in school to have the skills that run from teaching to social work. That’s where the frustration lies with the teachers not being able to teach the child who has multiple layers of issues, versus your well behaved child.” (Shelter Worker)

“Sometimes when they’re misbehaving, sometimes it’s because they haven’t eaten – they want to go home because they haven’t eaten, they haven’t had any breakfast, or they’re not clothed properly.”  
(School Office Administrator)

## **STIGMA**

**Definition:**

A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person

**Through the eyes of families:**

Often families may feel that others are looking down on them and they fear the impact of stigma on their children.

**What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:**

“It’s already hard for them knowing that they’re in a shelter and then having other kids realize they’re in a shelter. Kids make fun of other kids in school.” (Shelter Resident-Parent)

“Most kids, I think, in this area know this is a shelter. It’s a disadvantage when they see the kids coming in and going out of the shelter to the school; they might brand them negatively.” (Shelter Resident-Parent)

“Some of them do a good job hiding – they’ll come in here and they will wait for their friends to walk past the shelter, and then come back here, but soon most kids know they live here.” (Shelter Resident-Parent)

“It depends on the individual teacher. Teachers can ask a lot of questions. Sometimes they would ask the kids inappropriate questions. It makes the child feel uncomfortable. I’ve had to deal with issues around that, teachers questioning them about their dad and where they come from and things like that. Some of the kids are very sensitive.”  
(School Liaison Worker)

## TRAUMA

**Definition:** A deeply distressing or disturbing experience

**Through the eyes of families:** Moves to shelters are often precipitated by crisis situations and parents may fear that educators and shelter staff are unable to provide the supports needed for their children's education in these trying times.

**What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:** "I think in an effort to be non-judgmental, school staff will say they want to get to know the child and the intention is good – but this doesn't help. They don't listen to previous experiences of child and the family, and the child has to start at ground zero again at every new school." (Child & Family Therapist)

"I think the people that work in these programs, educators, shelter staff, should be re-educated. You see, when people work in a setting for too long, they become desensitized They treat you like a room number." (Shelter Resident- Parent)

## POVERTY

**Definition:** A state of lacking sufficient money to live at a standard considered comfortable or normal in society

**Through the eyes of families:** Families living in shelters and marginalized communities may not be able to provide their children with the financial means or resources to fully support their educational experience and to afford sustainable housing.

**What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:** "Things that teachers need to be aware of: kids don't have all the resources they need." (Shelter Staff Worker)

"There are many marginalized children, not just in shelters. Pockets of all neighbourhoods have children living in poverty. The classroom teachers need to really understand and build empathy on some of the issues that kids are facing, such as hunger and nutrition." (Shelter Worker)

"People need to understand that our families live on an extremely fixed income. What might be normal for some may not be feasible for someone living on a low income. So, if you're coming to the end of

the month and that child has a jam sandwich or a butter sandwich – maybe they don't have the extra money to buy the cold cuts." (Shelter Worker)

"Sometimes students come without food and think they're going to get lunch at school but there is no lunch at school. That's very upsetting for children." (School Principal)

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Definition:** A violent or aggressive behaviour within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner

**Through the eyes of families:** Families often feel their subsequent life gets entirely defined by experiences of domestic violence. Additionally, in violent homes, homework and school related issues may not always be the primary focus.

**What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:** "There needs to be more education around abuse and what these kids are going through." (Shelter Resident - Parent)

"For a child – their mom is being abused. They're in the bedroom, and what are they hearing? They're hearing mom get hit. They're hearing mom get yelled at. They're seeing food flying. So even though that child may not be hurt physically there's a lot of emotional abuse." (Shelter Worker)

"There are different kinds of circumstances for a child and their families: refugees, domestic violence, single parents, mental health issues, transience, substance abuse..." (Shelter Worker)

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

**Definition:** Attitudes and behaviours characteristic of a particular social group.

**What Parents, Educators and Shelter Workers told us:** "My kids are older, and really, because English is my second language, I'm not fluent. Any of the materials in high school – I couldn't help my daughter. With the homework, if she has questions in science, history...I can't help her." (Shelter Resident - Parent)

"Most of us come from different cultures, different languages, so our kids tend to come from different perspectives in how they learn at

home. If teachers teach our kids always in the same way they won't learn as well." (Shelter Resident - parent)

"Parents look up to the teacher. If this teacher says their child is 'bad', parents will think what is wrong with my child? Your kids were not like that before but now they have this label. Because the parents are getting used to the new country, new home, new classroom – everything is new – and then the teacher says "Oh, this child is misbehaving" parents will believe that the child is misbehaving with maybe no one looking at what is behind the misbehaviours. Instead if the child is labeled, parents will not challenge that label – the teacher is the authority." (Shelter Worker)



## Roles Children May Play within Families

Roles that are developed or assigned in families suffering trauma reflect the way in which each member adapts and copes with their environment.

Looking at family roles helps us to understand:

- How children interpret and cope with stress
- How different children in the same family may have different understandings of their world
- Where the boundaries may be blurred and where children may need extra support

### Roles:

**Caretaker:** Acts as a parent to younger siblings and mother. May oversee routines and household responsibilities (e.g. meals, putting young siblings to bed), helps to keep siblings safe during a violent incident and comforts them afterwards (e.g. reassuring siblings, getting tea for mother).

**Mother's Confidant:** The child who is privy to mother's feelings, concerns, and plans. After witnessing abusive incidents, his or her recollections may serve as a "reality check" for mother, if abuser later minimizes or lies about events.

**Abuser's Confidant:** The child who is treated better by abuser and most likely to be told his justifications for abuse against mother. May be asked to report back on mother's behaviour and be rewarded for doing so with, for example, privileges or absence of harsh treatment.

**Abuser's Assistant:** The child who is co-opted or forced to assist in abuse of mother (e.g. made to say demeaning things or to physically hit mother).

**Perfect Child:** The child who tries to prevent violence by actively addressing issues (wrongly) perceived as triggers, in this case by excelling in school and never arguing, rebelling, misbehaving, or seeking help with problems.

**Referee:** The child who mediates and tries to keep the peace.

**Scapegoat:** The child identified as the cause of family problems, blamed for tension between parents or whose behaviour is used to justify violence. May have special needs or be a step-child to abuser.

## The Potential Impacts of Trauma on Children

Children who are exposed to domestic violence are 10 to 17 times more likely to have serious emotional and behavioural problems. This chart identifies some of the most common expressions children exhibit.

| EMOTION   | COGNITION   | BEHAVIOUR   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression, sadness, worrying</li> <li>• Guilt, shame</li> <li>• Feelings of being responsible and helpless to intervene</li> <li>• Anxious, hypersensitive to danger cues</li> <li>• Distrust of adults</li> <li>• Ambivalent feelings toward violent parent</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentration and memory deficits</li> <li>• Intrusive thoughts and images of violence</li> <li>• Fantasies of rescuing victim and family</li> <li>• Attempts to understand violence</li> <li>• Ambivalence about family separation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining school performance</li> <li>• Inhibited, passive social behaviour</li> <li>• Psychosomatic complaints (stomach aches, headaches)</li> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Defiance, disobedience</li> <li>• Destructive of property</li> <li>• Re-enactment of trauma in talk &amp; play</li> <li>• Disturbed peer relationships</li> <li>• Bed wetting</li> </ul> |

## Children’s Coping Skills and Parent Strategies

**“We don’t create a fantasy world to escape reality; we create it to be able to stay.”**  
 - Lynda Barry, Author and Cartoonist

Children that experience trauma are under an incredible amount of stress and find ways to cope that are often mislabelled as “behaviours”. The chart below looks at some of these “behaviours” and reframes them as coping skills. The ways in which children learn to cope show their resilience. Even though it may not be appropriate in all circumstances, we have to understand that this is the way they have learned to protect themselves at home and be cautious of sending them messages that it is wrong. Instead we should try to arm them with more adaptive strategies.

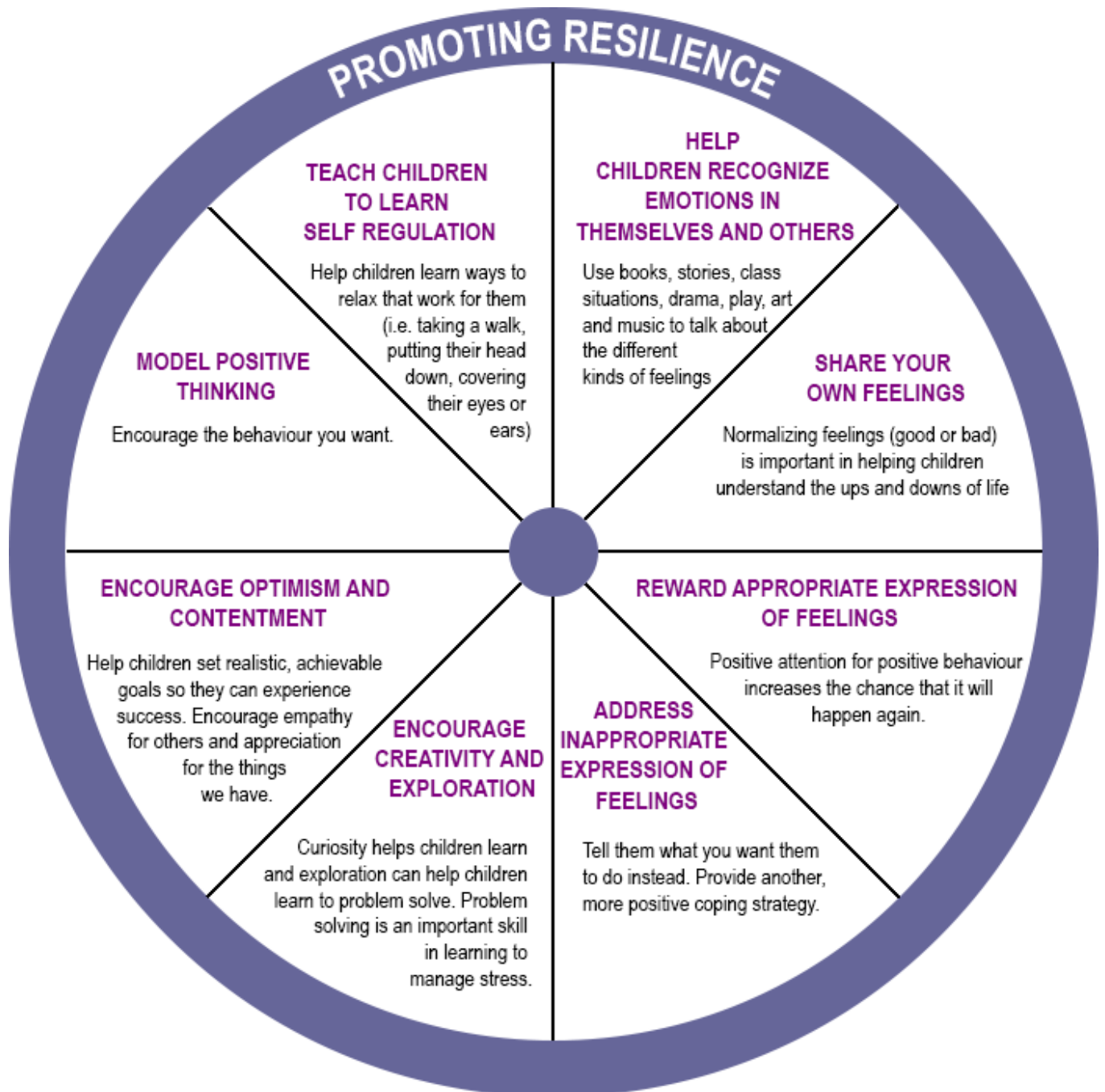
| “BEHAVIOUR”   | CHILDREN’S COPING SKILL   | STAFF STRATEGY   |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Not Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a child that might appear to daydream a lot</li> <li>• A child that never asks questions</li> <li>• A child that never makes eye contact</li> <li>• A child that is falling academically behind</li> </ul> | <p><b>Withdrawing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children tend to tune out when the world becomes too stressful</li> <li>• This may be a problem in school but may serve them well in order to survive at home</li> <li>• The classroom can be a stressful environment for children</li> <li>• Some of the triggers include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volume in the class</li> <li>- Disorganized space</li> <li>- Somebody else having a tantrum</li> <li>- Not understanding academic request</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Relationship Avoidance: for some children that have experienced high transience, there is a tendency to avoid building new relationships in order to protect themselves</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the trigger of this response vs. punishing the response</li> <li>• Be aware of the child’s environment (e.g. volume level of yourself and other students)</li> <li>• Position the child near the front of the classroom in order to facilitate eye contact</li> <li>• Work out a way to get a response from the child that they have heard you (e.g. code, hand signal, etc.)</li> <li>• Model what you want</li> <li>• Give the child an appropriate replacement for what you would like them to do in the classroom (e.g. “Take 5 minutes to relax and then come back and join us”; “Put your head on the desk/take deep breaths for 5 minutes, I</li> </ul> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | from further loss/disappointment.   | will go and check on the others and be back”<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let them use their own coping strategy (as long as it is not harming others) and then give them something else</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Non-Compliance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a child that often has incomplete homework</li> <li>A child that is generally non-compliant regarding academic work</li> <li>A child that tends to get up and walk around the classroom</li> </ul> | <p><b>Flight</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When it gets too much, I run/escape!</li> <li>Children escape in order to avoid an emotional breakdown</li> <li>Many children that experience trauma/homelessness can be academically behind</li> <li>Self-preservation becomes more important than academics</li> <li>High transience can affect a child’s self-esteem and socialization so they may try to create a new identity for themselves ( e.g. class clown), especially if this has brought them attention in the past</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulate academic pieces that are in smaller more manageable chunks</li> <li>Reward small successes</li> <li>Use more simplistic strategies for academic work (e.g. counting on fingers, use the computer vs. handwriting)</li> <li>Use earplugs/headphones to help the child to focus</li> <li>Turn the child’s desk/chair to avoid distraction</li> <li>Have a poster or picture of something calming that they can focus on when things get too much</li> <li>Have them to keep water at their desks</li> <li>Allow them to use minor self-soothing strategies (e.g. tapping)</li> <li>The goal is to find ways to move forward not to punish</li> <li>We need to take the blame away from the child and recognize that our frustrations are not the child’s fault</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Aggression</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verbal aggression</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Fight</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is often a “learned” and</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate the “behaviour”</li> </ul>   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild pushing/shoving</li> <li>• Bullying</li> </ul> | <p>rewarded behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some children misinterpret aggression for communication, especially if they are imitating adult behaviour (e.g. “When I am frustrated I just need to raise my voice to get what I want”; “If I am angry about something I just have to hit to get attention.”)</li> </ul> | <p>from the child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the "behaviour" with what you want</li> <li>• Be specific (e.g. “Be nice to your friends” What does “nice” mean? Instead you could say something like: “Keep your hands to yourself when you are playing with the toys”)</li> <li>• Maintain consistency across students and genders</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

## Strategies for Promoting Resilience

Emotional resilience refers to the ability to manage feelings and cope with stressful events. Depending on a child's temperament and environment, this may come more easily to some than others. The ability to cope with difficult situations impacts our health, well-being and long term happiness. When children find the support they need they become resilient in the face of upheaval. These supports are external (family, peer, school, community) and internal strengths (personality characteristics, empowerment, self-control).



**Teach children to learn self-regulation**

A child who often becomes frustrated when they don't get their way

**Model positive thinking**

A daily struggle that causes frustration for staff and students

**Encourage Optimism and Contentment**

A situation where a child is jealous of another child

**Encourage Creativity and Exploration**

A child who says "I can't do it!"

**Address inappropriate expression of feelings**

A child who yells at other children

**Reward appropriate expression of feelings**

A child who reacts appropriately when s/he doesn't get a turn

**Share your own feelings**

A child who gets overwhelmed during free play

**Help children recognize emotions in themselves and others**

A child sees another child crying

## Case Study

Lisa is an 11 year old student who does well academically and has great relationships with her peers. Lately she has been arriving late for school and often falls asleep in class. She seems tired, distracted and irritable, and has not been engaging with her friends.

### Mother:

Due to repeated incidents of domestic violence I finally fled my partner and my home and am currently living in a shelter with my 11 year old daughter. The transition has been difficult as I do not have any family or friends for support. I feel bad that my daughter was exposed to the violence with my partner and wish that I could have protected her more. Despite my worries, my daughter does well in school and has many friends. When I came to the shelter we decided together that it would be very important for her to stay at her home school given her connections with her teachers and her friends, especially given the recent instability of the family. Each morning my daughter and I wake up at 5:30 in the morning and it takes three buses (2.5 - 3 hours) travelling to and from school. This means that often we don't come home until after 6:00, which means that we miss dinner and I am often late for the informational workshops offered by the shelter. The shelter still provides dinner but we end up eating by ourselves as everyone else is in program or has gone to their rooms. In the morning I leave before breakfast is served and have to eat on the road. The shelter has a rule against keeping food in our room (even non-perishable items) so this makes it difficult to put together nutritious snacks for my daughter and it is too expensive to eat out. There have been a few occasions when I have arrived late to the school because of bus delays/traffic.

### Question for Discussion:

What would be your primary concern and strategy for mom?

### Child:

A few weeks ago my mom and dad got into a fight again but this time it was so bad the police were called. Usually I just go into my room when the fighting starts and try to block it out by calling my friends or focusing on my homework. This time was different – mom made us move to a shelter. I do really well in school and am really proud of all of my accomplishments. I have a great relationship with my teachers and love being at school. I am always being complimented for my good work and this makes me happy. Living at the shelter is ok but I rarely get to enjoy any of the activities because I am usually the first one to leave in the morning and the last one to arrive home in the evening. The commute to school has been longer but I am so happy that I did not have to lose my school as well. I have been trying to keep up with my homework but it's often busy on the bus and I don't always get a seat and sometimes when I get home I am just too tired. Lately, my teacher has been commenting that I have been arriving late and wants to talk to my mom about it. I can't tell my teacher what has happened but I'm worried that I might get kicked out because I'm falling asleep in class and haven't been doing well on tests. I love my friends and hanging out with them is



the happiest part of my day. I wish I could tell them what is going on but I am embarrassed and my mom said it was a secret.

**Question for discussion:**

What would you want this child to do? What would you tell her that might be helpful?

**Shelter Staff:**

A month ago a mother and daughter arrived at the shelter and there have been a few concerns. Mother and child spend a lot of time outside of the shelter travelling to and from the child's school. I understand the importance of this, especially in terms of maintaining stability for the child, but it is still my responsibility to ensure that residents are following the policies and procedures of the shelter. In the last few weeks I have had to give mom a few warnings about keeping food in her room. As well, mom takes the child to and from school and does not return to the shelter in between so she has missed a few of the meetings with her counsellor and has been unable to process her housing application. Residents have a time limit for staying in the shelter; if they have not secured housing during this time, they might be required to transfer to another shelter. Although I am concerned about mother and child there are 20 other families living at the shelter and the rules have to be followed.

**Question for discussion:**

What would be your primary concern for the family? What are your next steps?

**Teacher:**

One of my brightest students has recently started showing a decline in her academic performance and I know that something isn't right. I don't know much about her family life, just that it's her mother who always comes to parent-teacher interviews and seems to have a great relationship with her child. Lately, Lisa has not been herself; she often arrives late and then seems tired and distracted in class. She has also had difficulty concentrating and seems irritable when asked if she is ok. I've spoken with the principal and he recommended connecting her with after school help and making a referral to the school social worker.

**Question for Discussion:**

What would be your primary concern for the family? What is your strategy?

## PROMISING PRACTICES

\* Note: The following list of programs are not universally offered across the City of Toronto, rather these 'promising practices' are programs which have been proven successful and are currently being offered by certain agencies, schools and shelters. Your agency or school may like to explore offering some of these programs to families and children in your community.

\* Note: Specific programs vary from agency to agency.

