

Program Policy Template & Guide

For Women's Transition Housing and Support Programs

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BC Society of
Transition Houses

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Overview

This guide offers samples of policy to assist Women's Transition Housing and Supports Programs (WTHSP) that are interested in developing or updating agency policy about their programs, personnel, safety and security, health and safety and emergency management and service continuity. The templates provided within this guide are dynamic and are intended to be customized by the organization. It does not presume to dictate the contents of policy for individual organizations but instead to guide and provide a framework from which to work from.

This guide and the templates provided are aligned with the current BC Housing Operating Agreements and templates for the Women's Transition Housing and Supports Programs. Currently, the majority of the BC WTHSP organizations are funded by the BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program to provide housing and support services. BCSTH encourages programs to consult with any other funders to determine if these resources align with their funding obligations. As indicated, the templates are designed to be customized by the organization.

Framework: The policy templates apply an intersectional feminist framework, incorporating a gender-based analysis and trauma- and violence- informed lens to the social structures and systems of power that compound the impacts of violence in women's lives.

Policies can include the following components:

- **Rationale:** The rationale represents a statement of reasons/aims/objectives that detail why the policy has been developed and is important to the service. The rationale gives context (political or organizational) to the policy development. (OAITH, 2010)
- **Policy:** The policy statement describes the rules, guidelines and boundaries of a specific issue. This statement should demonstrate the organization's position or decision about how the organization will carry out its activities. (OAITH, 2010)
- **Procedures:** Procedures are the methods to implementing a policy. They are action oriented. Procedures detail who performs the procedure, what steps are performed, when the steps are performed, and how the procedure is performed.
- **Relevant documents or legislation:** Include or refer to other policies, contractual obligations, statements/positions, collective agreements or legislation that influence the policy(s).

- **Definitions:** Define the jargon or terms used in the policy.
- **Policy created date:** Date the policy is created.
- **Policy review date:** Date the policy is up for review.
- **Policy designate / overseen by:** Who is responsible for overseeing the policy (i.e., Executive Director, Finance, Volunteer Coordinator).

How to Use this Guide

1. Each organization is invited to review and customize the policies included in this guide, by removing aspects that are irrelevant or not applicable and/or adding points that are missing.
2. As policy procedures will vary greatly across organizations, procedures have intentionally been left out and will need to be written.
3. As you adapt the policy to your organization, replace *Agency XYZ* with the name of your organization or program. Wherever text is *italicized in blue* replace with information relevant to your organization.
4. Ensure that the policy and procedures:
 - a. comply with applicable municipal, provincial and federal legal requirements;
 - b. address requirements from funders and other important stakeholders;
 - c. will be able to be followed on a consistent basis.
5. Share and get approval from the organization's Board of Directors.
6. Share the finalized policies with all staff and volunteers and address any questions/concerns regarding implementation.
7. Determine who will be responsible to reviewing and updating the policies on a regular basis (i.e., annually).

Disclaimer

While the BCSTH is happy to provide this policy template guide, it is not possible to anticipate the needs and obligations of each WTHSP. As a result, each WTHSP must carefully review and tailor all policies to meet the WTHSP's specific needs. All references to laws in the policies are references to British Columbia law or Canadian federal law, as applicable. Each WTHSP is responsible for reviewing its policies with legal counsel to ensure that the WTHSP's policies are in compliance with all applicable legal requirements.

Neither BCSTH, nor any other person on BCSTH's behalf, has made or makes any express or implied representation, warranty or condition, either oral or written, whether arising by law or

otherwise, all of which are expressly disclaimed, with respect to the policy template guide and any user of the policy template guide acknowledges that it has not relied upon any representation or warranty made by BCSTH or any other person on BCSTH's behalf regarding the policy template guide.

Acknowledgement

Deep appreciation to the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) for so generously sharing their policies and for allowing us to adapt some of their policies for this policy template guide.

Program Policy Templates

PROGRAM POLICY

1.0. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Rationale: Working from an intersectional feminist framework *Agency XYZ* is committed to providing equitable, diverse and inclusive services where all who access services are equal in dignity and rights. Under the Canadian Human Rights Act and the BC Human Rights Code, it is against the law to discriminate on the basis of race, colour, age, national or ethnic origin, religion, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, sex, gender identify or expression, disability, genetic characteristics or a pardoned criminal conviction.

We recognize that we live in a society characterized by individual and systemic discrimination against particular groups, and are sensitive to the fact that oppressed groups and individuals experience marginalization and encounter barriers to full access and participation in services and the community. *Agency XYZ* strongly values equity, diversity and inclusion and recognizes that providing equity of access and opportunity means challenging discrimination and removing barriers to accessing our services. We acknowledge the rich diversity of women¹ and promote the benefits of a diverse community to help break down barriers, stigma and the negative attitudes that get created through lack of understanding, misinformation or fear of the ‘other’.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* will provide an environment and services that are accessible to women and their dependents who are at risk of violence or have experienced violence. *Agency XYZ* is committed to providing services free from discrimination on the basis of race, age, cultural heritage, national origin, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, health, socio-economic status, language, immigrant status and mental or physical ability and any prohibited ground of discrimination covered by the Canadian Human Rights Act and BC Human Rights Code as listed above.

¹ The term ‘women’ refers to all self-identifying women.

Agency XYZ will allow each program participant² accessing services independence from the religious, political and social beliefs or affiliations of the agency's employees and volunteers.

Agency XYZ will provide services that are sensitive and responsive to the diverse needs of the women and children it serves and promote cross-cultural understanding and respect for diversity among clients and staff.

Agency XYZ will ensure that relationships with program participants are respectful, and that procedures and decisions that affect services are fair, equitable, and ethical.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

² Throughout this document 'program participant', 'women with experiences of, or at risk of, violence', 'resident' and 'client' will be used interchangeably. Program participant refers to any individual who is accessing services from a Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program. For example, this could include a Transition House resident and her dependents or a woman accessing outreach support. Please note, the BC Housing Operating agreement uses the term 'client'.

PROGRAM POLICY

1.1. Service Eligibility³

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* understands and recognizes that violence is rooted in, and enabled by intersecting systems of oppression that places all people who identify as female, and those dependent on them, at risk of violence. We recognize the multiple and compounding health and social impacts of experiencing abuse and the myriad ways women cope. We also recognize the diversity of women's lives and experiences and that some women are more marginalized and face increased vulnerability to experiencing violence and its compounding impacts. *Agency XYZ's* commitment to working from an intersectional feminist framework ensures that we acknowledge the intersecting and compounding social and structural barriers women encounter when accessing support and the length of time it can take women leaving an abusive situation to safely re-establish herself and her dependents. Hence *Agency XYZ* works to reduce such barriers by providing accessible services that seek out and engage with all women in need of safety and support.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* supports women and their dependents who are at risk of violence, or have experienced violence, by providing access to safe, secure and confidential services, including information and supports for decision-making, transition, second stage, third stage and long-term housing, referrals to other services and links to affordable housing.

Agency XYZ's services are accessible to:

- a. individuals who identify as women over the age of 19 and their dependents who identify as:
 - i. having past and/or current experiences of abuse from a partner, family member(s), caregiver(s) or members of the community; and/or,
 - ii. being at risk of violence or have experienced violence from a partner, family member(s), caregiver(s) or members of the community; and/or,
 - iii. dealing with ongoing social and/or health impacts resulting from their experiences of violence that affect her safety, health and wellbeing; and/or,

³ Please note, the BC Housing Operating agreement uses the term 'intake eligibility'.

- iv. requiring services related to their risk or experience of violence

regardless of race, age, cultural heritage, national origin, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, health, socio-economic status, language, immigrant status and mental or physical ability ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, physical ability, health, mental wellness, social context, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

While all eligible women and their children have equal opportunity to access services, *Agency XYZ* may make decisions to restrict access to housing on a case-by-case basis in order to balance the needs of those requesting service with the safety and well-being of other program participants and the agency's available resources.

Dependents

Program services may be accessed by women and their dependents, including:

- a. children under the age of 19;
- b. children with disabilities, regardless of age; and,
- c. other family members who are dependent on the woman accessing services.

Women Under the Age of 19

Young women under the age of 19 who live independently and are experiencing or at risk of violence are eligible to access services. Upon intake and if relevant, *Agency XYZ* will establish an appropriate protocol with the Ministry of Children and Family Development regarding the provision of services to women under the age of 19.