### Promising Practices in Schools

| PRACTICE  | WHAT IT IS   | WHY IT WORKS  | HOW IT WORKS  | POTENTIAL PARTNER  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Professional Development and Staff Training Sessions</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific training sessions for teachers and office administrators aimed at familiarizing participants with the issues of domestic violence, and/or specific emotional and behavioural consequences experienced by children living in shelters.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase school staff's awareness of various issues experienced by families living in shelters (e.g. depression, anger, self-harm, impacts of domestic violence).</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sessions are scheduled in advance and conducted at least once a year.</li> <li>• Training is facilitated by a professional staff member from the local, neighbourhood-based mental health agency.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local children's mental health agency</li> </ul> |
| <b>Shelter Tours</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal visits carried out by teachers and school office administrators to local/neighbourhood shelters.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase school staff's level of understanding, awareness and empathy regarding the living conditions of children who do not have a home and how it relates to school work.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tours are planned regularly.</li> <li>• Visits may be scheduled during specific shelter programs (e.g. Breakfast Club).</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local shelter</li> </ul>                         |
| <b>Parenting and Family Literacy Centres</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated school spaces providing services for parents and pre-school children, to</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an early learning environment for children and</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centres are located in some schools across the City.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local school</li> </ul>                          |

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|  | <p>support children’s early learning, to engage them in structured activities and to familiarize their parents with the school community.</p>  | <p>helps them develop essential literacy and numeracy skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers participants the opportunity to become familiar with their local school environment and to establish positive home-school connections.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are open 20 hours a week, from Monday to Thursday.</li> <li>• Services are free and no registration is required.</li> <li>• Staff are Toronto District School Board (TDSB) employees.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>Social Skills Workshops for Children e.g. Friends for Life</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured activities aimed at improving children’s problem solving skills, facilitating their interactions at school, and enhancing their conversational and communicative skills.</li> <li>• Friends for Life: an evidence-based program used in over 20 countries to help children cope with internalizing behaviours (e.g. anxiety, depression) and to build their resilience by teaching them cognitive, behavioural, and emotional skills in a well-structured format.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports children and youth in developing positive social interactions.</li> <li>• Educates children about positive skills, including: conflict resolution, problem solving and dealing with difficult situations, building emotional resilience, using peer support, and practicing positive thinking.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An average of 12 to 14 sessions run by professional staff in some local schools across the city.</li> <li>• Students are guided through a series of class-based activities designed to teach them how to deal with worrying situations. They also complete homework activities between sessions.</li> <li>• Programs are often offered on a biweekly basis.</li> <li>• Children’s ages range from 6-9 and 9-12.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local children’s mental health agency</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Financial/ Resources Support</b></p>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial support is provided to families by the local school (e.g. assistance with school related costs and</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces the financial stresses and burdens with which many</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools may collect donations and redistribute them based on family need.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local school</li> </ul>                          |

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|  | <p>expenses, such as fieldtrips).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplies and resources (e.g. mittens, food) may be donated by the school.</li> </ul> | <p>families living in shelters are confronted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates children's participation in a variety of school related activities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Money from the school budget can be allocated to cover these requests.</li> </ul> |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|

## Promising Practices in Shelters

| PRACTICE                                     | WHAT IT IS   | WHY IT WORKS   | HOW IT WORKS  | POTENTIAL PARTNER  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Workshops for Parents</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent education workshops to meet the families' needs.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help parents develop skills to support their children and enhance their relationships.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By shelters' request, workshops are scheduled in advance, based on residents' demographic composition.</li> <li>Workshops require an ongoing collaboration between the community partner and the shelter.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your local children's mental health agency</li> <li>Toronto Public Health</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence-based program for families aimed to help parents create a stable and supportive family environment, deal positively and consistently with children's internalizing behaviours and enhance their children's social skills.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps parents build positive relationships with their children and educates them about ways to manage potentially difficult situations and ways to develop realistic expectations of their children.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sessions are provided in various formats to meet the needs of individual families.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your local children's mental health agency</li> <li><a href="http://www.triplep.ontario.ca/en/home.aspx">www.triplep.ontario.ca/en/home.aspx</a></li> </ul> |
| <b>Workshops for Shelter</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular training sessions for shelter</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase staff's empathy and</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At a shelter's request, workshops</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your local children's</li> </ul>  |

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| <b>Staff</b>                               | staff aimed to address issues related to domestic violence, mental health, and the impacts of homelessness on children.  | sensitivity in relation to the issues faced by transient families.<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help shelter staff better support their service users.</li> </ul>  | are scheduled in advance.   | mental health agency   |
| <b>Counselling Sessions</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual counselling services aimed at helping parents and families dealing with the emotional impacts of witnessing or experiencing domestic violence; the emotional impacts of the stresses and crises that bring a family to a shelter; or the behaviours that develop out of unresolved emotional impacts.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower and strengthen service users' resiliency.</li> <li>• Helps individuals overcome daily challenges.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once a partnership between the shelters and a children's mental health agency is established, sessions are scheduled in advance.</li> <li>• Community agency-based counsellors devote a certain number of hours per week to meet shelter residents and provide them with one-on-one counselling sessions.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local children's mental health agency</li> </ul> |
| <b>Front Line Case Management Sessions</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual case management sessions aimed at providing information and service coordination to better facilitate residents' needs.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By providing housing related assistance, income support resources, legal referrals, access to interpretative services and participation in a variety of educational groups, shelter residents can rely on a continuum of supports and</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelter staff/internal counsellors conduct one-on-one regular case management with residents/families living in the shelter.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local shelter</li> </ul>                         |

|  |  | services   |   |  |
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| <b>Children's/ Youth programs</b>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific structured activities targeted at children and/or youth living in shelters.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds children's resilience and help them deal with difficult situations.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs are offered within the shelter settings at different days and times.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local children's mental health agency</li> <li>• Your local shelter</li> </ul> |
| <b>VIBE (Vital Intervention Break-through Empowerment) Program</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An umbrella program offering a variety of interactive music and media activities along with a life skills development program, a leadership and mentoring program, and counselling support sessions.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens the social and emotional well-being of children and youth, particularly for those with exposure to violence, in order to help them meet their personal goals and objectives.</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program has both individual and group components.</li> <li>• Specific activities may include: skating, ballet, trips to Centre Island, physical educational games (e.g. with a therapist on site), or literacy programs.</li> <li>• Usually homework completion is a pre-requisite for participating in program related activities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Roz's Healing Place</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Hope Group Program</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured activities (e.g. photography) aimed to increase children's resiliency.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps children identify and express specific factors that give them hope when living in a shelter.</li> <li>• Program's consistency gives children stability and something on which to rely.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program runs two days a week.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>Breakfast Club Program</b>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal breakfast get-togethers that provide children with a nutritious meal before attending school.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps meet children's basic needs by ensuring they have a healthy start in the morning.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program is offered once a week in the morning.</li> <li>• Teachers are invited to join twice a year.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local shelter</li> </ul>   |

|                                       |   |   |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Homework Club Program</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured homework activities provided to children as needed.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists children in succeeding academically.</li> <li>• Addresses difficulties experienced by children when transferring from school to school, such as curriculum related changes.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program includes one-on-one tutoring sessions.</li> <li>• It is often organized around specific theme nights (e.g. science night, career nights, etc.).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local shelter</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Kinder Program</b></p>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and structured academic activities provided for junior kindergarten children.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps children prepare academically for school.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program is co-facilitated by York University teacher candidates.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkdale Residence</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Dinner Nights</b></p>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal set nights at the shelters where dinner is provided and served to the children by shelter staff.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relieves mothers from parental responsibility and provides them with some time for rest and relaxation.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dinner nights are organized weekly and facilitated by shelter staff.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local shelter</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Follow-Up Care Services</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free and confidential professional services aimed supporting women and children after they have left the shelter.</li> <li>• Services include: crisis support and counselling, safety planning, information and referral assistance regarding housing, income support, employment training, legal matters, budgeting and managing finances, career training and assistance with resume development.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps prevent women from needing to return to the shelter.</li> <li>• Via a continuous network of groups, counselling and regular contact, women and children who have left the shelter are offered help in order to move forward with their lives.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelters provide support services and referral assistance to ex-residents, as needed.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local shelter</li> </ul> |

## Promising Practices for both Schools and Shelters

| PRACTICE                                  | WHAT IT IS   | WHY IT WORKS   | HOW IT WORKS  | POTENTIAL PARTNER  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Assistance for School Registration</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services provided by school and/or shelter staff in order to facilitate children's enrolment process.</li> <li>• Registration packages are offered to parents to complete at their own convenience in the shelters.</li> <li>• Packages include consent forms to release children to the care of shelter workers.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce parents' level of stress/anxiety as it particularly relates to their children's registration process.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff provide parents and families with guidance and assistance with their children's enrolment and registration process.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your local school and/or shelter</li> </ul>                         |
| <b>School Liaison Program</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-based program for children who are in crisis and living in a shelter where a school liaison worker orients families to the new school.</li> <li>• Activities include: accompanying families to schools for registration, supporting children academically, advocating for children's needs, communicating with schools about new admittances and departures, and shadowing students between the school and shelter.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School liaison workers provide administrative help with registration; they bridge the gaps and facilitate communication between shelter residents and schools; they help create problem-solving strategies; and they support children's education and emotional health.</li> <li>• They ease children's stress associated with starting at a new school.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated staff members meet with children and parents to orient them to the new school environment.</li> <li>• School liaison workers are present at school on a daily basis in order to provide individual assistance with academic or behavioural problems, to encourage children's participation in games and other school related activities, and to support the child in the move to the new school.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkdale Residence</li> <li>• WoodGreen Red Door Shelter</li> </ul> |



## A Day in the Life of a School Liaison Worker

\* Provided by Birkdale Residence, City of Toronto Shelter

A School Liaison Worker is a position that has been established in a number of schools and shelters across Toronto, often administered by children's mental health agencies. Since this practice has proven exceptionally effective in benefitting the lives of children and their families, it is featured in this resource.

The school liaison workers orient families to the new school and help to ease children's stress associated with starting at a new school. They are present at school on a daily basis in order to provide individual assistance with academic or behavioural problems, to encourage children's participation in games and other school related activities, and to support the child in the move to the new school. Most effectively the School Liaison Worker is a conduit who helps communications flow better between the shelter, school, parents and child to help provide the child with a sense of support in a time of upheaval.

The following is a description of 'a day in the life' written by a Toronto School Liaison Worker.

"To begin my day I ensure every child is registered in the local school or is remaining at his or her original school.

### For Children at Catholic Schools

I complete the paper work, go to the school with the child and assist them in getting a complete or partial uniform, if needed. If they do not have a baptismal certificate I advocate for them to be given time to produce the necessary documents. Once the children are registered I will do periodic telephone check-ins with the teacher or the principal to ensure there are no academic, social, or child welfare concerns.

### For Secondary Students

I book an appointment with the school, accompany the family to the registration and assist with getting any information from the previous school that is required. Once this is done my involvement ends.

For children that do not have current immunization records I refer them to clinics to get immunized.

### For Elementary Students

I complete the admission packages. I provide the teacher with a student profile. I am the point of contact for the school if a child is late, absent, ill, lacks a lunch, etc. If parents are not available, I walk children to and from school. If children do not have adequate lunches I provide them. I advocate for school trip fees to be waived.

When there is a student with special needs or behavioural concerns, I will spend time in the classroom either assisting the child with getting work completed, observing the student, shadowing the student, etc. I talk to the parents about how I have assisted or what I have observed in the classroom. If a child's behaviour is disruptive to the learning environment then I will take the child to the library or computers for a while. I only preform these duties when requested directly by the teacher.

I communicate with the teachers in person, classroom visits, telephone calls and e-mails about how students are progressing. If a child requires an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), I assist the parent with navigating the system to ensure the child is brought forward to the team. I attend IPRC meetings as a support to the mother. I make follow-up calls to ensure a child does not fall through the cracks.

I attend parent teacher interviews with the mother as a support and to review any concerns.

If there are concerns with bullying or social skills or coping skills, I will refer a child to Helping Hands (a program offered at Birkdale to support children in developing productive coping strategies).

I keep track of attendance and address concerns with the parent.

If a child does not have the proper clothes for school or the weather, I assist with obtaining these items. If there are issues of neglect then I contact the Children's Aid Society (CAS) when required.

I provide profiles to the Day Care Recreational Assistants (DCRA) that run our after school programs. I also give them details about a child's academic history and I tell them how the children are doing academically and in what areas the child requires additional support.

I assist children with completing school projects. I run girls groups and co-facilitate Cool School, Social Skills and the Hope Group.

If a student moves out suddenly or there are concerns that are being addressed but require follow-up, I make referrals to the outreach worker to ensure the child's educational needs are met after discharging them from our program.

I maintain statistics about how many children are enrolled each year into the elementary school. I maintain a special needs tracker and I maintain a current list of all the children who attended each school while living at the shelter.

I complete discharge planning with families who have secured an address by giving them the name, address, and directions to the new school. I will also book appointments to register the child at the new school if it is requested."

## Sample School Liaison Worker Job Description

\* Provided by Birkdale Residence, City of Toronto Shelter

Responsible, under supervision, to provide support to children residing at Birkdale Residence and attending \_\_\_\_\_ school. This position is created as a partnership with the Toronto District School Board to offer direct support to the children who attend \_\_\_\_\_ school while residing at Birkdale Residence.

### Responsibilities Include

- ❑ Facilitation in the transition into the student's new school
- ❑ Integration into the school student population
- ❑ Support offered through organized groups and peer activities such as "Welcome Group" for new children
- ❑ Sharing of resources
- ❑ Liaising between parents and teachers
- ❑ Case management
- ❑ Assistance with school registrations
- ❑ Observation of children's interactions with their peers
- ❑ Accompaniment of children on school trips, as required
- ❑ Assist families with referrals to appropriate community services, as required
- ❑ Co-ordination of services in conjunction/consultation with school staff
- ❑ Accompaniment of parent to parent interviews, as needed

### School Registration

- ❑ The School Liaison Worker (SLW) is responsible for ensuring that all school-age children are registered at area school.
- ❑ Upon a family's admission into the shelter, the School Liaison will obtain a copy of the client print-out along with a signed "Consent to Release" form (from the family file).
- ❑ The School Liaison Worker would then initiate contact with the family in order to provide them with the school registration package, and review the school's general policies and procedures (e.g. safe arrival, lunch, zero tolerance, etc.).
- ❑ Assess and determine academic needs in order to provide the school with any pertinent information.
- ❑ Determine family's status and whether or not they have required documents to register children.
- ❑ Once all the documentation is in order, SLW contacts the school and arranges a registration appointment.
- ❑ In extenuating circumstances, SLW accompany the family to the school and arrange for an interpreter, if necessary.

## In School Support

- ❑ The School Liaison worker should try to arrange a brief in class visit with new students whenever possible.
- ❑ Meet with teachers, principal and other support staff on a regular basis.
- ❑ Attend staff meetings and school support meetings, as required.
- ❑ Provide crisis intervention when necessary.
- ❑ Attend IPRC meetings with parents when appropriate.
- ❑ Withdraw individual children from class on an “as needed” basis and as requested by teachers.
- ❑ Provide academic support through after-school programs to ensure consistency.
- ❑ Liaise between parents, school and other Birkdale Staff as required.
- ❑ Provide admission profile on new school-age child for teachers.
- ❑ Interact and observe children’s interactions with others during classroom visits.
- ❑ Attend monthly faculty meeting to update teachers on homelessness issues and current trend.

## Co-Facilitations of Groups

- ❑ Act in a supportive role in the process of helping children with their adaptation to a new school environment.
- ❑ Co-facilitate of “School Cool, Hope, Social Skills” groups for new children at school who currently reside in the shelter. The groups address topics on the transition to a new school, conflict resolution, self-esteem building, friendship making and accessing age appropriate community resources.
- ❑ Oversee the service delivery and implementation of the “Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten Program” facilitated by York University students from the Education Program.
- ❑ Assist with specialized resiliency programs as identified by the Day Care Recreational Assistant.

## Case Management

- ❑ Maintain case files on children and write additional correspondence and reports, as required.
- ❑ Conduct continuing supportive counselling of children and families using appropriate methods of professional intervention, including individual and small group family counselling. Monitor client’s progress, ensuring ongoing contact.
- ❑ Work in conjunction with in-house Child Advocate and Case Worker on high risk Children’s Aid involvement and special needs children.
- ❑ Make appropriate referrals for children with exceptional needs, as needed.
- ❑ Ensure the admission profile is distributed to the appropriate teachers, Case Worker and DCRA.
- ❑ Report to full team case conference regarding emerging issues and program highlights.
- ❑ Make referrals to \_\_\_\_\_ Children’s Mental Health Agency for Helping Hands @ School.

### Working in conjunction with Day Care Recreational Assistant & Child Advocate

- ❑ Provide academic resource specific to a child's need which will help facilitate support to the Day Care Recreational Assistant to maintain the function of Homework Monitor and Study Buddy.
- ❑ Follow up with any day care log entry regarding any behavioural and academic concerns noted by DCRA.
- ❑ Work in conjunction with in-house Child Advocate and Day Care Recreational Assistant to ensure school age children receive appropriate academic support as identified by teachers, School Liaison Worker and Day Care Recreational Assistant.

### Community Partnerships

- ❑ Form a liaison with Toronto District School Board Schools and Children's Mental Health Agency.
- ❑ Provide In-School Lunch and Learn/Share Information Session to raise awareness of the multiple issues children face who are living in poverty or homeless.
- ❑ Co-facilitate groups with the Children's Mental Health Agency.

### Training

- ❑ Maintain current knowledge of services available for children and youth and upgrades through training.
- ❑ Participate in appropriate professionally-related activities specific to children's advocacy, mental health and education.
- ❑ Work in consultation with Activity Organizer when planning age appropriate workshops for parents with school age children. For example: "How to Build a Relationship with your Child's Teacher", "Homework Help" and "Helping your Child Adjust to a New School".

### Special Projects

- ❑ Undertake special projects and assignments, as required.
- ❑ Provide work direction to student placements, as needed.
- ❑ Provide updated profiles for all school agers in the evening program for Day Care Recreational Assistants.
- ❑ Create monthly multi-age and school-age program calendar.
- ❑ Co-ordinate "Girls on the Run", as needed.
- ❑ Implement and lead resiliency focused workshops as identified by Day Care Recreational Assistant, teachers and Child Advocates.

## Sample Student Academic Profile

\* Provided by Birkdale Residence, City of Toronto Shelter

The School Liaison Worker completes this form with the parent and shares it with the teacher, helping to eliminate many of the miscommunications that can occur when a child enrolls a new school.

**Child's Name:**

**Parent's Name and Room #:**

**DOB:**

**Age:**

**Grade:**

**English as a first language or ESL (note child's first language):**

**Current School:**

**Current Teacher:**

### Reason for Admission

- List reason for admission on Central Family Intake
- Date of admission

### Health

- Immunization  provided  required
- Chronic health concerns

### Academic History

- Include previous school name.
- Include name of previous teacher.
- Get consent to speak to previous teacher about academic strengths and weaknesses and social skills in the school environment.
- Get consent to request a copy of the most recent report card from the school.
- List all schools attended in academic career and dates, if possible.

### Special Needs

- Does the child have a special needs diagnosis? If yes, give details.
- Does the parent believe the child needs a psychological assessment? If yes, provide parent's concerns.
- Was the child receiving any special education supports in school? If yes, provide details e.g. smaller classroom, IPRC completed or in process, speech and language, etc..

## Emotional Health

- Experience of a recent loss
- Any special fears
- Anything the teacher should know about your child

## Reports from School

### List Date:

(Capture any emerging issues)

- Are there any concerns being brought forward by the teacher academically?
- Are there any concerns being brought forward by the teacher socially (poor social skills, poor conflict resolution skills, inability to make friends, poor hygiene, inappropriate language, inappropriate conversations)?
- Does this child need to be brought forward to team?
- Are there child welfare concerns, for example, insufficient lunch, not dressed for the weather (record if donations are provided to rectify the situation)?
- Is the child not picked up on time after school?

## Attendance Record

- Attendance record requested
- Month 1                                      Received                                      Overview
- Month 2                                      Received                                      Overview
- Month 3                                      Received                                      Overview

## Discharge Planning

- New School (provide the mother with the information if requested)
- Outreach recommended and e-mail sent to Supervisor - Social Assistance outlining why outreach is recommended

## Additional Resources

| TOPIC  | CITATION   | FUNDER(S)  | DESCRIPTION  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Emotional impacts of homelessness</b>                         | Sherkin, S. (2006). Kid Builders Research Project-Phase 2: Supporting the school success of homeless children in Scarborough. Community Social Planning Council of Toronto.  | Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre & The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This community report documented feelings and perceptions as they relate to the impact of homelessness on families.</li> <li>• Parents felt their children are starting to worry more since arriving at the shelter.</li> <li>• Shelter staff believed parents are “parentifying” their children (e.g. children worry about high rents, welfare payments, or parents’ job search).</li> <li>• Parents, shelter staff and teachers perceived children as aggressive and lacking social and organizational skills.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Emotional impacts of witnessing and experiencing violence</b> | Ayoub, C. C., Deutsch, R.M. and A. Maraganore. (1999). Emotional Distress in Children of High-Conflict Divorce. The impact of Marital Conflict and Violence. Family and Conciliation Courts Review, 37 (3), 297-314. | Harvard Medical School and Harvard Medical School of Education                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings from this study suggest that children of families with high marital conflict are more likely to have high levels of emotional stress.</li> <li>• This association still stands even after controlling for age and several other factors including: child maltreatment, the presence of mental illness, or a substance-abusing mother.</li> <li>• The frequency and intensity of witnessing or experiencing violence does not increase children’s emotional distress, suggesting that even a single exposure may result in adverse psychiatric symptoms.</li> </ul> |



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|  | Kennedy, A.C., Bybee, D., Sullivan, C.M. and M. Greeson. (2010). The Impact of Family and Community Violence on Children's Depression Trajectories: Examining the Interactions of Violence Exposure, Family Social Support, and Gender. <i>Journal of Family Psychology, 24(2)</i> , 197-207. | School of Social Work, Michigan State University    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This study found depression in children to be positively associated with witnessing intimate partner violence, as specifically defined by their mother's exposure to partner abuse, including: verbal and physical, name calling, posing of threats, screaming and yelling.</li> </ul>  |
|  | Levendosky, A.A., Huth-Bocks, A.C., Shapiro, D.L. and M.A. Semel. The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Maternal-Child Relationship and Preschool-Age Children's Functioning. <i>Journal of Family Psychology, 17(3)</i> , 275-287.  | Department of Psychology, Michigan State University | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's negative behaviours, as a negative consequence of domestic violence, have been found to be mediated by their specific relationship in the family or with the mother.</li> <li>• In this study, domestic violence was significantly associated with women's psychological functioning, as defined by depressive and post traumatic symptoms.</li> <li>• Women exposed to DV reported lower parenting effectiveness and more insecure attachment to their children.</li> </ul> |
|  | Kilpatrick, K.L. and L.M. Williams. Potential Mediators of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Child Witnesses to Domestic Violence. <i>Child Abuse &amp; Neglect. 22(4)</i> , 319-330.   | Department of Psychology, University of New England | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This study showed that neither the frequency or intensity of DV was significant in predicting PTSD in children, suggesting that exposure to DV has a chronic, long term impact upon the psychological well-being of the children witnessing it.</li> </ul>  |
|  | Hershorn, M. and A. Rosenbaum. (1985). Children of Marital Violence: A Closer Look at the Unintended Victims.   | Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both marital violence and non-marital discord have been found to be related to conduct problems amongst witnessing children.</li> </ul>   |

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|--|---|---|---|
|  | American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 55(2), 260-266.  |   |   |
|  | Jaffe, P., Wolfe, D., Wilson, S. and L. Zak. (1986). Similarities in Behavioural and Social Maladjustment Among Child Victims and Witnesses to Family Violence. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 56(1), 142-146.                | Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services & Ontario Mental Health Foundation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This study's findings indicate that school-aged boys exposed to family violence had a pattern of adjustment problems that resembled those of abused boys.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Griffing. S., Lewis, C.S., Chu, M., Madry, L., and B.J. Primm. (2006). Exposure to Interpersonal Violence as a Predictor of PTSD Symptomatology in Domestic Violence Survivors. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21 (7), 936-954. | Urban Research Institute & Teachers College, Columbia, NY.                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants in this study with prior violence exposure reported higher levels of PTSD severity scores.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Lieberman, A.F., Van Horn, P. and Ozer. E.J. (2005). Preschooler Witnesses of Marital Violence. Development of Psychopathology, 17, 385-396.  | University of California, San Francisco and University of California Berkeley         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this study, children's exposure to marital violence and maternal life stress were significantly correlated with children's behavioural problems.</li> <li>• The quality of the mother-child relationship was also associated with children's behavioural issues.</li> </ul> |
|  | Graham-Bermann, S.A. and S. Perkins. (2010). Effects of Early Exposure and Lifetime Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) on Child Adjustment. Violence and Victims, 25 (4), 427-437.   | University of Michigan  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This research found a dose response relationship between the exposure to domestic violence and adjustment problems for children.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>The Incorporation of a Resiliency</b> | Steinebach, C. and U. Steinebach. (2009). Positive Peer Culture with German Youth. Reclaiming Children and Youth, 18(2), 27-33.   | Zurich University of Applied Sciences   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within a resiliency framework, individuals have the ability to face difficulties via a combination of external supports (family, peer,</li> </ul>  |

|                      |   |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Orientated Framework |   |   | school, community) and internal strengths (personality characteristics, empowerment, self-control).   |
|                      | Henley, R. (2010). Resilience Enhancing Psychosocial Programmes for Youth in Different Cultural Contexts: Evaluation and Research. Progress in Development Studies, 10 (4), 295-307   | Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Base, Switzerland                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines the construct of resilience as a dynamic multidimensional process, involving how an actor influences his environment to better cope with adverse circumstances in order to get good outcomes.</li> <li>• Resiliency is defined as a trajectory of adaptation which occurs when a person responds to severe stress, shock or traumas.</li> <li>• Healthy emotional development is fostered by the internalization of a variety of protective factors: peer relationships, the presence of a caring relationship with a parent/or supportive adult (e.g. teacher), interaction of a person with the community or involvement in organizations and institutions.</li> </ul> |
|                      | Catalano, R.F., Berglund, M.L. Ryan, J.A.M., Lonczack, H.S. and J.D. Hawkins. (2004). Positive Youth Development in the United States: Research Findings on Evaluations of Positive Youth Development Programs. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 2004, 591, 98-124. | Social Development Research Group, School of Social Work, University of Washington, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth with high resiliency factors are less likely to be involved in risk-taking activities, such as substance use and school misbehaviour and are more likely to further develop interpersonal skills, self-control, problem solving and cognitive competencies.</li> <li>• Programs promoting positive youth development achieved improvement in positive youth outcomes, such as: greater social acceptance by</li> </ul>   |

|  |  |   |  |
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|  |  |   | and collaboration with peers, improved communication with parents, higher achievement and school attachment, improved cognitive competence and academic mastery.   |
|  | Buchanan, R. L. and G.L. Bowen. (2008). In the context of Adult Support: The Influence of Peer Support on the Psychological Well-Being of Middle School Students | Department of Social Work, Salisbury University, Salisbury, USA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a study examining the influence of adult and peer support on the psychological well-being of middle school students, both adult and peer support was beneficial for helping middle school students increase their psychological well-being.</li> <li>• However, within the cases of low adult support, high levels of peer support did not improve psychological well-being.</li> </ul>  |
|  | Hammond, W. (2003). Understanding the Resiliency Framework. Resiliency Initiatives.  | Resiliency Initiatives  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resiliency is the capability of individuals to cope with life adversities by making use of common resiliency factors, including external (family, peers, school, community), and internal (personality characteristics, empowerment, self-control).</li> <li>• Demonstrated that youth with higher resiliency factors are less likely to be involved in risk-taking activities.</li> <li>• As it relates to the importance of school related strengths, the school culture resiliency factor consists of four developmental strengths that could lead to positive youth development: school boundaries, caring school climate, bonding to school, and high expectations.</li> </ul> |

## Section 2: Navigating the Education System

- ▶ **Key Points and Questions**
- ▶ **Navigating the Education System - Information for Parents and Staff**
  - Toronto District School Board
  - Toronto Catholic District School Board
- ▶ **Homework Support Options**
- ▶ **Additional Resources**

## Key Points and Questions

### KEY POINTS

- There are many policies and practices in place to support parents and children.
- Policies can be confusing and parents may benefit from having help deciphering them.
- People may not know what supports are in place for them.
- There are many programs in place to support students ranging from special needs to ESL.
- Homework help is available through school board.
- Children living in shelters may attend upwards of three schools in a year.
- Transitions can be disruptive to children's education so having information about available resources and supports is useful.

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. How could you share this information with parents?
2. What sort of homework support do you offer to children?
3. Where do we find information on other school boards?
4. How could a child's education be disrupted by multiple transitions?
5. How could a child's life be disrupted by these transitions?

## Navigating the Education System: Information for Parents and Staff

The following sections are intended to assist parents and families living in shelters and shelter staff to access information in order to effectively navigate the school system. We focus on policies, resources and supports from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), however most of the same services exist in other school boards. A caution – while resources and supports do exist, some may take more time and persistence to access than others.

It is our hope that such information will help parents and shelter staff engage effectively as partners with school educators in successfully advocating for their children’s education. (Parents are also advised to review their children’s school-provided agenda for relevant policies and resources at specific schools.)

The following policies, procedures, resources and supports are reviewed:

- Relevant TDSB & TCDSB Policies and Procedures
- Relevant TDSB & TCDSB Resources and Supports
  - Admissions/Registration Information
  - English as a Second Language (ESL) Support
  - Special Education Supports and Resources
- Homework Support Options

# Toronto District School Board

## DOCUMENTS REVIEWED:

\* From Toronto District School Board. (n.d.) [www.tdsb.on.ca/ppf/allDocs.aspx](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/ppf/allDocs.aspx)

### TDSB Policies

Homework Policy

Respectful Learning and Working Environment Policy

Evaluation of Late and Missed Assignments Policy

Accountability for Student Achievement Policy

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

Optional Attendance Policy

Human Rights Policy

Parent and Community Involvement Policy

Nutrition Foundation Policy

Code of Conduct Policy

Students without Legal Immigration Status Policy

Safe Schools Policy

Equity Foundation Policy

Gender Based Violence Policy

### TDSB Procedures

Academic Honesty

Protocol for Assigning a Lower Limit Below 50 Percent for Reporting on Student Achievement

Evaluation of Late and Missed Assignments Policy

Students with Special Needs: Management Process for Risk-of-Injury Behaviours



Suspensions Appeal Meetings

## **TDSB Resources and Supports**

### **Admission & Registration Information**

Directly at the Neighbourhood School

At the TDSB Head Office

### **English as a Second Language (ESL) Support**

ESL/English Literacy Development (ELD) Programs

Newcomer Reception Centers

Literacy Enrichment Academic Program (LEAP)

General Settlement Information for Newcomers

Language Resources

### **Special Education Supports & Resources**

The Community Based Resource Model (CBRM)

Intensive Support Programs (ISPs)

The Homes School Program

Individual Education Plans (IEP)

Parents' Guide to Special Education

Transition Planning

Transportation Provision

## TDSB GENERAL POLICIES

### Homework Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To promote student learning and academic achievement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly communicate homework guidelines.</li> <li>Facilitate ongoing communication with families in the homework process.</li> <li>Coordinate homework support resources (e.g. academic support programs, library facilities information)</li> <li>Provide homework related information to parents (e.g. websites, newsletters, etc.).</li> <li>Share expectations for homework with students and parents.</li> <li>Match homework assignments with students' development age, skill set and learning style.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are responsible for recording assignments' due dates and for completing them in a timely manner.</li> <li>Parents are required to read to their children in their first language throughout the elementary years of their education, to provide encouragement and appropriate homework support, and to facilitate access to a supportive homework environment either inside a home or in alternative settings (e.g. homework clubs).</li> </ul> |

### Respectful Learning and Working Environment Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To facilitate a respectful learning environment, free from violence, harassment, bullying, intimidation and discrimination.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain a respectful learning and working environment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both students and parents are required to maintain a respectful learning environment.</li> </ul> |

### Evaluation of Late and Missed Assignments Policy

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To inform staff and students about the late assignments' evaluation process.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform students of their specific course work requirements and deadlines.</li> <li>Clearly outline consequences related to incomplete and late assignments.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are responsible for their classroom related behaviour.</li> <li>Students and parents are expected to be aware of the importance of submitting</li> </ul> |

|  |   |                                 |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify students of their own responsibility for class related behaviours.</li> <li>• Distribute assignments via paper copies or websites.</li> </ul> | assignments in a timely manner. |
|--|---|---------------------------------|

### Accountability for Student Achievement Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enable all students to reach a high level of academic achievement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment.</li> <li>• Make use of assessment and evaluation practices to improve students' learning.</li> <li>• Share all assessment related information with students and their parents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have the right to achieve their highest level of academic attainment.</li> </ul> |

### Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support a positive school climate.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the school-wide bullying prevention and intervention strategies.</li> <li>• Communicate these policies and procedures to students and parents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have the right to a positive school climate.</li> </ul> |

\* For more information on bullying see Ministry of Education *Safe Schools Policies*  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/discipline.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/discipline.html)

### Optional Attendance Policy

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To facilitate access to programs and schools that best meet the needs of all children.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate students' enrolment at schools and in programs that best suit their needs, even if located outside their residential catchment area.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and legal guardians have the right to make use of the Optional Attendance process to keep their children enrolled in their current school or any specialized</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |
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|  |  | <p>programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spaces are determined through a lottery system based on admission specific priorities (e.g. those with siblings or those attending licensed child care within the school's catchment area, etc.).</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

## Human Rights Policy

| <b>Objective</b>  | <b>School Staff's &amp; Teachers' Responsibilities</b>  | <b>Families' &amp; Students' Rights &amp; Responsibilities</b>   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain a learning environment that actively promotes human rights.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a learning environment free of discrimination and harassment.</li> <li>• Make use of preventive education and proactive strategies.</li> <li>• Facilitate access to complaint procedures in the case of discrimination and harassment incidents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students and their parents are encouraged to formally complain in the case of unequal treatment and discrimination within the school system based on any of the following grounds: age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, faith, ethnic origin, family status, gender, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, same-sex partnership status, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.</li> </ul> |

## Parent and Community Involvement Policy

| <b>Objective</b>   | <b>School Staff's &amp; Teachers' Responsibilities</b>  | <b>Families' &amp; Students' Rights &amp; Responsibilities</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build and support parent and community involvement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide parents with the information needed to support their children's education.</li> <li>• Ensure all parents have the opportunity to participate in the school system.</li> <li>• Involve families in decisions regarding their children's education.</li> <li>• Support parent forums in order to promote parent consultation on matters related to the school system.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents have the right to be provided with the information they need by the Board, in order to support their children's education and to be involved in decisions which affect their children and their schools.</li> </ul> |

## Nutrition Foundation Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure equitable access to high quality school-based nutrition programs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop school-based nutrition programs in consultations with the school community, including students.</li> <li>Provide parents and other community members with information about nutrition programs and nutrition education in the TDSB.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have the right to equitable, accessible, high quality school-based nutrition programs.</li> </ul> |

## Code of Conduct Policy

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To establish a Code of Conduct for all members of the school community in accordance with the Education Act.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain consistent standards of behaviour for all students.</li> <li>Help students fulfill their potential</li> <li>Empower students to be positive leaders within their communities.</li> <li>Maintain regular communication with parents.</li> <li>Demonstrate respect for all students and all other members within the school community.</li> <li>Assist school principals in maintaining disciplinary practices and reporting incidents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are responsible for coming to school prepared, on time and ready to learn, for showing respect to themselves and others, for following established rules and for taking responsibility for their own actions.</li> <li>Parents are expected to regularly communicate with the school, to be respectful of school staff, to show an active interest in their child's school work, to ensure their child's school attendance, to report any absence or late arrival, to assist their child in following rules of behaviour, and to assist school staff with disciplinary issues.</li> </ul> |

## Students without Legal Immigration Status Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a safe and welcoming environment for students regardless</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement admission procedures for students lacking full immigration status.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students without full immigration status have the right to attend elementary and secondary school for free in Ontario.</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| of their immigration status, in accordance with the Ontario Education Act. |  |  |
|--|--|--|

## Safe Schools Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a peaceful and welcoming learning environment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the school environment is free of negative factors including abuse, bullying, discrimination, intimidation or violence of any kind.</li> <li>Respond appropriately when violent incidents threaten the safety and security of students and the school community.</li> <li>Ensure consequences are implemented when students commit violent acts.</li> <li>Educate all students, including those committing violent acts.</li> <li>Provide students with opportunities to attend programs and access services based on their academic and social/emotional needs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents and community members are expected to actively participate as partners in maintaining a safe learning and working environment on school premises.</li> </ul> |

- For more information see the Ministry of Education's *Bullying A Guide for Parents* [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/bullying.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/bullying.pdf)

## Equity Foundation Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that the principles of <i>Equity</i>, <i>Fairness</i> and <i>Inclusiveness</i> are fully integrated within the school system.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide opportunities for all students to understand the causes of societal inequities and subsequent forms of discrimination.</li> <li>Help students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to challenge unjust practices.</li> <li>Provide students with equitable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents and students are to be provided with access to specific procedures for addressing any concerns arising from their inequitable treatment within the school system.</li> <li>Students have the right to equitable opportunities in their</li> </ul> |

|  |   |           |
|--|---|-----------|
|  | opportunities to academically succeed and to fully develop their abilities. | learning. |
|--|---|-----------|

## Gender Based Violence Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure the school system's commitment to the elimination of gender based violence.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the duty to report any incidents related to gender based violence within the school.</li> <li>Notify the appropriate supervisor or the School Services staff in cases of physical and emotional harm to students.</li> <li>Participate in annual training regarding the gender based violence policy.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are expected to take the opportunity to participate in gender based peer education programs around the issues of healthy relationships, sexuality, gender stereotyping, homophobia, etc.</li> </ul> |

## TDSB OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

### Academic Honesty

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide direction on the issues of academic honesty (i.e. cheating, plagiarism).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide age appropriate instruction and include age appropriate and easily understandable information regarding academic honesty and plagiarism in student agendas.</li> <li>Promote school practices to discourage academic dishonesty.</li> <li>Define plagiarism for students and teach them the research skills needed to avoid plagiarism.</li> <li>Make use of resources.</li> <li>Create assignments that require critical thinking.</li> <li>Allot class time and supervision for assignment related work.</li> <li>Determine occurrences of plagiarism.</li> <li>Inform parents and students of plagiarism related consequences.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek clarification from teachers about plagiarism related consequences (e.g. mark of zero).</li> <li>Seek help to improve students' research skills.</li> <li>Understand penalties for academic dishonesty.</li> <li>Cite sources accurately.</li> <li>Have the right to appeal teachers' decisions.</li> </ul> |

## Protocol for Assigning a Lower Limit Below 50 Percent for Reporting on Student Achievement

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities       |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To determine the lower limit of the range of marks below 50 percent recorded on student achievement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record students' actual marks on report cards.</li> <li>Assist students to gain their credits when their marks fall below 50 percent.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul> |

## Students with Special Needs: Management Process for Risk-of-Injury Behaviours

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To manage the safety issues and respond to behavioural needs of students with special needs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure a safe school environment while respecting students' right to an appropriate education.</li> <li>Ensure that Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour Logs and Safety Plans are collaboratively developed in consultations with parents and/or caregivers.</li> <li>Share information about high-risk students in school team meetings.</li> <li>Advise parents of all protocols including: school and classroom safety audit, physical intervention, contain and release, time out, confidentiality in special education, parental involvement, staff and student safety, record keeping, reporting of violent accidents, admission, readmission, expulsion, transfers, etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents have the right to participate the development of their children's IEPs.</li> <li>Parents have the right to be informed of all specific protocols in place.</li> </ul> |

## Suspensions Appeal Meetings

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To establish the process of conducting</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide appropriate documentation at the suspension appeal meetings.</li> <li>If part of the Discipline Committee,</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have the right to participate to a suspension appeal meeting and the right to be</li> </ul> |



|                             |  |   |
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| suspension appeal meetings. | assist with deliberation and decisions regarding suspension. | present at the meeting without being a party. |
|-----------------------------|--|---|