Inclusivity (See Policy 1.0. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)

Women will not be denied or provided lesser service on the basis of belonging, or being perceived to belong, to any category protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act. They will not be denied service on the basis of: ethno-cultural background, race, color, creed, marital or parental status, national or regional origin, religious or spiritual beliefs, ability or disability, health or mental wellness, social context, sexual orientation, gender identity, pre- or post-operative sex-reassignment, health or surgery status, being pregnant or having children, income level, immigration or refugee status or lack thereof, mental health status, substance use status, criminal record or type of employment.

Agency XYZ will take all reasonable steps within its control to meet the diverse

needs of all those who identify as female seeking services and provide an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. As part of our commitment to provide services to those who identify as female, *Agency XYZ* promotes an environment that is accepting and encouraging to all service users. All individuals who identify as female are welcome to utilize the programming and services at *Agency XYZ* if they fit the program mandate, and the housing dynamics allow all individuals accessing the services to feel safe, and secure in the house.

Eligibility for Women with No Legal Status in Canada

Women without legal status in Canada are eligible for all program services at *Agency XYZ*, including Second Stage Housing.

Direct Access

Second Stage Housing is designed to support women following a stay in a Transition House or Safe Home; however, these are not eligibility requirements. Some women may need or desire direct access to a Second Stage Housing program and may self-refer.

Referral

Eligibility for a Second Stage Housing unit will not be based on a woman's previous housing situation or the absence of a referral. *Agency XYZ* will have discretion in determining whether an applicant's needs can be met by the Second Stage Housing program, or whether referral to an alternate housing option or program is more appropriate.

Pets (See Policies 1.7. – 1.9.)

Agency XYZ will strive to accommodate individuals who may otherwise encounter barriers to services because of certain circumstances. In particular, *Agency XYZ* will reasonably accommodate individuals with pets and will make reasonable efforts to engage in community partnerships with agencies who can assist in accommodating pets.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PROGRAM POLICY

1.2. Client Rights

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* respects the rights and dignity of the people it serves. We acknowledge that the women we serve will most likely have experienced a lack of power and personal freedoms through their experiences of abuse. As such, *Agency XYZ* is committed to empowering women and providing them with the support, resources and time they need in a safe and non-judgmental, non-coercive environment. Working from a woman-centred and intersectional feminist framework, *Agency XYZ* is committed to providing services that are equitable and inclusive to ensure that no person in need of support faces discrimination. The aim of this policy is to ensure that women and their dependents accessing *Agency XYZ* are aware of their rights and what they are entitled to from the organization, its employees and volunteers.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* recognizes the rights of women and their dependents as defined in current governmental laws and regulations, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the BC Human Rights Act and Employment Standards, and as defined by the service principles or expectations outlined by the relevant funding body/BC Housing.

Agency XYZ programs and service delivery are guided by the following principles:

- A woman-centered approach to service delivery
- The safety and security of women and children at risk of violence is paramount
- The role of power imbalances is acknowledged and responded to
- An open and collaborative service environment
- Transparent and accountable service delivery

Agency XYZ will explain their policies and procedures related to services and client's rights and responsibilities to program participants upon their intake or as soon after as is possible. This information on rights and responsibilities will be provided to program participants in ways that are clear and understandable when they first come in contact with services and annually if they access services for longer than one year.

The Client Rights policy will be posted in high visibility locations throughout *Agency XYZ*.

Agency XYZ will offer core services to program participants as needed, recognizing that not all women will require all of the following core services:

- Initial contact services
- Safe shelter/Housing and immediate basic needs
- Personal supports for women and children
- Referrals, advocacy and supported access to services
- Inter-agency service linking

Agency XYZ will provide basic needs to program participants, including, at a minimum:

- Safe, secure and appropriate sleeping accommodation for women and their dependents;
- Bedding, towels and personal hygiene products for women and their dependents;
- Laundry facilities or laundry products and services, either on-site or off-site, at no cost to the program participant; and,
- Access to food for three meals per day, including access to snacks and beverages throughout the day and infant formula if required.