## TDSB RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

### Admission and Registration Information

#### Directly at the Neighbourhood School

| For Whom?  | Documents Required for Registration   | Additional Information   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary students.</li> <li>Aged 4-13.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proof of Age: birth certificate or passport .</li> <li>Proof of Home Address: purchase or lease agreement or a utility bill showing name and address.</li> <li>Proof of Custody: where applicable.</li> <li>Students without legal immigration status: any document which verifies the student's legal name, date of birth, home address, custody papers where applicable, and date of entry to Canada (required for ESL funding purposes).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In person: International Programs and Admissions office at 5050 Yonge Street</li> <li>By Phone: 416-395-8109 or 416-395-9618</li> <li>By email: <a href="mailto:admissions@tdsb.on.ca">admissions@tdsb.on.ca</a></li> </ul> |

#### At the TDSB Head Office

| For Whom?   | Documents Required for Registration   | Additional Information   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary students.</li> <li>Aged 14-20.</li> <li>Any other students missing the documentation required for the neighbourhood school based enrolment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the absence of official documentation, to verify the required information, TDSB accepts written signed letters of confirmation of the student's information from lawyers, notary publics, medical doctors, or other persons of recognized standing in the Toronto community.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In person: International Programs and Admissions office at 5050 Yonge Street</li> <li>By Phone: 416-395-8109 or 416-395-9618</li> <li>By email: <a href="mailto:admissions@tdsb.on.ca">admissions@tdsb.on.ca</a></li> </ul> |

## English as a Second Language (ESL) Resources and Support

### ESL/English Literacy Development (ELD) Programs

| Level  | Description  | Information   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary and secondary students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs aimed at helping students for whom English is not their first language, and to help those who did not have regular or consistent access to school in their country of origin.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary School Curriculum link: <a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/</a></li> <li>Secondary School Curriculum link: <a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/</a></li> <li>Secondary School ESL/ELD course descriptions: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/pr ograms/English_as_a_Second_Lan guage/docs/ESL%20and%20LD.pdf">www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/pr ograms/English_as_a_Second_Lan guage/docs/ESL%20and%20LD.pdf</a></li> </ul> |

### Newcomer Reception Centers

| Level  | Description  | Information  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students eligible for secondary school enrolment.</li> <li>Ages 14-20.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are four Newcomer Reception Centres assessing students' English language and mathematical skills to help place them in appropriate high school credit courses.</li> <li>Appointments must be made with the Reception Centre by telephone.</li> <li>Documentation required: any papers showing their current Toronto address such as a telephone bill, electricity bill, or a driver's license.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Southwest West End Reception Centre</b><br/>Address: 777 Bloor Street West, 4th floor, Toronto, Ontario (north side of Bloor Street at Christie subway station)<br/>Phone: 416-393-0542</li> <li><b>Southeast Greenwood Reception Centre</b><br/>Address: 24 Mountjoy Avenue, Toronto, Ontario (1 block south of Danforth Avenue just east of Greenwood Ave.)<br/>Phone: 416-393-0750</li> <li><b>Northwest Thistletown Reception Centre</b><br/>Address: 20 Fordwich Crescent (Islington Avenue south of Finch Ave.)<br/>Phone: 416-394-7698 or 416-394-</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | <p>7697</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Northeast</b><br/> <b>Georges Vanier Reception Centre</b><br/> Address: 3000 Don Mills Road East<br/> (Don Mills Road East, south of Finch Ave.)<br/> Phone: 416-395-9440</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

### Literacy Enrichment Academic Program (LEAP)

| Level   | Description  | Information  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ages 11-18.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A special program for students who did not regularly attend school before coming to Canada, aimed to increase their English literacy and mathematics skills.</li> <li>• Program offered in 40 elementary schools and 13 secondary schools.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications are made through the students' home school.</li> </ul> |

### General Settlement Information for Newcomers

| Level   | Description   | Information   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ages.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific settlement information in many languages, on a range of topics, including the Ontario school system.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement specific information can be accessed at:<br/> <a href="http://www.settlement.org">www.settlement.org</a></li> </ul> |

### Language Resources

| Level   | Description   | Information   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ages.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific tips helping children with reading, writing, math and homework.</li> <li>• Resources for parents in a variety of home languages.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tips and resources can be found at:<br/> <a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/">www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/</a></li> </ul> |

## Special Education Supports and Resources

### The Community Based Resource Model (CBRM)

| For Whom?  | Description   | Additional Information  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students who have been formally identified through the IPRC process and recommended for Special Education placements at their home school.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A board-wide process aimed to support students who require special education services in their local elementary and middle schools.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More details available: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23229&amp;pageid=20135">www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23229&amp;pageid=20135</a></li> <li>For Program Locations go to: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23239&amp;pageid=20145">www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23239&amp;pageid=20145</a></li> </ul> |

### Intensive Support Programs (ISPs)

| For Whom?   | Description  | Additional Information  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students requiring intensive support.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs located within families of schools and staffed by central resources.</li> <li>The number and location of ISPs, is determined by profiles of students requiring intensive support.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on ISP support classes: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23230&amp;pageid=20136">www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23230&amp;pageid=20136</a></li> <li>Program locations: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23239&amp;pageid=20145">www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.aspx?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23239&amp;pageid=20145</a></li> </ul> |

### The Home School Program

| For Whom?   | Description  | Additional Information |
|---|--|------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students in special needs placements.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A component of the Community Based Resource Model process.</li> <li>A special education class in which a student is placed for at least 50 percent of the school day.</li> <li>The Special Education teacher works in collaboration with the student's regular classroom teacher to address the students' needs and coordinate their Individual Education Plans.</li> </ul> |                        |

## Individual Education Plans (IEP)

| For Whom?   | Description  | Additional Information  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students in need.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A written plan describing the Special Education program and/or services a particular student requires.</li> <li>The plan identifies learning expectations and suggests services to assist the student.</li> <li>It helps teachers better monitor their students' progress.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on individual plans guidelines can be accessed at: <a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elementary/msec/speced/iep/iep.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elementary/msec/speced/iep/iep.html</a></li> </ul> |

## Parents' Guide to Special Education

| For Whom?  | Description   | Additional Information   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Parents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multilingual document designed to provide parents with information about the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process, and to outline the procedures related to potential placements for students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This document can be accessed at: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23539&amp;pageid=20406">www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23539&amp;pageid=20406</a></li> </ul> |

## Transition Planning

| For Whom?  | Description   | Additional Information   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For children with special needs and their parents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An entry-to-school plan designed for parents and children with special needs in order to assist with their transition from preschool to school, to help them adjust to the school setting, and to help them develop a positive attitude towards education.</li> <li>For students transitioning from secondary school to post-secondary setting, IEPs are in place to assist with students' needs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connections: A Guide to Transition Planning for Parents of Children with a Developmental Disability: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/parents/special_education_2/docs/Connections%20PDF.pdf">www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/parents/special_education_2/docs/Connections%20PDF.pdf</a>.</li> </ul> |

## Transportation Provision

| For Whom? | Description | Additional Information |
|-----------|-------------|------------------------|
|-----------|-------------|------------------------|

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For students in Special Education classes.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safe and reliable transportation for students in special education classes.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The following Student Booklet provides additional details on transportation:<br/><a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/parents/special_education_2/docs/Student%20Booklet.pdf">www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/parents/special_education_2/docs/Student%20Booklet.pdf</a>.</li></ul> |
|--|---|--|

# Toronto Catholic District School Board

## DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

TCDSB. (n.d.). *TCDSB policy register*. Retrieved from <http://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Pages/Default.aspx>

### TCDSB Policies

Homework Guidelines

Assessment and Evaluation of Student Achievement Policy – Addressing Late or Missed Assignments

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

Catholic Equity and Inclusive Education Policy H.M. 24

Safe Schools/ Code of Conduct Policy

Violence Prevention Policy

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Race and Ethnic Relations and Multiculturalism H.M. 24

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Admission of Students without Status

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## English as a Second Language (ESL) Support

ESL/English Literacy Development (ELD) Programs

Orientation Centre

Language Resources

## Special Education Supports & Resources

Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process

Intensive Support Programs (ISPs)

Individual Education Plans (IEP)

Parents' Guide to Special Education

Transition Planning

Transportation Provision



## TCDSB Policies

### Homework Guidelines

| Objective  | School Staff's and Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' and Students' Rights and Responsibilities  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist students in assuming responsibility for their own learning development.</li> <li>• Develop positive attitudes towards independent study and life-long learning.</li> <li>• Encourage the development of self-discipline, good work habits, and time management skills.</li> <li>• Foster the partnership between home and school.</li> </ul> | <p>The school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers information to assist parents in helping their children at home (e.g., Curriculum Nights, interviews/conferences, newsletters),</li> <li>• Works with the community to develop programs to provide students with support for homework.</li> </ul> <p>The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains to students the purpose and importance of homework,</li> <li>• Teaches skills necessary for the student to complete homework and assigns work that is appropriate to the student's age, learning style, maturity, skills, and individual needs,</li> <li>• Uses homework as a vehicle for developing and reinforcing learning, not as a punishment,</li> <li>• Works collaboratively with other teachers to assign reasonable amounts of home-work,</li> <li>• Communicates regularly with parents.</li> </ul> | <p>The parent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides encouragement and appropriate support, without doing the homework for the student,</li> <li>• Provides a calm environment (e.g., workplace, block of uninterrupted time), usually in the home or in an alternate setting, e.g., Homework Club,</li> <li>• Shows interest in the student's schoolwork and progress;</li> <li>• Maintains regular contact with the teacher.</li> </ul> <p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures that he/she clearly understands the homework and asks for help if homework is not clear,</li> <li>• Completes homework regularly,</li> <li>• Prepares appropriately for upcoming lessons and studies appropriately for tests,</li> <li>• Manages time and materials appropriately (e.g., uses school planner, submits homework on time, organizes necessary materials),</li> <li>• Communicates regularly with teachers and parents.</li> </ul> |

## Assessment and Evaluation of Student Achievement Policy – Addressing Late or Missed Assignments

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To inform students and staff about good and valid assessment and evaluation practices.</li> </ul> <p>Guiding principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deduction of marks and zero's do not improve learning or assist students who are already struggling,</li> <li>Zeros or incompletes should be used to indicate that a significant expectation has not been demonstrated, not be given as a penalty.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist students with poor Learning Skills such as poor time management and organizational skills to prevent late and missed assignments.</li> <li>If a student has missed one or more evaluations and an "incomplete" has been recorded, the teacher will review the student's progress. The teacher will consider the student's most consistent overall level of achievement on completed evaluations and will use professional judgment to adjust the grade to reflect the missed evaluation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student is responsible for explaining to the teacher the reasons for late and missed assignments or evaluations.</li> <li>The student must follow the teacher's instructions to make up the incomplete work.</li> </ul> |

## Catholic Equity and Inclusive Education Policy H.M. 24

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To eliminate discrimination.</li> <li>However, where there is an apparent conflict between denominational rights and other rights the board will favour the protection of the former.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate the principles of equity and inclusive education in all aspects of its policies, programs, procedures and practices.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be treated in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.</li> </ul> |

## Safe Schools/ Code of Conduct Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers' Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a framework for individual schools to develop local, school-based codes of conduct.</li> <li>• To foster a positive school climate and support student achievement.</li> <li>• Recognizes prevention and early intervention as the key to maintaining a positive school environment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students work to their full potential and develop their self-worth.</li> <li>• Communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents.</li> <li>• Maintain consistent standards of behaviour for all students.</li> <li>• Demonstrate respect for all students, staff and parents.</li> <li>• Empower students to be positive leaders in the classroom, school and community.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate respect for themselves, for others and for the responsibilities of citizenship through acceptable behaviour.</li> <li>• Come to school prepared, on time and ready to learn.</li> <li>• Refrain from bringing anything to school that may compromise the safety of others.</li> <li>• Follow the established rules, policies and local codes of conduct and takes responsibility for his or her own actions.</li> <li>• Parents encourage and assist their child in these responsibilities.</li> </ul> |

## Violence Prevention Policy

| Objective  | School Staff's & Students' Responsibilities  | School Staff's & Students' Rights   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide effective measures for dealing with violence in schools</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect all members of the school community and the property of the school;</li> <li>• Contribute positively to the Christian climate of the school;</li> <li>• Respond positively to the educational environment;</li> <li>• Comply with all school expectations, procedures and codes of behaviour</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be respected by all members of the school community</li> <li>• Work and learn in a safe and orderly environment</li> </ul> |

## Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build awareness about mental health concerns affecting students, and to guide the response to critical mental health issues impacting students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer any students with identifiable mental health concerns to the school's local mental health response staff.</li> <li>Refer to Mental Health Response Guidelines and Suicide Intervention Guidelines when dealing with students presenting mental health concerns.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dignity and privacy of the student experiencing mental health concerns will be respected.</li> </ul> |

## Race and Ethnic Relations and Multiculturalism Policy

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers Responsibilities   | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All people are created in the image and likeness of God and, as such, deserve to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.</li> <li>Recognizes that its school system gives prominence to the tenets of Roman Catholicism.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively foster the creation of an environment which respects the racial, ethnic and cultural plurality within the school system and society at large.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be treated with dignity and respect.</li> </ul> |

## Catholic Equity and Inclusive Education Policy

| Objective  | School Staff's & Teachers Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities   |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide an educational environment that supports and embraces diversity within the Catholic community, demonstrates</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate the principles of equity and inclusive education in all aspects of its policies, programs, procedures and practices.</li> <li>Improve student achievement, well-being and to close achievement gaps for students by identifying, addressing and removing all barriers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be treated with dignity and respect.</li> </ul> |

|   |                                     |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <p>respect for all, and values each as child of God.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uphold the protections entrenched in the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Constitution Act, 1867 and confirmed in the Constitution Act of 1982 –the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.</li> </ul> | <p>and forms of discrimination.</p> |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|

## TCDSB Operational Procedures

### Academic Honesty

This policy is developed on a per school basis. Please consult your local school for specific information on their policy.

| <b>Objective</b>  | <b>What is plagiarism</b>   | <b>Families' &amp; Students' Rights &amp; Responsibilities</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure intellectual integrity and academic honesty prevails.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own. It is an obvious form of cheating and not accepted at schools.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are expected to submit their own work and all sources used.</li> <li>A student who is unclear about an issue is expected to seek clarification with their teacher.</li> </ul> |

## SAFE SCHOOLS: Guide to Appeals for Pupil Suspensions and Expulsions

Interim policy: <http://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Documents/Other/POLICY%20-%20SUSPENSION%20REVIEW1.pdf>

| Objective   | School Staff's & Teachers Responsibilities  | Families' & Students' Rights & Responsibilities  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a pupil is suspended for more than one day, the parents/guardians may request an appeal in writing to the area superintendent within 5 school days from the start of the suspension.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area superintendent may contact the parties of the appeal and the principal, to discuss the details of the possible appeal hearing.</li> <li>The board must hold a hearing and make a decision within fifteen (15) schools days from receipt of the appeal. The board may: confirm the suspension, confirm the suspension but shorten its duration or quash and expunge the record. The decision of the board is final.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/guardians may request an appeal.</li> <li>A pupil, if an adult or 16/17 years old and not under the care of parents/guardian may also exercise this right to appeal.</li> <li>Request must state the reason for consideration.</li> </ul> |

## TCDSB RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

### Admission and Registration Information

#### Admission of Students without Status

The Toronto Catholic District School Board does not deny admission to students whose parents are without status or who are awaiting news of their application to become Canadian citizens.

#### Elementary School Students

| For Whom?  | Documents Required for Registration  | Additional Information  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birth Certificate</li> <li>Proof of Catholicity (one of the following):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your child's Catholic baptismal certificate,</li> <li>The parent's Catholic baptismal certificate (some conditions may apply),</li> <li>A letter of enrolment to the R.C.I.A./R.C.I.C. programme from a Catholic parish priest.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Passport/Immigration Documents</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For further information or to make an appointment for registration, please contact your local elementary school.</li> <li>Note: Non-Catholic children of Non-Catholic parents who are not enrolled in the R.C.I.A./R.C.I.C.* program are not eligible for admittance to TCDSB elementary schools.</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | (if child was not born in Canada). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proof of Address (some examples: a lease agreement, utility bill, proof of purchase).</li> <li>• Immunization Record.</li> </ul> |  |
|--|--|--|

\*RCIA: Rite of Christian Adults, RCIC: Rite of Christian Children

## Secondary School Students

| For Whom?   | Documents Required for Registration   | Additional Information  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open to all students residing in the City of Toronto, you do not need to be Catholic.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New Permanent Residents</b><br/>Arriving in Canada who would like to be placed in a TCDSB secondary school must contact our ORIENTATION CENTRE at (416) 393-5500 to book an appointment for registration.</li> <li>• For further information please contact your local secondary school.</li> </ul> |

## Quick Reference Guide ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMISSION/IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITY

<http://www.tcdsb.org/FORPARENTS/AdmissionsandRegistration/Documents/Chart%20School%20Admission%20and%20Immigration%20requirements.pdf>

## English as a Second Language (ESL) Support

### ESL/English Literacy Development (ELD) Programs

| For Whom?  | Description  | Additional Information  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary students born in Canada or newcomers whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools are responsible for identifying, assessing, and programming for ESL/ELD students.</li> <li>It is a support program (or intervention) rather than a separate curriculum subject. Because students' language proficiency affects their achievement in all subjects, teachers need to incorporate appropriate ESL and ELD approaches and strategies into all areas of the curriculum.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary ESL/ELD Brochure 2012 – 2013:<br/><a href="http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SchoolProgramsK12/ESL/Documents/ESL%20Brochure%202012-13.pdf">http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SchoolProgramsK12/ESL/Documents/ESL%20Brochure%202012-13.pdf</a>.</li> </ul> |

| For Whom?   | Description  | Additional Information  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary students born in Canada or newcomers whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) assist students to learn English.</li> <li>Courses are designated according to levels of proficiency in English, not by grade.</li> <li>Courses offered at a particular school will depend on enrollment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More information<br/><a href="http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SchoolProgramsK12/ESL/Pages/SecondaryELL.aspx">http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SchoolProgramsK12/ESL/Pages/SecondaryELL.aspx</a>.</li> </ul> |

### Orientation Centre

| For Whom?   | Description  | Additional Information   |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Canadian secondary school students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through interviews and transcript assessment, the program places students in the appropriate courses at the appropriate levels.</li> <li>The Centre liaises with various community agencies and colleges, easing the transition for students and their families.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact Information:<br/>orientation.centre@tcdsb.org<br/>Orientation Centre TCDSB<br/>700 Markham Street, Room 130<br/>Toronto, ON<br/>M6G2M3<br/>Phone: 416-393-5500</li> </ul> |



|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For complete list of services: <a href="http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/BoardServices/OrientationCentre/Pages/Services.aspx">http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/BoardServices/OrientationCentre/Pages/Services.aspx</a>.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|

## Language Resources

| For Whom?  | Description  | Additional Information   |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All English Language Learners.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External websites that the ELL department have found to be particularly useful for English as a Second Language.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>View the complete list of websites: <a href="http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SchoolProgramsK12/ESL/Pages/InternetResources.aspx">http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SchoolProgramsK12/ESL/Pages/InternetResources.aspx</a>.</li> </ul> |

## Special Education Supports and Resources

### Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process

| For Whom?   | Description  | Additional Information  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students, as initiated by parent, teacher and/or principal.</li> </ul> | <p>Three essential functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To determine the strengths and needs of students,</li> <li>To identify the student's exceptionality according to the categories and definitions provided by the Ministry of Education and Training (see pp 13-15),</li> <li>To recommend program placement, to be followed by the development/modification of the Individual Education Plan.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents are entitled to participate in all discussions.</li> <li>Parents are entitled to have an advocate (or representative) speak on their behalf.</li> <li>Interpreter/translator should be arranged by principal as required,</li> <li>For more information on Special Education and the IPRC Process, see <i>Parent Guide to Special Education</i>: <a href="http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan/SpecEdPlanDoc/Parent%20Guide%20-%20April%20%202012.pdf">http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan/SpecEdPlanDoc/Parent%20Guide%20-%20April%20%202012.pdf</a>.</li> </ul> |

## Intensive Support Programs (ISPs)

| For Whom?   | Description   | Additional Information  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students requiring intensive support.</li> </ul> | <p>Placement determined by the IPRC giving consideration to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional assessment:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An audiological assessment,</li> <li>Psychological assessment (when deemed appropriate),</li> <li>A speech and language assessment (when deemed appropriate).</li> </ul> </li> <li>Classroom documentation:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration with school personnel, agencies, classroom teacher, parent(s)/guardian(s) and student.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Deaf and Hard of Hearing Assessment:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic and functional assessment at the student's school.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on ISP support classes:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23230&amp;pageid=20136">http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10428&amp;menuid=23230&amp;pageid=20136</a>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Locations of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Intensive Support Programs:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sts. Cosmas and Damian</li> <li>St. Raymond</li> <li>The Divine Infant</li> <li>Secondary - Dante Alighieri.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The number and location of ISPs, is determined by profiles of students requiring intensive support.</li> <li>May have Special Education Placement with Partial Integration or full integration of ISPs.</li> </ul> |

## Individual Education Plans (IEP)

| For Whom?   | Description   | Additional Information   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed with input from the parent(s)/guardian(s) and from the student if he or she is sixteen years of age or older.</li> <li>Must be developed within thirty days of the placement of an exceptional pupil in a particular program.</li> <li>May also be prepared for students who require accommodations, program modifications and/or alternative programs, but who have not been identified.</li> <li>Identifies the student's specific learning expectations and outlines how the school will address these expectations through appropriate accommodations, program.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on individual plans guidelines can be accessed at:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elmsec/speced/iep/iep.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elmsec/speced/iep/iep.html</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>Or           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.tdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan/SpecEdPlanDoc/Parent%20Guide%20-%20April%20%202012.pdf">http://www.tdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan/SpecEdPlanDoc/Parent%20Guide%20-%20April%20%202012.pdf</a>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | modifications and/or alternative programs, as well as specific instructional and assessment strategies as identified in the IPRC. |  |
|--|---|--|

## Parents' Guide to Special Education

| For Whom?  | Description  | Additional Information  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Parents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information to parents about special programs and services provided by the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) and the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). It also outlines the procedures involved in identifying a student as “exceptional”, deciding the student’s placement, or appealing such decisions.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This document can be accessed at:<br/> <a href="http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan/SpecEdPlanDoc/Parent%20Guide%20-%20April%20%202012.pdf">http://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan/SpecEdPlanDoc/Parent%20Guide%20-%20April%20%202012.pdf</a>.</li> </ul> |

## Transition Planning

| For Whom?  | Description  | Additional Information   |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For children with special needs and their parents.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition into school (sometimes called entry to school),</li> <li>Daily transitions between activities,</li> <li>Year to Year transitions</li> <li>Transition from elementary to secondary school,</li> <li>Transition from secondary school to work, further education and/or community living.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Transition plan must be developed for students at the age of 14.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Education: <i>Transition Planning: A Resource Guide</i> (2002)<br/> <a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/transiti/transition.html">http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/transiti/transition.html</a>.</li> </ul> |

## Transportation Provision

| <b>For Whom?</b>   | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Additional Information</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students in special education classes.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transportation for students in special education classes is facilitated by the Toronto Student Transportation Group.</li><li>• Transportation is provided as required for all exceptional students at the elementary and secondary level, with the exception of students identified as gifted.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the TCDSB decisions regarding how children will be transported are made on an individual basis. If a child can be transported with other children, that is the preferred method.</li></ul> |

## Homework Support Options

| HOMEWORK SUPPORT                                    | LEVEL  | DESCRIPTION  | MEANS OF ACCESS   |
|---|--|--|---|
| Free Online Math Help                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grades 7-10</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homework Help program - interactive tutorials with an Ontario Certified Teacher</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online</li> <li><a href="http://homeworkhelp.ilc.org/">homeworkhelp.ilc.org/</a></li> <li>Every Thursday from 5.30 pm to 9.30 pm</li> </ul>  |
| Online Tutoring Chat for English, Sciences and Math | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School</li> <li>English &amp; Sciences (grades 9-12)</li> <li>Math (grades 11-12)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free online tutoring services offered by Ontario Certified Teachers</li> <li>Live and anonymous</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online</li> <li><a href="http://www.ilc.org/aat/chat_schedule.php">www.ilc.org/aat/chat_schedule.php</a></li> <li>Sunday to Thursday, 5:30 p.m. ET to 9:3.30</li> </ul>                                |
| Learning Activities from TVO                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age 11 and under</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A variety of activities, games, applications, contests, event series, videos, downloads, coloring pages, and specific activity books</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online</li> <li><a href="http://www.tvokids.com/framesets/grownUps.html">www.tvokids.com/framesets/grownUps.html</a></li> <li>Anytime</li> </ul>   |
| English and Math Learning Materials                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Grades 1-8</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A three day collection of lessons developed by TDSB teachers and made available as online activities</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online</li> <li><a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/communications/homeworktips/gr1to8mat/gr1to8mat.htm">www.tdsb.on.ca/communications/homeworktips/gr1to8mat/gr1to8mat.htm</a></li> <li>Anytime</li> </ul> |

## Examples of Homework Support Programs

### Free Online Math Homework Help for Grades 7 - 10

[Homeworkhelp.ilc.org](http://Homeworkhelp.ilc.org)

The Toronto District School Board in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Independent Learning Centre is pleased to bring the Homework Help program to Grade 7-10 students.

#### Key features of the site include:

- ✓ Ask a Tutor – Online tutoring by Ontario Certified Teachers Sunday-Thursday 5:30 p.m.– 9:30 pm.
- ✓ Listen and Learn Lessons
- ✓ Interactive Tutorials

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Homework Help website. The header features the site logo, the text "Homework Help Math Help for Grades 7 to 10", and a "Log In" button. Below the header is a search bar with the text "Search" and a search box containing "eg: integers, Obtuse Triangle, Pythagorean Theorem". To the right of the search bar is a "Register Now" button. The main content area is titled "Math Homework Help" and features a large image of colorful math manipulatives. Below the image is a banner that reads "Ask a question Sunday to Thursday" and "Tutors online Sunday to Thursday, 5:30 to 9:30 pm EST". The left sidebar contains a "Watch a Demo" button and a list of resources including "HOME", "ASK A TUTOR", "ASK A TUTOR HELP", "BEST SESSIONS", "INTERACTIVE TUTORIALS", "LISTEN & LEARN", and "TUTOR SCHEDULES". The right sidebar contains a "Tutor Chat" section with a chat icon and a "Partners" section with logos for "Ontario" and "tvo".

e-Learning Contact, [jill.kelsall@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:jill.kelsall@tdsb.on.ca)



Ontario's Designated Provider of Distance Education  
**Independent Learning Centre**

Home School GED Testing **Ask a Teacher** About ILC My ILC Course Sales

Welcome Log In Register

Home » Ask a Teacher » Chat » Chat Schedule

**Chat**

- Chat Schedule
- Meet the Tutors
- Privacy and Rules of Conduct
- FAQs
- Tools & Resources

### Chat Schedule

Tue Jun 26 Wed Jun 27 Thu Jun 28 Fri Jun 29 Sat Jun 30 Sun Jul 1 Mon Jul 2

| 5:30P -7:30P    | 5:30P -9:30P    | 7:30P -9:30P  |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Chemistry 11-12 | Chemistry 11-12 | Biology 11-12 |
| English 9-12    | Math 11-12      | English 9-12  |
| Math 11-12      | Science 9-10    | Math 11-12    |
| Physics 11-12   |                 | Science 9-10  |
| Science 9-10    |                 |               |

Note: Times are Eastern Time (ET).

- [www.ilc.org/aat/chat\\_schedule.php](http://www.ilc.org/aat/chat_schedule.php)

## Additional Resources

| TOPIC  | CITATION   | FUNDER(S)                       | DESCRIPTION  |
|--|--|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>The impact of homelessness on primary and secondary school students</b> | Grothaus, T., Lorelle, S., Anderson, K. and J. Knight. (2011). Answering the call: Facilitating responsive services for students experiencing homelessness. <i>Professional School Counselling</i> 14(3), pg. 191-201. | Professional School Counselling | This article is a clarifying review of the status quo for students experiencing homelessness, as well as sharing the results of a mixed methods study.   |
|  | Hyman, S., Aubry, T. and F. Klodawsky. (2011). Resilient educational outcomes: Participation in school by youth with histories of homelessness. <i>Youth &amp; Society</i> 43 (1), pg. 253-273.                        |                                 | Disruptions during high school, including dropouts have many educational consequences for youth with a history of homelessness. With the help of an ecological resilience prediction model, the study followed 82 youth who were initially homeless for a two year period, to identify their particular experiences within school. |
|  | Moore, T., McArthur, M. and D. Noble-Carre. (2011). Lessons learned from children who have experienced homelessness: what services need to know. <i>Children &amp; Society</i> 25 (2), pg. 115-126.                    | National Children's Bureau      | This case study explores an Australian qualitative study, which surveyed the experiences of children who accompanied their families during phases of homelessness.   |
|  | Murphy, J. (2011). Homeless children and youth at risk: The educational impact of displacement. <i>Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)</i> , 16(1), pg. 38-55.                                   |                                 | This article explores how displacement affects the educational welfare of homeless youth. The article concludes by stating the consequences of homelessness that follow displaced youth into adulthood.  |
|  | Shields, C.M. and A. Warke. (2010). The Invisible Crisis: Connecting Schools With Homeless Families. <i>Journal of School Leadership</i> 20(6), pg. 789-   |                                 | This case study documents the barriers homeless children face and the role educators can play in ensuring that they receive quality  |



|  |  |                                |   |
|--|--|--------------------------------|---|
|  | 819.   |                                | education.  |
|  | Wang, H. (2009). Horizons for Homeless Children: A comprehensive service model for homeless families. Journal of Children and Poverty 15(1), pg. 55-62.  | Horizons for Homeless Children | This article summarizes the operative practices of Horizons for Homeless Children and surveys the services it delivers. |
| <b>Parent survey results from the TDSB</b> | Toronto District School Board. (2009-2010). Parent Surveys. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about_us/media_room/docs/2008ParentCensusK-6SystemOverviewAndDetailedFindings.pdf">www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about_us/media_room/docs/2008ParentCensusK-6SystemOverviewAndDetailedFindings.pdf</a> | Toronto District School Board  | This report outlines the input of over 17,000 parents about their children's experience within the TDSB.                |

## Section 3: Navigating the Shelter System

- ▶ **Key Points and Questions**

- ▶ **Shelter Services in Toronto**

- ▶ **City of Toronto Shelter Standards**

  - Residents Rights and Responsibilities within the Shelter System

  - Example of a Shelter's Rules, Responsibilities and Complaints Procedure

- ▶ **Additional Resources**

## Key Points and Questions

### KEY POINTS

- There are many different types of shelters in Toronto.
- Each shelter has its own set of rules and policies.
- All shelters are governed by *Toronto Shelter Standards*.
- Central Family Intake is a central referral service that does intake and disperses clients to the shelter system.
- Until families receive a long term housing solution they may live in one shelter for a long time, may be transferred between shelters, or may find temporary housing through the transitional housing program.
- Shelter residents have both rights and responsibilities.
- Shelter residents should receive support from staff to achieve identified goals.
- Shelter residents should receive safe, adequate and nutritious food.
- Shelter residents may launch a formal complaint if necessary.

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. How might one's life be disrupted by living in a shelter?
2. What kind of supports would you seek if you were living in a shelter?
3. What would a day in the life of a shelter resident look like?
4. What supports are in place for children living in the shelter?
5. Does the shelter have a quiet place for children to do homework and use the internet?

## Shelter Services in Toronto

**“One of our neighbourhood shelters currently is housing two families per room.”**

Diane Dyson, Director Research and Public Policy, WoodGreen Community Services

**City of Toronto Hostel Services (Shelter System)** provides shelter and assistance to homeless individuals and families with children. Meals and basic necessities are provided in a secure environment, as well as case management, counselling and support programs for adults and children. Housing workers help clients in pursuing permanent housing opportunities.

Together, the City and dozens of community partners provide about 3,800 emergency hostel beds in 57 locations, including nine locations operated by the City. During the winter, additional shelter spaces are made available through the *Out of the Cold* program and the *Extreme Cold Weather Alert System*. City funding also supports the *Habitat Services* program, which supplies 931 boarding home and rooming house beds for adult psychiatric survivors (Shelter Support and Housing Administration, n.d.

[www.toronto.ca/housing/about-hostel.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/housing/about-hostel.htm)).

The shelter system in Toronto is essentially two systems that are linked. **Family shelters** provide emergency shelter services for families who are homeless regardless of cause. Some family shelters accept families of men, women and children, some only accept families of women and children. **Violence Against Women (VAW)** shelters provide refuge and emergency and follow-up services to women and children who are homeless as a result of domestic violence.

VAW shelters are funded by the provincial government, sometimes with additional funds from the United Way. They receive annualized funding. The family shelters are funded by the City of Toronto and are operated by City of Toronto staff. Some family shelters receive annual funding; others receive a blend of annual and per diem funding. The latter is based on use of the shelter and can vary within the year, based on the number of users reported. There is flow through funding from the provincial government to City of Toronto for these shelters, but no funds received by the shelter come directly from the provincial government.

The state of repair of the shelter buildings ranges from dilapidated and aged to renovated and well decorated. VAW shelters maintain smaller, more home-like environments, and are often located in houses.

In contrast, homeless family shelters can be extremely large, often a multi-story dwelling housing well over 100 people at a time. When family homelessness exceeds family shelter capacity, the City leases a series of motel units. In the motels, entire families live in one motel room, without separation by gender. From

these, children attend neighbourhood schools and attempt to achieve stability and a sense of belonging as their parents work with shelter staff to find a solution to their housing crises.

**Central Family Intake** serves both systems. Central Family Intake is a central referral service that does intake and disperses clients to the shelter system, operating 24 hours a day and seven days a week by telephone. It also does homelessness prevention work by assisting families to stay in their homes. Families seeking shelter in municipally run family shelters must go through Central Family Intake. Women seeking shelter in a VAW shelter may approach it through Central Family Intake but, according to VAW shelter staff, due to VAW shelters largely operating at full capacity, they are more likely to be admitted if they contact the VAW shelter directly. VAW shelter staff also expressed concern that when women fleeing domestic violence call Central Family Intake, the Children's Aid Society is notified of the situation.

When shelters reach capacity or have residents who have stayed past the limit of length of stay – though few shelters now have a set time when residents are expected to leave – Central Family Intake will re-direct clients to other shelters in the city. Families also overflow to Family Residence, and when that is full, to leased rooms in nearby motels. The number of families in motels varies, but according to family shelter staff, the use of motels is currently a constant in the system.

**Transitional Shelters** are facilities operated by the City of Toronto or under purchase-of-service agreements with the City of Toronto, that provide longer-term stable accommodation to homeless persons who are working toward reintegration in supportive, social or private housing. Persons staying in transitional shelters may have more complex needs and require more intensive and specialized programming (City of Toronto. (2002). Toronto Shelter Standards. Retrieved from [www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/shelter\\_standards.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/shelter_standards.pdf)).

# City of Toronto Shelter Standards

## Residents Rights and Responsibilities within the Shelter System

\* From City of Toronto. (2002). Toronto Shelter Standards, Section 5. Retrieved from [www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/shelter\\_standards.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/shelter_standards.pdf)

- Each shelter has to post, in a common area, a written policy outlining residents' rights and responsibilities
- Each shelter has its own set of policies and procedures which should be made available to residents

### **Rights:**

- Be treated in a non-judgemental and respectful way
- Be free from discrimination and harassment
- Have a fair appeal process without fear of punishment
- Receive safe, adequate and nutritious food
- Provide input into shelter programs and policies
- Be involved in decisions affecting them
- Receive support from staff to achieve identified goals
- Be given information about services and resources
- Have forms and requests for information explained
- Have personal information treated confidentially
- Contact Hostel Services for information, concerns or to lodge a complaint

### **Responsibilities:**

- Follow the rules of the shelter
- Treat shelter staff and other shelter residents with respect
- Respect the private property and belonging of other shelter residents

- Work with staff to improve their housing situation within their capacity

## Complaints and Appeals

- Residents should be informed by your shelter of the current internal process for resolving complaints.
- Speak to the service provider directly first. Most complaints can be resolved this way.
- If the issue persists, launch a formal complaint with the funder by contacting the Hostel Services and speaking with an Agency Review Officer. The number should be provided by residence staff or through the Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration general inquiry line:

Phone: 416-397-4182

Contact Details: Shelter, Support and Housing Administration  
Metro Hall  
55 John St., 6th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5V 3C6  
ATTN: SSHA COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

Email: [ssha@toronto.ca](mailto:ssha@toronto.ca)

Fax: 416-338-1144  
ATTN: SSHA COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

- **City of Toronto Hostel Services (Shelter System) Concerns/Complaints** 416-392-8741 – if the shelter worker is unable to help with concerns or complaints, or to appeal a decision of the shelter provider, contact the Hostel Services. The call will be directed to the supervisor of Client Services.

## Example of a Shelter's Rules, Responsibilities and Complaints Procedure

\* Provided by Birkdale Residence, City of Toronto Shelter

### **Birkdale Residents have a right:**

- To expect that the standards outlined in the Toronto Shelter Standards document are upheld
- To a safe, clean environment
- To be treated with respect, and in a non-judgmental, free of harassment, and non-discriminatory manner
- To have a fair and clean complaint and appeal process without fear of punishment
- To be part of an operation where everybody's dignity is upheld
- To have personal information treated with confidentiality
- To have forms and requests for information explained
- To counselling services provided by Birkdale counsellors
- To be involved in decisions affecting them
- To identify reasonable goals and receive support from staff to achieve them
- To be given information about services and resources in order to make informed decisions
- To receive expedient, efficient service from the office and from maintenance staff when indicated
- To participate in programs and meetings as appropriate
- To a smoke-free environment
- To participate in volunteer activities
- To provide input and feedback into shelter programs and policies
- To receive per diem to be able to provide food for their families
- To have their complaints and concerns addressed in a timely fashion

### **It is the Birkdale Resident's responsibility:**

- To maintain a clean, tidy room, stocked with adequate food for their families
- To choose a suitable babysitter to take care of their children in their absence; the Residents are responsible for seeking approval from staff
- To actively participate in their case plan, with the assistance of their counsellors, so as to overcome barriers to their housing needs and other issues
- To make sure that their children's emotional and physical needs are met
- To follow the house rules, such as
  - No drugs or alcohol on the premises,
  - Treat other residents and staff with respect,
  - Make sure that their children are attending school as required by law,



- Absolutely no violence, physical or otherwise, in their families, against other residents, or against staff,
- There are regular room checks to ensure safety and security,
- Curfew is midnight from Sunday to Thursday, 4 am on Friday and Saturday and on Sunday of a long weekend,
- Children's bedtime is 10 pm,
- Absolutely no smoking in the rooms and in the common areas, except the designated areas,
- Unclaimed personal belongings will be offered to charities.

Please observe both your rights and responsibilities so that to create an environment that supports you in your goals, both short and long term.

### **Birkdale's Residents Complaint Procedure**

1. All complaints may be directed to the Client Service Worker (CSW) at the Main Office to be resolved with CSW assistance. All complaints, except those pertaining to staff should be resolved at the front line level.
2. If the complaint cannot be resolved or if it is a staff complaint then approach the Shift Leader. The Shift Leader will mediate and help come to a satisfactory resolution.
3. If you have a serious complaint you may choose to complete a complaint form. The complaint will be investigated and resolved by the Shift Leader or Supervisor Social Assistance.
4. If not satisfied, the next step is to make an appointment to see the Manager.
5. If still not satisfied, you may call Metro Hall and direct your complaint to Hostel Services at 416-392-8741.

## Additional Resources

| TOPIC   | CITATION  | FUNDER(S)       | DESCRIPTION  |
|---|---|-----------------|--|
| <b>Shelter Standards, Policies and Programs</b> | City of Toronto. (2003). Toronto Report Card on Housing and Homelessness. Retrieved from: <a href="http://intraspec.ca/reportcard2003.pdf">intraspec.ca/reportcard2003.pdf</a>  |                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of housing and homelessness matters in Toronto, highlighting key policies and programs.</li> <li>• Selection of income, housing, and service indicators.</li> <li>• Detailed account of government responses since the 2001 report.</li> <li>• Summary chart of key government responses since the 2001 report.</li> </ul> |
|   | City of Toronto. (2009). Street Needs Assessments Results. Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-29123.pdf">www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-29123.pdf</a>                                |                 | The objective of this article is to define the services that individuals experiencing homelessness need to find and keep permanent housing. The article also strives to determine the number of people who are homeless and living on Toronto streets.   |
|   | City of Toronto. (2002). Toronto Shelter Standards. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/shelter_standards.pdf">www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/shelter_standards.pdf</a>  |                 | This document outlines guiding principles, access to shelter, resident rights, standards of organization, program standards, and nutrition standards for Toronto shelters.   |
|   | Toronto City Council. (2005). Development of a Quality Assurance program to assess each shelter's compliance with the new Standards. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/council/cc050719/cms6rpt/cl014.pdf">www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/council/cc050719/cms6rpt/cl014.pdf</a> | City of Toronto | This article provides insight on the three phases of Quality Assurance in the shelter system and reports on the results of the first phase of the Quality Assurance Review of shelters within Toronto.   |
| <b>Recommendations for</b>                      | Raising the Roof. (2009). Youth Homelessness in Canada: The   |                 | This report offers a look into Canada's homeless population and outlines   |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p><b>policies to address youth homelessness</b></p> | <p>Road to Solutions. Retrieved from:<br/> <a href="http://www.raisingtheroof.org/RaisingTheRoof/media/RaisingTheRoofMedia/Documents/RoadtoSolutions_fullrept_english.pdf">www.raisingtheroof.org/RaisingTheRoof/media/RaisingTheRoofMedia/Documents/RoadtoSolutions_fullrept_english.pdf</a></p> |  | <p>various recommendations regarding the long term solutions.</p> |
|--|---|--|---|

## Section 4: Resource List for Parents

This resource list includes resources for parents looking for information and support for their children, as well as a few services for themselves as they work through transitions. This is by no means a comprehensive list, rather a starting point of some of the services that are offered in Toronto.

Areas in this resource list include:

- ▶ **Children’s Health Services**
- ▶ **Children’s Mental Health Services**
- ▶ **Children’s Programs and Support Services**
- ▶ **Education and Academic Support for Children**
- ▶ **Parenting Resources**
- ▶ **Advocates for Parents**
- ▶ **General Services for Parents**

## Children's Health Services

### General Information

**About Kids Health** Hospital for Sick Children

[www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/DevelopmentalStages/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/DevelopmentalStages/Pages/default.aspx)

Comprehensive and general website that has answers about kids' health by ages and stages.

**Kids Help Phone** 1-800-668-6868 [www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens/home/splash.aspx](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens/home/splash.aspx) Canada's only free, national, bilingual, confidential and anonymous, 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for children and youth.

**Toronto Public Health** 311 [www.toronto.ca/health/](http://www.toronto.ca/health/) Toronto Public Health supports the overall health of the population and assists in efforts to overcome health inequalities. It provides services to individuals and communities, and advocates for public policies that make our city healthier. Toronto Public Health provides free non-emergency and emergency dental care for [eligible](#) children and youth (0-17 years).

Call 3-1-1, 24 hours a day for general information about Toronto Public Health programs and services or email [publichealth@toronto.ca](mailto:publichealth@toronto.ca). Translation services are available. For Teletypewriter call 416-392-0658.

During regular business hours, your call can be forwarded to a Public Health professional for free, for confidential health information and advice, and, for registration into public health programs such as food handler training and pre-natal classes. You can also find information online at [www.toronto.ca/health/az\\_index.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/health/az_index.htm).

## Children's Mental Health Services

### Children's Mental Health General Information

**Canadian Mental Health Association** [www.cmha.ca/](http://www.cmha.ca/)

Contact: 416-977-5580

**Children's Mental Health** [www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/)

Contact: 416-921-2109

## Children's Mental Health Agency Locations

### ETOBICOKE

**The Etobicoke Children's Centre** Accredited Member [www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/)

Serves ages 0 to 12

Contact: 416-240-1111, 65 Hartsdale Drive

**George Hull Centre for Children and Families** Accredited Member, French Language Service

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=17](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=17)

Serves ages 0 – 18 and their families

Contact: 416-622-8833, 600 The East Mall, Third Floor

### SCARBOROUGH

**Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre** Accredited Member, French Language Service

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=3](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=3)

Serves ages 0 – 12

Contact: 416-321-5464, 325 Milner Avenue, Suite 110

**East Metro Youth Services** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=7](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=7)

Serves young parents

Contact: 416-438-6880, 3020 Lawrence Avenue East

### TORONTO

**Adventure Place** Accredited Member [www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=2](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=2)

Serves ages: 0 – 12

Contact: 416 744 7650, McNicoll Public School, 155 McNicoll Ave

**Autism Ontario**

[www.autismontario.com/](http://www.autismontario.com/)

Serves all ages

Contact: 416-246-9592, 1179 King Street West, Suite 004

**Canadian Mothercraft Society** Accreditation Pending

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=178](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=178)

Serves ages 0 to 24

Contact: 416-920-4054, 1992 Yonge St., Suite 301

**Central Toronto Youth Services** Accredited Member, French Language Service

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=4](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=4)

Serves youth, young adults and their families

Contact: 416-924-2100, 65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 300

**Child Development Institute** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=14](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=14)

Serves ages 0 – 16 and their families

Contact: 416 603-1827, 197 Euclid Ave

**Child, Youth and Family Program - Centre for Addiction & Mental Health** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=164](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=164)

Serves ages 0 to 24

Contact: 416-921-2109, 40 St. Clair Avenue East, Suite 309

**Delisle Youth Services** Accreditation Pending

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=5](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=5)

Serves teens

Contact: 416 482-0081, 40 Orchard View Blvd. Suite 255

**Geneva Center for Autism**

[www.autism.net/index.php](http://www.autism.net/index.php)

Serves children, youth and parents

Contact: 416 322-7877, 112 Merton Street

**Hincks-Dellcrest Centre** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=19](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=19)

Serves infants, children, youth and families

Contact: 416-633-0515, 1645 Sheppard Ave. W

**Integra** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=10](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=10)

Serves ages 8 to 18

Contact: 416-486-8055, 25 Imperial Street

**Jewish Family & Child Service** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=9](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=9)

Serves all ages

Contact: 416 638-7800, 4600 Bathurst Street, 1st Floor

**Oolagen Community Services** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=11](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=11)

Serves youth and their families

Contact: 416-395-0660, 65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 500

**St Leonard's Society of Toronto**

[www.stleonardstoronto.com/youth.html](http://www.stleonardstoronto.com/youth.html)

Serves youth and families

Contact: 416-462-3684, 779 Danforth Ave.

**Turning Point Youth Services** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=21](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=21)

Serves ages 12 to 24 and their families

Contact: 416-925-9250, 95 Wellesley Street, East

**YouthLink** Accredited Member, French Language Service

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=22](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=22)

Serves ages 12 to 21

Contact: 416-967-1773, 747 Warden Ave

**Yorktown Child & Family Centre** Accredited Member

[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about\\_us/member\\_profile.php?id=24](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/about_us/member_profile.php?id=24)

Serves ages 0 to 18

Contact: 416-394-2424, 21 Ascot Ave

## Children's Programs and Support Services

**After-School Recreation Care (ARC)** 416-338-4FUN/4386 [www.toronto.ca/parks/general/after-school-recreation.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/parks/general/after-school-recreation.htm) The City of Toronto After-School Recreation Care program provides safe, affordable child care for children ages 6 to 12. Under the supervision of trained, caring recreation staff, ARC offers children creative activities, outdoor play, health & wellness, sports & physical activities, social interaction & making friends, and homework help.

**Association of Community Centers - Toronto Neighbourhoods** [www.toronto.ca/abcc/spc-community-centres.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/abcc/spc-community-centres.htm) The Association of Community Centers (AOCs) is comprised of 10 volunteer board-run, multi-purpose facilities providing a broad range of community, recreation and social service programs to residents in the local community.

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Toronto Network** 416-925-2243 [www.boysandgirlsclubsoftoronto.com/](http://www.boysandgirlsclubsoftoronto.com/) A network of eight existing Boys and Girls Clubs providing valuable community services to children and youth across the City of Toronto.



**City of Toronto Recreation Centres** 416-338-4FUN/4386

[www.toronto.ca/parks/prd/facilities/recreationcentres/index.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/parks/prd/facilities/recreationcentres/index.htm) Toronto community recreation centres can be different things for different people. They are a place to work out, to swim, and to have fun. They are also places where you can learn new skills, get information, and meet new friends. The recreation centres offer a wide range of facilities such as gymnasiums, pools, weight rooms and meeting rooms. Make your local centre the heartbeat of your neighbourhood.

Facility Map: [www.toronto.ca/parks/pdf/facility\\_map.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/parks/pdf/facility_map.pdf)

**Middle Childhood Matters Coalition** 647-462-5227 [www.middlechildhoodmatters.ca/](http://www.middlechildhoodmatters.ca/)

A group of 35 concerned social service agencies and community members that have been committed to working together with parents since 2003 to increase access to high quality out-of-school programs for all children ages 6–12 in Toronto. The Coalition works for systemic change through influencing public policy, advocating, partnership and network development, and supporting best practices.

**Moorelands** 416-466-9987 [www.moorelands.org/](http://www.moorelands.org/) Each year Moorelands Community Services works with more than 1,500 Toronto children and youth affected by poverty, to provide them with positive and fun experiences to help strengthen their confidence, competence and character.

**Parent and Family Literacy Centres** [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/findACentre.html#toronto](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/findACentre.html#toronto)

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres help prepare children for starting school and encourage families to be a part of their children's learning by:

- Helping children build essential literacy and numeracy skills through stories, music, reading and playing
- Encouraging families to engage in their children's learning
- Offering a book-lending library in different languages so parents can read to their children in their first language
- Familiarizing children and families with school routines
- Giving children and families the chance to spend time with other families
- Linking families with appropriate community resources for special needs, health and other related services.

**Tropicana Community Services** 416-439-9009 [www.tropicanacommunity.org](http://www.tropicanacommunity.org) a Toronto-based multi-service organization, provides all youth, newcomers, people of Black and Caribbean heritage and others in need with opportunities and alternatives that lead to success and positive life choices.

**Toronto Catholic School Board** 416-222-8282 [www.tcdsb.org/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.tcdsb.org/Pages/default.aspx)

The Toronto Catholic School Board offers recreational After-School Programs, generally between 3:30 and 6:00 p.m.. A morning component could be added if necessary.

**Toronto Children's Services** 416-392-5437 [www.toronto.ca/children/index.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/children/index.htm) Children's Services plans and manages a broad range of child care services in Toronto.

**Toronto District School Board** 416-397-3000 [www.tdsb.on.ca/](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/)

The Toronto District School Board has a directory which will help you find the appropriate program for your child. Use the [child care finder](#) to locate a program in your area.

**Toronto Neighbourhood Services** [neighbourhoodcentres.ca/](http://neighbourhoodcentres.ca/) Toronto Neighbourhood Centers is an association of non-profit multi-service organizations dedicated to strengthening local neighbourhoods and enabling diverse communities to work together to promote justice and a healthy life for all.

**Toronto Public Library** 416-393-7131 [www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/)

TPL offers all sorts of programs for children and their families [www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/kids-and-families/](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/kids-and-families/)

The Museum + Arts Pass (MAP) lets you and your family (2 adults & up to 4 children) explore the best of Toronto's arts and cultural treasures for free. With your valid adult Toronto Public Library card, you can take out a pass for your family at any Toronto Public Library branch. Quantities are limited and [rules and conditions apply](#).

Passes are available for the following venues and more:

- [Ontario Science Centre](#)
- [ROM - Royal Ontario Museum](#)
- [Toronto Zoo](#)

Internet access, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and computer classes are free in every library branch. Free wireless internet access is also available at all locations. For a small fee, you can also use computer and scanning equipment with powerful graphic design and web development software at the Toronto Reference Library's [Digital Design Studio](#).

**YMCA** 416-928-9622 [www.ymcagta.org/en/index.html](http://www.ymcagta.org/en/index.html)

YMCA offers affordable programs available in various neighbourhoods throughout the Greater Toronto Area and provide financial help for those who qualify.

## Education and Academic Support for Children

**Belka Enrichment Center** 416-744-3430 [www.belkaecenter.com/main/](http://www.belkaecenter.com/main/) Belka Enrichment Center is a project of Caribbean Global Missions (CGM), a non-profit organization aimed at developing the academic and social potential of low income and at risk youth in the Jane Finch community in Toronto, and other parts of Canada.

**Frontier College** 416-923-3591 [www.frontiercollege.ca/english/literacy/toronto.html](http://www.frontiercollege.ca/english/literacy/toronto.html) A national literacy organization which aims to bring literacy and learning to Canadians. This interactive directory is a resource for program coordinators, parents and volunteers who are seeking information on learning programs, such as homework clubs and reading programs for children and youth living in Toronto [learningprograms.ca/](http://learningprograms.ca/).

**Independent Learning Centre** 416-484-2704 [www.ilc.org/index-main.php](http://www.ilc.org/index-main.php) The Independent Learning Centre is the province's designated provider of distance education courses designed for independent study.

**Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario** 416-929-4311 [www.ldao.ca/](http://www.ldao.ca/) LDAO's mission is to provide leadership in learning disabilities advocacy, research, education and services and to advance the full participation of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities in today's society.

**Learning Enrichment Foundation** 416-769-0830 [www.lefca.org/about\\_us/index.shtml](http://www.lefca.org/about_us/index.shtml) LEF prides itself on its range of programming, driven by the needs of the community. They offer employment services, skills training, language training, childcare services and supports for children and families, newcomer services, youth programs and community enterprises programs.

**Ontario Early Years** [www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/oeyc/index.aspx](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/oeyc/index.aspx) Ontario Early Years Centers are places where parents and caregivers can: take part with their children in a range of programs and activities, get answers to questions, get information about programs and services that are available for young children and their families, talk to early years professionals, as well as other parents and caregivers in the community.

**Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee** 416-393-8949 [www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10428&menuid=40129&pageid=33595](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10428&menuid=40129&pageid=33595) The Special Education Advisory Committee works with the TDSB to ensure the continued rights of students with special learning needs. At the TDSB, this committee may make recommendations to the Board concerning any matter relating to the establishment, development and delivery of Special Education programs and services. All interested parents, guardians and members of the public are invited to attend SEAC meetings.

## Parenting Resources

**1, 2, 3 Magic** [www.123magic.com](http://www.123magic.com) This simple, yet powerful approach to disciplining kids has won rave reviews from parents, educators and professionals alike for sharing practical, easy-to-use discipline techniques to families and educators.

**Barbara Coloroso Kids Are Worth It** [www.kidsareworthit.com/](http://www.kidsareworthit.com/) Barbara Coloroso is an internationally recognized speaker and author in the areas of parenting, teaching, school discipline, non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliatory justice.

**Bullying.org** [www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org) Bullying.org is dedicated to increasing the awareness of bullying and to preventing, resolving and eliminating bullying in society.

**City Parent** [www.cityparent.com/](http://www.cityparent.com/) Wide-ranging website with many tips and links to help parents with children at any age.

**Helping Children Thrive Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers: A Resource to Support Parenting** Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System [www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mothers.html) This resource is written for service providers assisting women who have survived woman abuse.

**How Full Is Your Bucket?** [strengths.gallup.com/114595/Welcome-Bucketbook-com-Users.aspx](http://strengths.gallup.com/114595/Welcome-Bucketbook-com-Users.aspx) Each of us has an invisible bucket. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it's empty, we feel awful. Yet most children (and many adults) don't realize the importance of having a full bucket throughout the day.

**Kids Have Stress Too** The Psychology Foundation of Canada [www.psychologyfoundation.org/kidshavestresstoo.php](http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/kidshavestresstoo.php) *Kids Have Stress Too!*® (KHST!) helps parents and caregivers understand childhood stress and how to provide children with the tools to deal with stress effectively.

**Little Eyes Little Ears How Violence Against a Mother Shapes Children as They Grow** Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System [www.lfcc.on.ca/little\\_eyes\\_little\\_ears.html](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/little_eyes_little_ears.html) A resource for anyone looking to understand how children experience violence against their mothers and how those experiences may shape them as they grow, from infancy to adolescence.

**Parenting Resource Guides from Niagara Region Public Health** [www.niagararegion.ca/living/health\\_wellness/parenting/parenting-resource-guide.aspx](http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/parenting/parenting-resource-guide.aspx) A series of five Parent Resource Guides. They can be downloaded from the website or send a request sent to have a hard copy mailed.

**Resiliency Canada** [www.resiliencycanada.ca/](http://www.resiliencycanada.ca/) Resiliency is the capability of individuals, families, groups and communities to cope with and overcome significant adversity or stress in ways that promote health, wellness and result in an increased ability to constructively respond to future adversity.

**Triple P Ontario: Positive Parenting Programs** [www.triplepontario.ca](http://www.triplepontario.ca) Triple P is a free parenting program providing parenting information and ideas about simple routines and small changes that can make a big difference to families.

## Advocates for Parents

People elected or appointed who can advocate on your behalf or help you find information you need relating to their field of expertise:

### City Councillors

Toronto City Council consists of the Mayor and 44 City Councillors, one representing each of the city's wards. The council is the main governing and legislative body for the city. City councillors also sit on committees and on community councils in the area where they have been elected.

Your City Councillor can assist you in accessing information and can act as an advocate on city-related issues.

Find your city councillor: [app.toronto.ca/im/council/councillors.jsp](http://app.toronto.ca/im/council/councillors.jsp)

### The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth

The Office of the Provincial Advocate reports directly to the Legislature and provides an independent voice for children and youth, including children with special needs and First Nations children.

The advocate receives and responds to concerns from children, youth and families who are seeking or receiving services under the Child and Family Services Act and the Education Act (Provincial and Demonstration Schools).

416 325-5669 [provincialadvocate.on.ca/](http://provincialadvocate.on.ca/)

### People for Education

This is an independent organization working to support families and their children in public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools. They can answer your questions about education or provide you with links to the information and resources you might need to help you and your child navigate the education system. To reach People for Education, call 1-888-534-3944 or 416-534-0100,

[www.peopleforeducation.ca/](http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/)

### School Board Trustees

Elected school board trustees work to ensure that students realize their potential and succeed. They are advocates for education and are the voice of the public, ensuring all concerns are addressed. Each trustee covers a different area of the city, which differs by the board in which they are located.

Find your school trustee:

Public: [www.tdsb.on.ca/boardroom/trustees/](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/boardroom/trustees/)

Catholic: [www.tcdsb.org/Board/TrusteesoftheBoard/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.tcdsb.org/Board/TrusteesoftheBoard/Pages/default.aspx)

French: [www.csviamonde.ca/csviamonde/index.php?q=conseillers](http://www.csviamonde.ca/csviamonde/index.php?q=conseillers)

French Catholic: [www.csdccs.edu.on.ca/conseil.php](http://www.csdccs.edu.on.ca/conseil.php)

## General Services for Parents

**211 Toronto** 211 [www.211toronto.ca](http://www.211toronto.ca) Since 2002, Find help Information Services has operated 211Ontario.ca as a portal to specialized provincial information and referral databases. In 2007/2008, community-based information and referral providers collectively worked toward realizing their long-standing vision for 211Ontario.ca – to coordinate and web-enable local data to create a fully searchable, bilingual point of access to over 60,000 community, social, health and related government programs and services in Ontario.

**City of Toronto Hostel Services (Shelter System) General Inquiry** 416-392-8741 To make an inquiry or get information about emergency shelter services, please call Hostel Services' general line.

**City of Toronto Hostel Services (Shelter System) Concerns/Complaints** 416-392-8741 If your shelter worker is unable to help you with your concerns or complaints, or you want to appeal a decision by your shelter provider, you may contact the Hostel Services. Your call will be directed to the supervisor of Client Services.

**City of Toronto Central Family Intake Line** 416-338-4766, 311 or 1-877-338-3398 (toll-free) if you need emergency shelter.

**Credit Canada** 1-800-267-2272 [creditcanada.com/](http://creditcanada.com/) Professional credit counselling services and debt management programs.

**Legal Aid** 1-800-668-8258 toll-free (or 416-979-1446 in Toronto) [www.legalaid.on.ca/en/](http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/) Legal Aid Ontario gives low-income people access to a range of legal services tailored to meet their legal needs.

**Service Canada** 1-800-622-6232 [www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml) Service Canada was created in 2005 to improve the delivery of government programs and services to Canadians, by making access to them faster, easier, and more convenient.

**Toronto Housing** 416-981-5500 [www.torontohousing.ca/](http://www.torontohousing.ca/) Our [mission](#) is to provide affordable housing, connect tenants to services and opportunities, and work together to build healthy communities.

## Appendix A: Lost in the Shuffle Original Report Summary

### Lost in the Shuffle: The Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto

[socialplanningtoronto.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/lost-in-the-shuffle\\_final-report.pdf](http://socialplanningtoronto.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/lost-in-the-shuffle_final-report.pdf)

#### The Kid Builders Research Project

The *Kid Builders Research Project*, examining the educational needs of homeless children living in Toronto and the links between homelessness and school success, is the first major study to investigate the education of homeless children in Canada and begins to address a major gap in the literature. *Phase 3* builds on the first and second phases that reported on data collected in Scarborough only, broadening the project across Toronto.

*Kid Builders Phase 3* defines school success broadly as:

- academic achievement
- social and behavioural adjustment
- a sense of well-being and belonging.

The focus is elementary schools and children aged six to twelve, inclusive.

#### Family Homelessness in Toronto

In Toronto, homelessness escalated through the 1990s and into the present decade, and families with children became the fastest growing homeless population. By 2001, 6,727 children resided in the Toronto shelter system; in 2002 that number dropped to just fewer than 5,000. It has remained between 4,500 and 5,000 since that time, with 4,600-4,800 children homeless each year.

Family homelessness is largely women and children's homelessness. The entire system of Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters serves only women and children. This study included two family shelters that serve only women and children and did not encounter any family shelters in Toronto that serve only men and their children. The proportion of shelter families that are women-led warrants further investigation.

#### The Children

With an annual population of homeless children in the City of Toronto of slightly less than 5,000, in any given year somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 children in Toronto, who are roughly the age of the children in this study, will go through some version of the experiences described in this report.

## The Impacts of Homelessness and of Witnessing or Experiencing Violence

The large American body of literature on the subject of the education of homeless children indicates that they are at a higher risk of a number of emotional problems that can interfere with learning; that continued transience and delayed admission to schools hamper their school success, and that they are more prone to ill health, both mentally and physically.

All children in VAW shelters come from homes that have experienced violence. A national snapshot of shelters in 2004 revealed that 76% of women and 88% of children in *all* Canadian shelters were escaping situations of abuse. Witnessing or directly experiencing domestic abuse is linked to behaviours that can disrupt learning, such as:

- increased aggression, depression and anxiety
- separation anxiety and mood swings
- symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder
- general mental health difficulties.

## The Study

This is a large qualitative study. Between June 2006 and March 2007, focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted with 198 people connected to four homeless family residences, five Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters and six elementary schools in Toronto attended by homeless children including:

- 61 staff connected to nine shelters across Toronto
- 42 parents and 41 children living in the shelters
- 54 teachers and administrators of the Toronto District School Board.

Focus groups and interviews generated over 700 pages of transcripts.

Quantitative data was also collected:

- 8 shelters completed a survey collecting demographic information
- 37 parents completed a questionnaire on their family
- administrators at three schools completed a review of the school records of seven students residing in a shelter.

*There is a wealth of information offered in this study by parents and children struggling through harsh realities in one of the world's richest countries, a nation repeatedly recognized for its enviable quality of life. The comfortable Canadian quality of life is not in evidence in this report.*



## Findings

Information gathered from the shelter survey and the parent questionnaire begins to construct an initial profile of life for homeless families living in shelters in Toronto.

### SHELTER PROFILE:

#### Capacity

- Shelters are at or close to full capacity.
- Most shelters, and all VAW shelters, turn away families on a weekly basis.
- One family shelter housed 123 children at one time.

#### Stays

- 70% of parents were in a shelter for the first time.
- Average length of stay is four to six months.
- 79% of parents identified as single, separated or divorced.
- Almost 60% were 35 or younger.

#### Status, language, ethnicity

- proportion of residents who are Canadian ranged from 77% to 5%.
- 40% of parents were Canadian citizens.
- 70% of parents spoke English at home.
- 79% of parents reported they or their children were members of racialized communities.

#### Income

- All shelters reported the income status of residents as “low.”
- 29% of parents said employment was a main source of income prior to coming to the shelter, dropping to 9% after becoming homeless.

#### Affordable Housing

- 77% were on a waiting list for subsidized housing, the longest wait was nine years.

## FROM SHELTER TO SCHOOL

#### Changing Schools

- Most, but not all, children coming to live in a shelter change schools.
- 58% of children had attended three or more schools, even though 40% of them were in grade 3 or lower, and none had left the shelter yet for a permanent home.
- Nearly half of the children who had only attended one school were still in kindergarten.

#### Enrolment

- All shelters either provided assistance with enrolment or arranged for assistance

- General enrolment was universally prompt, commonly one to two days
- Enrolment in special needs programs, or accessing special needs programming once in a school, was subject to delays and a serious impediment to education.

### Study supports

- The majority of shelters said they offered a quiet place for children to study.
- Parents generally did not agree, finding it difficult, especially in the larger shelters, to settle their children into homework amid noise and activities.
- Computer access can be inadequate to complete homework, especially for older students.
- Most shelters reported a Homework Club operating directly after school at the shelter, from twice a week to five days a week.

### Sense of belonging

- More than 70% of shelter children did not participate in before- and after-school programs at the school they attended from the shelter, according to parents.
- All schools had a policy allowing parents to opt out of fees for trips and activities; accessing the policy required disclosure of the family's situation, not always an optimal or comfortable option for shelter parents and children.

*...for the children of these families to gain access to Canada's much-vaunted quality of life, the root causes of family homelessness must be addressed as fully as possible.*

## The Impacts of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto

The broad barriers to school success caused by the impacts of homelessness identified in *Kid Builders Phase 3* are:

- transience and consequent disruption
- emotional impacts of witnessing or experiencing violence
- emotional impacts of the stresses and crises that bring a family to a shelter
- behaviours that develop out of unresolved emotional impacts
- the stigma of living in a shelter, internalized or enforced through bullying
- shelters with inadequate quiet space for studying or computer access.

Across the school and shelter systems, teachers, administrators, shelter staff, parents and even children themselves take steps to try and to reduce the impact of homelessness on children's education. Key blockages occur when:

- a child has inadequate access to needed educational support such as special needs programming
- a child does not have an adult who can navigate between the school and shelter.

## Impacts on Education

### Transience

- Creates a major barrier in the education of homeless children.
- Children who rapidly change schools in different school boards while still in elementary school risk a fragmented education that is not discovered by testing or mitigated by special intervention.
- Children who changed schools and teachers of those children reported:
  - knowledge gaps due to curriculum not covered
  - repetition of material already covered.

### Stigmatization, Attitudes and Bullying

- Children living in shelters express fear they will be stigmatized with negative labels. This fear was not expressed by children too young to understand what they are experiencing.
- Children experience bullying framed around living in a shelter, but many more fear the potential of bullying and teasing for living in a shelter than actually experience it.

### Witnessing or Experiencing Violence

- Children who have witnessed or experienced violence may be withdrawn and quiet, may act out, act destructively, have difficulty focusing and paying attention, and may make traumatic disclosures in class settings.
- Teachers need assistance coping with these behaviours in order to teach material to these children and to the class as a whole.

### Disruption, Trauma and Children's Behaviour

- Shelter children who have not witnessed violence may still experience:
  - dislocation through the loss of familiar settings, structures, friends and belongings
  - the stress of life in a shelter
  - emotions and behaviours that block learning
  - low self-esteem
  - loss of interest in succeeding at school
  - the temptations of gangs.

## Highlights of the Recommendations

Steps can be taken in the short, medium and long term to reduce the negative impacts of homelessness on children's education in Toronto. Some key recommendations of the *Kid Builders Phase 3* are:

### Advocacy and Support

- Assign a school liaison worker for every homeless student, funded through the Ministry of Community and Social Services and working through non-profit social agencies.
- Create Transient Student Support Administrators at the school board to assist shelters, parents and schools with any and all of the problems facing homeless students.
- Develop a protocol for schools serving homeless students that promotes links between schools and shelters, fosters a welcoming school and implements immediate assessments.
- Offer professional development workshops to teachers on the emotional impacts of children experiencing and witnessing violence.

### Transience

- Implement a system to locate and flag highly transient students and ensure they receive the programming they need for school success.
- Reinstate and expand Bill 133 to ensure shelter children who have moved to a permanent home have the right to remain in the school they attended from the shelter without transportation costs.

### Access to programs

- Reverse the onus so shelter children are directly admitted to special education programming at the new school when requested by parents, until proof to the contrary is provided.
- Increase funding so special needs assessments happen on a timely basis.

### Housing

- Give homeless families with school age children a priority ranking for subsidized housing on the waiting list, behind the priority for abused women.

## Summary of Kid Builders Phase 3 Recommendations

### Goal 1: Reduce the Consequences of Transience for Homeless Children

#### Strategy A: Reduce the Incidence of Transience

**Recommendation 1:** Re-introduce a Revised Bill 133: An Act to Amend the Education Act to Provide Stability for Students in Transition Housing (p.31)

**Recommendation 2:** Provide Emergency Housing Subsidy for Shelter Families with School Age Children

**Recommendation 3:** Implement the Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations

**Recommendation 4:** Make Shelter Allowances Correspond to Rental Costs

**Recommendation 5:** Invest in Family Housing

**Recommendation 6:** Ensure Priority on Housing for Families with School Age Children

**Strategy B: Reduce the Impacts of Transience on Children's Education**

**Recommendation 7:** Assign Transient Student Support Administrators

**Recommendation 8:** Reverse the Onus for Access to Special Education

**Recommendation 9:** Flag Transient Students for Special Services

**Recommendation 10:** Adopt Case Management for Highly Transient Students

**Goal 2: Reduce the Barriers of Emotional Impacts**

**Strategy A: Provide Emotional Support and Respond Effectively to Children's Behaviour**

**Recommendation 11:** A School Liaison Worker for Every Homeless Student

**Recommendation 12:** Teacher Training on Emotional Impacts and Consequent Behaviours

**Recommendation 13:** More Assessments, Treatment, and Readily Available Mental Health Services

**Recommendation 14:** Teacher Training on Emotional Impacts in Bachelor of Education

**Strategy B: Build Children's Self-Esteem through Success**

**Recommendation 15:** Set and Re-Set Achievable Academic Goals

**Goal 3: Reduce Stigma and Barriers to Belonging**

**Strategy A: Promote Links between Schools and Shelters and Foster a Welcoming School**

**Recommendation 16:** Develop a School Protocol for Schools Serving Homeless Students

**Recommendation 17:** Expand Community use to include Shelter Access to Schools

**Strategy B: Improve Community Attitudes**

**Recommendation 18:** Launch Public Campaign to Dispel Stigma

## Goal 4: Ensure Living Conditions Adequate to School Success

### Strategy A: Enhance Shelter Facilities

**Recommendation 19:** Increase Access to Computers

**Recommendation 20:** Ensure a Quiet Place to Work

## RECOMMENDATIONS

“We in Canada will continue to ensure quality learning for children regardless of where they live and the particular challenges they face. This will involve learning environments that engage young people in their learning while adapting to their learning styles, unique cultures and needs. We will continue to foster and promote learning environments that are safe, accessible, supportive and caring, and based on the principles of respect, diversity and inclusion.”

**A Canada Fit for Children  
Government of Canada, April 2004**

This study defined school success as academic achievement, social and behavioural adjustment and a sense of well-being and belonging. Given that definition, the broad barriers to school success caused by the impacts of homelessness identified in *Kid Builders Phase 3* are:

- transience and consequent disruption
- emotional impacts of witnessing or experiencing violence
- emotional impacts of the stresses and crises that bring a family to a shelter
- behaviours that develop out of unresolved emotional impacts
- the stigma of living in a shelter, internalized or enforced through bullying
- shelters with inadequate quiet space for studying or computer access.

This report describes a wide range of responses to these impacts. Across the school and shelter systems teachers, administrators, shelter staff, parents and even children themselves take steps to try to reduce the impact of homelessness on children’s education. It is clear that key blockages occur in the system when:

- a child has inadequate access to needed educational support such as special needs programming
- a child does not have an adult who can navigate between the school and shelter.

Many of these impacts can be addressed through policies that are achievable in the short-term and medium term. Two obvious, yet elusive, long-term societal changes offer the broadest and most complete solutions and are not re-stated in the recommendations:

- end family homelessness
- end violence against women and children.

There is a wealth of literature that more than adequately covers direct and specific approaches to reducing family violence and homelessness. This report focuses on children's education, while encouraging all levels of government to act vigorously on both fronts as soon as possible.

Much can be done to foster the school success of children living through the experience of losing their family home. The recommendations that follow are an attempt to describe policies and actions that will better support the school success of homeless children until such time as the political will is developed to ensure families always have access to affordable housing. The recommendations should be read as opportunities to offer support to vulnerable children struggling for an adequate education in difficult circumstances, rather than as a critique of existing practices.

This report carries forward the recommendation from the *Kid Builders Research Project Phase 2* report with regard to implementation of the recommendations of the Hadley Inquest Jury (Sherkin: 2006). This clear and comprehensive set of recommendations followed the inquest into the murder of Gillian Hadley by her domestic partner. The provincial government has yet to act on their implementation. Executive directors of VAW shelters interviewed in this research were emphatic that there is much to be gained from their implementation.

Immediate Actions are those recommendations that can be implemented within a six-month time frame; Medium-Term Actions are recommendations that would take between six months and two years to implement, and Long-Term Actions would require longer than two years for implementation.

## Goals, Strategies and Recommendations

### Goals:

Analyzing the wealth of information gathered in this research has given rise to four goals to reduce the impacts of homelessness on children's education:

- reduce the consequences of transience for homeless children
- reduce the barriers created by the emotional impacts of stress, violence and witnessing violence
- reduce the stigma and barriers to belonging
- ensure that shelter living conditions are adequate for school success.

### Strategies:

Achieving these goals requires the adoption of clear strategies.

To reduce the consequences of transience for homeless children:

- reduce the incidence of transience
- reduce the impacts of transience on children's education.

To reduce the barriers created by the emotional impacts of stress, violence, and witnessing violence:

- provide emotional support and respond effectively to children's behaviour
- build children's self-esteem through success.

To reduce the stigma and barriers to belonging:

- promote links between schools and shelters and foster a welcoming school
- improve community attitudes.

To ensure that shelter living conditions are adequate to school success:

- enhance shelter facilities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION**

The following recommendations are based on research conducted in Toronto, and are offered as a guide for improving the situation of homeless children living and learning in Toronto. However, as the first Canadian study on the impact of homelessness on children's education, the applicability of this research and the related recommendations is potentially much wider. Any child enduring disruptions in education similar to those described here – whether they are in highly priced Vancouver, oil-boom Calgary, or slipping from town to town across rural Ontario – will likely be vulnerable to the same problems. Children in this study lived and attended school in other jurisdictions both in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada.

The recommendations are addressed to a range of ministries of the Government of Ontario, agencies of the City of Toronto and Toronto district school boards. Recommendations pertaining to changes in school protocols were developed in response to research within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), but are offered generically to school boards as they may well apply equally in other school districts. Most importantly, these recommendations should be read as an attempt to achieve equitable educational opportunity for children who experience homelessness, and should be adopted whenever and wherever they will work toward that goal.



## Goal 1: Reduce the Consequences of Transience for Homeless Children

### Strategy A: Reduce the Incidence of Transience

#### Immediate Actions

#### **Recommendation 1: Re-introduce a Revised Bill 133: An Act to Amend the Education Act to Provide Stability for Students in Transition Housing (p.31)**

Bill 133 should be re-introduced to the Ontario legislature after it has been revised to state clearly that in addition to homeless children having the right to remain in their original school regardless of their address:

- school boards must cover the costs of transportation from shelter to school
- shelter children who have moved to a permanent home have the right to remain in the school they attended from the shelter to complete their school year and school boards must cover the costs of transportation.

#### Medium-Term Actions

#### **Recommendation 2: Emergency Housing Subsidy for Shelter Families with School Age Children**

The provincial government should create and implement a “Family Rescue Program” that provides monthly rent subsidies for families with school age children living in shelters to allow them to afford to move to market rent apartments immediately. This program should continue as long as there is a shortage of affordable, subsidized social housing.

#### **Recommendation 3: Implement the Hadley Inquest Jury Recommendations**

To reduce transience and support the education of homeless children, priority should be placed on Hadley Inquest Jury recommendations on:

- community based services, including bussing to schools (#39 and 40)
- housing (#23-30)
- education, training and prevention programs (#46 and 47)
- bail for abusers (#9-17)
- global positioning systems for accused abusers released on bail (#53).

*Full recommendations are available at: [www.owjn.org/issues/w-abuse/hadley2.htm](http://www.owjn.org/issues/w-abuse/hadley2.htm)*

#### **Recommendation 4: Make Shelter Allowances Correspond to Rental Costs**

For recipients living in Toronto, the shelter allowance portion of Ontario Works social assistance should correspond to the cost of rental housing in Toronto.

## **Long-Term Actions**

### **Recommendation 5: Invest in Family Housing**

The provincial government should immediately invest in supplying affordable housing for families in Toronto, whether through funding the building of new housing stock or supplementing rent for market rate apartments. Housing should be child-positive and connected to community.

### **Recommendation 6: Priority on Housing for Families with School Age Children**

Appropriate steps should be taken to create a priority ranking on the social housing waiting list for homeless families with school age children behind the priority for abused women and based on the single criterion of being housed in a family or VAW Shelter at the time of application and of an appropriate unit becoming available.

## **Strategy B: Reduce the Impacts of Transience on Children's Education**

### **Immediate Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 7: Assign Transient Student Support Administrators**

School boards should create Transient Student Support Administrators to operate as champions for homeless students, assisting shelters, parents, and schools with any and all of the problems facing homeless students and provide priority linking to special needs programming and support services. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) should appoint a Transient Student Support Administrator in each of the four quadrants of the district with power to:

- maintain the special teacher allocation for schools with shelter students
- approve individual education plans (IEPs) for shelter children without testing
- maintain an up-to-date electronic database of requests for special needs testing with specific tracking of highly transient students and their needs
- develop specific, innovative programming for highly transient students
- develop and share quick assessment and curriculum review techniques
- access any student's OSR without delay
- liaise directly with school and shelter liaison workers.

## **Recommendation 8: Reverse the Onus for Access to Special Education**

Shelter children with special education needs should not be waiting for access to education. To address this problem in the short term in Toronto, the TDSB should reverse the onus on access to special education for children living in shelters. When parents living in a shelter register their child at a new school and report that the student has been in special programming at the pre-shelter school, the child should be directly admitted to appropriate programming by the new school, until proof to the contrary is provided. A case conference should be scheduled immediately upon registration and the Transient Student Support Administrator notified. In the long term, this problem needs a structural solution including adequate funding for timely assessments for all special needs students and for special education programming.

### **Medium-Term Recommendations**

## **Recommendation 9: Flag Transient Students for Special Services**

School boards need to track and flag highly transient students. The TDSB should adopt a tracking system that can locate and flag transient students who have attended four or more schools by any time in grade 3. Tracking these students and ensuring they receive the programming they need for school success, including addressing the gaps caused by transience, should be the direct responsibility of the Transient Student Support Administrator.

## **Recommendation 10: Adopt Case Management for Highly Transient Students**

School boards should use a case management model for the education of highly transient students – those who are in their fourth school before the end of grade 3 – including a case plan with individualized education plans, information on special needs, remedial programming, and a protocol for ensuring these are put in place promptly wherever the child goes to school. The TDSB should introduce a case management model for the education of highly transient students.

## **Goal 2: Reduce the Barriers of Emotional Impacts**

### **Strategy A: Provide Emotional Support and Respond Effectively to Children's Behaviour**

### **Medium-Term Recommendations**

## **Recommendation 11: A School Liaison Worker for Every Homeless Student**

Through the appropriate ministry or ministries, the provincial government should create a program that funds a comprehensive network of school liaison workers on the models of the Child Development Institute and Aisling's Helping Hands in Schools:

- fund school liaison programs run by non-profit agencies outside of the shelter and the school
- ensure every child in a shelter is assigned a school liaison worker
- develop incentives to ensure parents agree to participate in the program
- seek space in schools for school liaison workers to have offices.

### **Recommendation 12: Teacher Training on Emotional Impacts and Consequent Behaviours**

School boards need to ensure teachers are equipped to deal with children who have experienced or witnessed violence. The TDSB needs to offer professional development workshops to teachers on the emotional impacts of experiencing and witnessing violence, and of homelessness, stress, disruption and loss on children, as well as on how those impacts are evidenced in children's behaviour. Teachers should be offered strategies on how to handle disclosures, as well as withdrawal and acting out. A second level of professional development workshops should be targeted specifically to dealing with children's disruptive behaviours that arise from the same sources. The workshops should be focused on schools with students who have witnessed or experienced violence.

### **Long-Term Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 13: More Assessments, Treatment, and Readily Available Mental Health Services**

The provincial government should increase funding for children to be assessed for special needs programming and for treatment by psychiatrists and psychologists to shorten waiting lists. The provincial government should ensure that children's mental health services are provided locally, linked to schools serving shelter children, and easily accessible for shelter children. The Minister of Education should develop protocols by which school boards can automatically accept assessments conducted by other school boards in Ontario.

### **Recommendation 14: Teacher Training on Emotional Impacts in Bachelor of Education**

Teacher education should include mandatory material on the education of homeless students including:

- the high incidence of witnessing violence among homeless children
- the impacts of witnessing violence
- the behaviours that develop out of the impacts
- strategies to teach children exhibiting those behaviours.

### **Strategy B: Build Children's Self-Esteem through Success**

### **Long-Term Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 15: Set and Re-Set Achievable Academic Goals**

Teachers should program achievable goals for homeless students who are experiencing academic difficulties and re-set those goals as they are achieved so that students can build self-esteem and remain motivated learners despite the disruption of their education.

### **Goal 3: Reduce Stigma and Barriers to Belonging**

#### **Strategy A: Promote Links between Schools and Shelters and Foster a Welcoming School**

##### **Medium-Term Recommendations**

##### **Recommendation 16: Develop a School Protocol for Schools Serving Homeless Students**

School boards should have a protocol in place for schools serving homeless children that promotes links between schools and shelters and fosters a welcoming school. The TDSB should develop and implement a protocol for schools serving homeless children that promotes links between schools and shelters and fosters a welcoming school:

- require every teacher working in a school serving students in a shelter to visit the shelter at least once per academic year, at a time and in a manner developed in coordination with the shelter staff
- require principals at schools serving homeless children to take steps to establish that serving homeless children is part of the mission of the school including:
  - implementing the Ambassador's Club program where students become ambassadors welcoming homeless and other mid-year arriving students to the school and assist them to settle in (p.87)
  - implementing a Care Club where teachers can choose to provide additional connection for the highest risk students in the school (p. 84)
  - encouraging teachers to attend homework clubs at shelters where their students are living whenever possible, in coordination with shelter staff
  - implementing Quick Assessments and Curriculum Review for new students arriving in their schools mid-year, on the model of the Reading 180 program (p.83)
  - implementing immediate curriculum review testing to ascertain which modules a new student has already covered and which they have missed in each subject.

The TDSB and, where applicable, other school boards, should facilitate the development and sharing of existing Quick Assessment and Curriculum Review Techniques throughout schools and especially among those with a population of shelter students.

### **Recommendation 17: Expand Community use to include Shelter Access to Schools**

The provincial government should expand funding to the Community Use of Schools program to provide shelters with after school access to the schools their children attend for sports and recreation programs at no cost.

## **Strategy B: Improve Community Attitudes**

### **Long-Term Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 18: Public Campaign to Dispel Stigma**

The Ministry of Community and Social Services should fund a public education campaign to de-stigmatize shelters, conveying a message that homeless families are simply ordinary families experiencing difficult circumstances.

## **Goal 4: Ensure Living Conditions Adequate to School Success**

## **Strategy A: Enhance Shelter Facilities**

### **Medium-Term Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 19: Increase Access to Computers**

Wherever possible students should have access to computers on-site at shelters that are adequate to support their school success. When the City of Toronto is upgrading, surplus computers should be offered to family and VAW shelters at no cost, for student use. City Council should adopt a policy to this effect.

### **Long-Term Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 20: Ensure a Quiet Place to Work**

Shelters should ensure that students have a quiet place to do homework, and shelter standards should reflect this. When renovating, shelters should include this space as a goal, funds permitting, and where possible, should seek renovation funds or assistance to provide this space for school age children. Families with school age children should not be housed in motels that cannot provide students with a quiet place to work outside the unit in which the family is housed.

## Appendix B

# Poverty and Homelessness in Toronto – Resources

### Action on Poverty Profiles

[The Alliance for a Poverty-Free Toronto](#) and Social Planning Toronto released a series of [44 “Action on Poverty” profiles](#) – one for each ward in the City of Toronto. These profiles provide basic information about the numbers and demographics of individuals living in poverty in Toronto, as well as comparisons with the city-wide statistics for the same indicators.

This statistical information is coupled with an example of a locally based initiative that is challenging poverty in each ward – local residents and organizations taking “Action on Poverty.”

Taken together, these [44 profiles](#) present a detailed picture of the face of poverty across our city, along with a compelling portrait of the many ways in which Torontonians are coming together to respond to this critical issue.

Each ward has a poverty fact sheet which can be located on Social Planning Toronto’s website at [www.socialplanningtoronto.org/news/action-on-poverty-ward-profiles/](http://www.socialplanningtoronto.org/news/action-on-poverty-ward-profiles/). These profiles are available for public use under the following conditions:

- **Attribution** — you must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- **Non-commercial** — you may not use this work for commercial purposes.

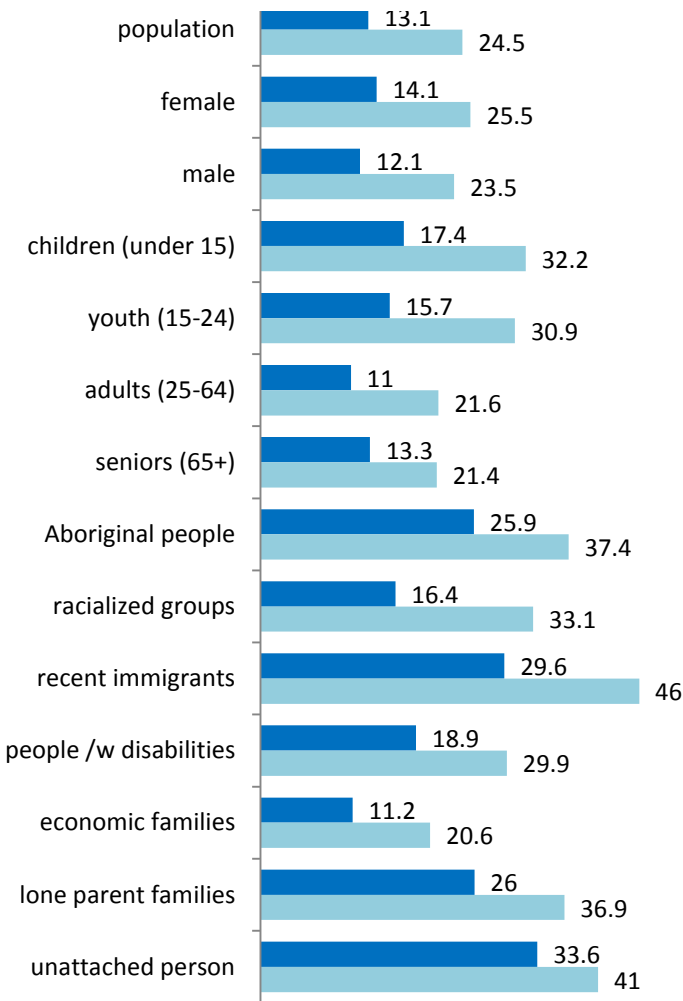
\* Note: City Wards and Trustee Wards do not overlap. There are 44 city wards and only 22 trustee wards. Please see the bottom of the second page of the Action on Poverty Profiles for which Trustee represents the each city ward.

**The following is an example of an Action on Poverty Profile:**

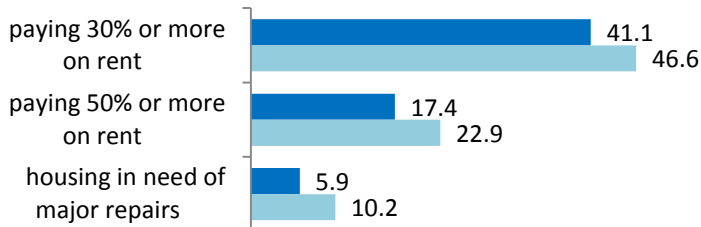
# Ward 44 Scarborough East

## Action on Poverty Profile

### % Living in Poverty



### % Tenant Households



### Story Behind the Stats

In the southeast corner of Scarborough, Ward 44 is comprised of the West Hill, Port Union, Highland Creek and West Rouge neighbourhoods. Here the working poor struggle to make ends meet on a daily basis. Many of these people have low-paying, part-time or contract jobs and spend more than 30% of their income on rent. Many seniors are trying to stay in their homes despite the high cost of living. On a fixed income, they are faced with deteriorating living conditions and have no means to make the necessary repairs.

**58,085 people live in Ward 44  
7,610 live in poverty – 13.1%**

**“Interfaith leaders came together to finish up Habitat homes in 3 days. In a critical situation people always come together, that has been the history of Scarborough.”**

**- Peter Vanderyagt, Chair,  
Caring Alliance**



# Taking Action in Ward 44

The Caring Alliance was formed in 1997 to address the needs of more than 1100 homeless individuals who were housed in motels in east Scarborough. Volunteers were recruited to visit these individuals and help them adjust to their new space.

Since then, the scope of their effort has expanded. Caring Alliance works with service providers to help keep people in their homes, raise money for people in need, build affordable housing, provide meals to the homeless and unite the community in a crisis. In collaboration with other community agencies and thoughtful volunteers, Caring Alliance has built affordable housing through Habitat for Humanity projects. They are providing low-income people with the opportunity for home ownership and the chance to escape the cycle of poverty. When housing is no longer a constant worry, families can focus on other things, such as education, career development and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

## Alliance for a Poverty-Free Toronto Takes Action

APT is made up of 40 community members and organizational representatives, including individuals with lived experience of poverty, from across the city. We are working together to develop and promote a comprehensive plan of action to eliminate poverty in Toronto. Want to get involved? Contact us at [apt@socialplanningtoronto.org](mailto:apt@socialplanningtoronto.org) or call (416) 351-0095 x255

## Your Elected Representatives

Mayor: **Rob Ford**, 416-397-FORD, [mayor\\_ford@toronto.ca](mailto:mayor_ford@toronto.ca)

City Councillor: **Ron Moeser**, 416-392-1373, [councillor\\_moeser@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_moeser@toronto.ca)

School Trustees: **Jerry Chadwick**, 416-397-3096, [jerry.chadwick@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:jerry.chadwick@tdsb.on.ca) (Toronto District School Board-English public school board)

**Toronto Catholic District School Board**, 416-222-8282

**Conseil scolaire Viamonde** (French public school board), 416-614-0844

**Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud** (French Catholic school board), 416-397-6564

Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP): **Margarett Best**, 416-281-2787, [mbest.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:mbest.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org) (east of Morningside Ave and south/west of Highland Creek)

**Tracy MacCharles**, 905-509-0336, [tmaccharles.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:tmaccharles.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org) (east of Morningside Ave and north/east of Highland Creek)

Member of Parliament (MP): **Hon. John McKay**, 416-283-1226, [john.mckay@parl.gc.ca](mailto:john.mckay@parl.gc.ca) (east of Morningside Ave and south/west of Highland Creek); **Corneliu Chisu**, 416-287-0110, [corneliu.chisu@parl.gc.ca](mailto:corneliu.chisu@parl.gc.ca) (east of Morningside Ave and north/east of Highland Creek)

## Homelessness in Toronto Factsheet

On any given night, you will find countless homeless people staying on the streets, in cars or the lobbies of unlocked buildings, in temporary or emergency shelters, with friends or family, or in motel rooms – many of these people are children and youth. In Canada, at least 250,000 people experience homelessness each year. Many people experiencing homelessness may be women and children fleeing violence in their homes.

### Child and youth homelessness in Toronto

- 3,269 children stayed in Toronto's shelters in 2009, 550 more than the year before (a 20% increase). The numbers of children accompanying their parents into shelters has been growing since 2005 (City of Toronto: Shelter, Support, and Housing Administration. (2010). Special Request).
- Unstable housing situations were frequently reported as a trigger for youth homelessness. 63% of the young people interviewed said they'd grown up in a family that had inconsistent housing and 50% said their family had difficulty maintaining housing. Close to 30% reported low income as a factor in their family's situation (Raising the Roof, 2009, pg. 18).

### What are the causes of homelessness?

#### 1. Lack of affordable housing

There were 86,892 households on the affordable housing waitlist as of September 30, 2012; 31,839 households on the waiting list include children under the age of 17 (Housing Connections, 2012).

#### 2. Increased Market Rent

- Between 2005 and 2010, Toronto rents rose by 31%. Today, only 20% of private rental apartments rent for less than \$800 a month

#### 3. Inadequate Social Assistance

- For a single mother on Ontario Works (OW) with one dependent one month looks like this:  
\$334 (basic needs) + \$584 (shelter allowance) from OW 2012 + \$91.67 Ontario Child Benefit - \$352.99 (food) - \$1395 (two-bedroom apartment) (average costs)  
= NEGATIVE \$738.32 not including transportation, clothing, school fees, etc.

#### 4. Unemployment/Precarious forms of employment

- Toronto unemployment rates are higher than both provincial and national rates
- In 2008, Toronto unemployment sat at 7.53%. Since the economic recession, it rose to 9.99% in 2009. This rate has begun to drop but remains much higher for youth (17% across Ontario)

#### 5. Domestic Violence/Family Breakdown

- From 2006 to 2009, the number of homeless women and children staying in Violence Against Women shelters increased by 8.2% (City of Toronto, 2009, Street Needs Assessment).

### Poverty and Homelessness

Young families with children are more likely to be struggling. Toronto's 2005 poverty rates were 37% for female lone parent families and 32% for children under 6 (Wilson, 2009).

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## Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

**Contact Information:** Please fill out this form as completely as possible.

|            |          |             |  |
|------------|----------|-------------|--|
| First name |          | Last name   |  |
| Address    |          |             |  |
| City       | Province | Postal code |  |

Please indicate how you would like us to contact you regarding your complaint.

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Standard mail at the above address |                |
| Home phone                         | Business phone |
| Cell phone                         |                |
| E-mail                             |                |

**Acting as a Representative:** If you are submitting a complaint on behalf of someone else, SSHA may, depending on the nature of the complaint, require written authorization from the person confirming permission to gather personal information from you. In filing this complaint, are you acting as a representative of someone else? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

|  |
|--|
| Name of person acting on behalf of complainant |
| Person to be contacted                         |

**Details of the Complaint:** (For purpose of review and corrective action)

|   |
|---|
| Service area/location of problem: (i.e.- Hostel Services, Social Housing, Streets to Homes, etc.) |
| Staff person(s) involved if known/ Service Provider/ Agency involved:                             |

|  |
|--|
| Nature of complaint (Please include as much information as possible)   |
| How would you like to see your complaint resolved?   |
| List of enclosed documents. (Please include copies, not originals, of any documentation in support of your complaint.) |
| Complainant's signature  |
| Date complaint submitted   |

**Notice of Collection**

The personal information you choose to provide on this form is collected under the authority of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. The information you provide will be used to investigate the complaint and may be used for contact purposes.

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Tracking number:

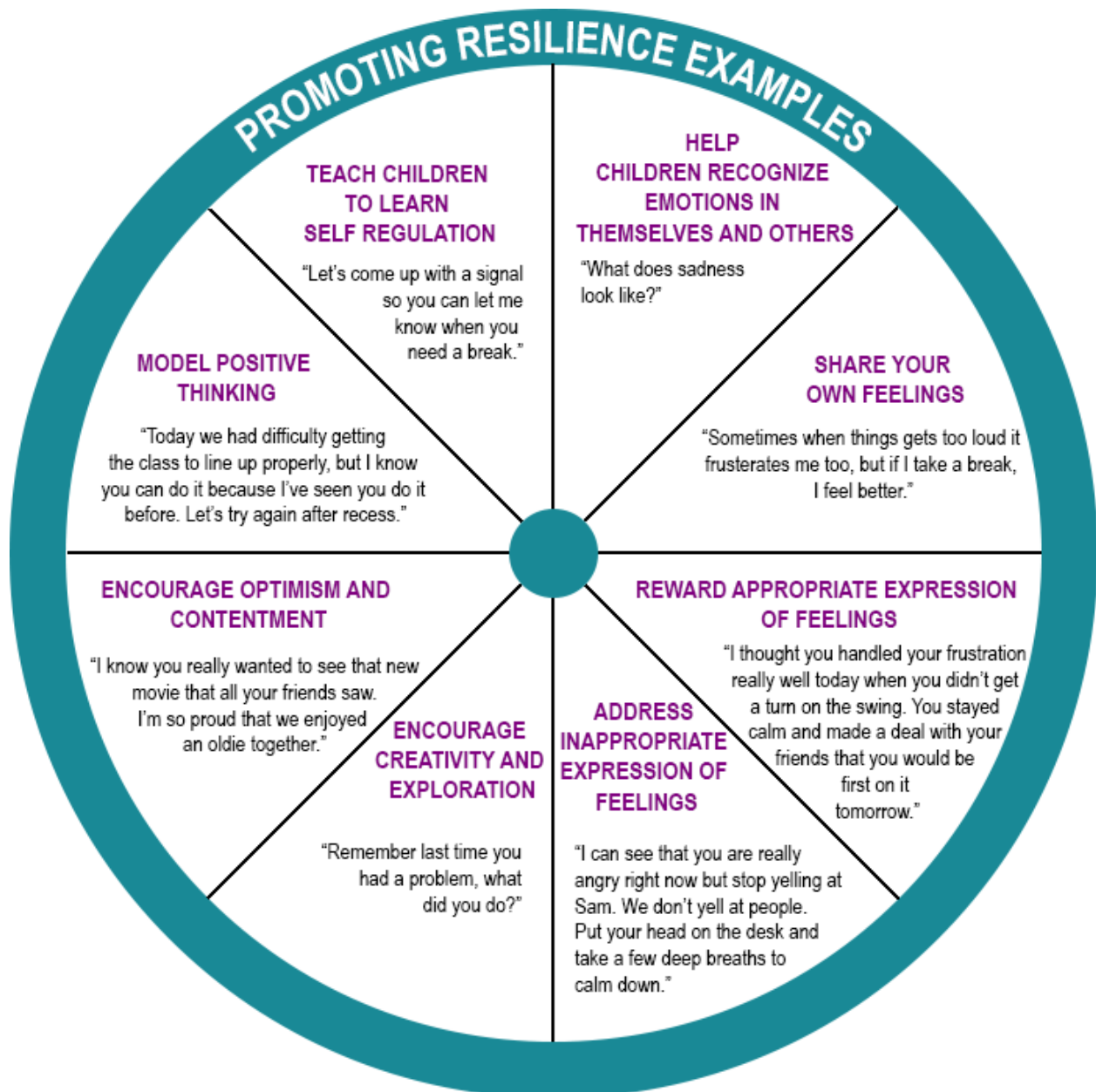
# Appendix C

## Workshop Activities

### Resilience Exercise

To be used in conjunction with Section 1, Strategies for Assisting Children: Strategies for Promoting Resilience.

Answers: The following are examples of techniques one could apply when helping children develop their emotional resilience.





## Case Studies for TDSB and TCDSB Policies

To be used in conjunction with Section 3, Navigating the Education System.

**Review the Navigating the Education System section to help answer these questions.**

1. A parent comes to your shelter/school and asks you about enrolling their child. She/he confesses that the child does not have full immigration status within the country. Please find the TDSB policy that would guide the parent's course of action in this situation. Please describe the specific steps you would take.

2. A student/child living at your shelter is submitting his class assignments late. Please refer to the TDSB policy or procedure that could assist the student and his parents in being aware of the importance of submitting assignments in a timely manner. Please describe the course of action you would take in the given situation.

3. You suspect a student/child leaving in the shelter is going to school hungry every day. Please refer to the TDSB policy or procedure that could assist the child in accessing school based nutrition programs. Please describe the steps you would take.