Transition Housing

Agency XYZ will deliver support services that are beneficial to program participants with the intention of supporting them to achieve and maintain stability in housing, enhance access to other community-based supports and services, and strengthen and foster their ability to live more independently. Transition Housing support services include:

- a. use of on-site laundry facilities;
- b. access to information and education regarding the dynamics and impact of violence against women, children and youth;
- c. accompaniment to appointments where necessary;
- d. referrals to external services and resources;
- e. support and advocacy where appropriate, to assist women in accessing external services and resources;
- f. development and maintenance of relationships with provincial and community agencies involved in the delivery of services, and advocacy regarding the diverse needs of women and children at risk of violence; and,
- g. assistance with Income Assistance, Pension Benefits, Disability Benefits, obtaining a BC Identification Card, or establishing a bank account as appropriate.

Second Stage Housing

Agency XYZ will deliver support services that are beneficial to program participants with the intention to assist them in addressing and enhancing life skills, restoring the ability to maintain healthy, independent lives and eventually maintain a productive independent tenancy.

Second Stage Housing support services include:

- a. support for program participants to maintain their occupancy, including but not limited to:
 - i. directly assisting with room de-cluttering and/or normal cleaning and maintenance;
 - ii. repayment plans for outstanding program accommodation payments or other debts;
- b. individual or group support services such as life skills, community information, social and recreational programs;
- c. connecting the program participant to community supports and services such as education, employment, health and life skills and independent residential tenancy opportunities when appropriate;
- d. case planning and program participant needs assessment;
- e. assistance with Income Assistance, Pension Benefits, Disability Benefits, obtaining a BC Identification Card, or establishing a bank account as appropriate;
- f. wellness checks, front desk security services and measures, meals and other services; and,
- g. other support services as may be determined by *Agency XYZ* in enhancing the program participant's ability to maintain a healthy, independent life and eventually maintain a productive independent tenancy.

Agency XYZ acts in accordance with, and recognizes that, each individual woman and her dependents accessing programs have the right to:

- Be free from abuse, neglect, retaliation, humiliation, financial or any form of exploitation.
- Be considered for accommodation and housing based on fair and equitable policies.
- Physical security and well-being.
- Voluntary participation, which includes her right to:

- Progress through programs at her own level of comfort, including making her own decisions and choices without coercion or undue influence.
- Informed consent and choice, which includes her right to:
 - Be informed about the policies of *Agency XYZ* that have a direct impact on her and her dependents.
 - Access information and opportunities that enable her to explore options and understand the potential implications of any choices;
 - Be central to any planning or decision-making processes that affect her and/or her children.
 - Be informed and included in the decisions made about her and her family.
- Confidentiality and privacy in accordance with the Private Information Protection Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, including the maintenance of confidentiality of records.
- Respect and dignity including to be treated without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, social condition, and physical or mental disability or ability.
- Be informed of her human, legal and civil rights and to speak up and be heard when she feels her rights have been violated.
- Access legal representation when required.
- Make a complaint or appeal a decision.
- Independence from the religious, political and social beliefs or affiliations of the organization's employees and volunteers.

Agency XYZ:

- is committed to client rights being consistently maintained throughout all programs; and,
- will redress any violation of client rights immediately.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PROGRAM POLICY

1.3. Length of Stay

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes that complex social and structural barriers exist which makes leaving an abusive relationship and re-establishing oneself very challenging. As such, women need to be supported within reasonable timeframes to have the rest and respite they need, to establish their own goals and to be assisted in achieving their goals, safety and wellbeing. *Agency XYZ* believes it is more important to take the time to successfully support a woman than it is to ensure she departs our facility within 30 days.

Policy: **Transition House**

Women may receive core services and temporary shelter at *Agency XYZ* for as long as 30 days, however, stays may be extended to suit individual circumstances. These circumstances may include: (*Agency XYZ to define circumstances*).

Safe Home

Women may receive core services and temporary shelter at *Agency XYZ* for as long as 10 days but stays may be extended to suit individual circumstances. These circumstances may include: (*Agency XYZ to define circumstances*).

Second Stage House

Women may receive core services and short-term housing in independent units at *Agency XYZ* for as long as 18 months but stays but may be extended to suit individual circumstances. These circumstances may include: (*Agency XYZ to define circumstances*).

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PROGRAM POLICY

1.4. When a Request for Housing or Shelter Cannot Be Accommodated

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes that all women with experiences of violence, or at risk of violence, have the right to safety and support. Women with experiences of violence face social and structural inequities that further marginalize them and increase their vulnerability to further violence. As such, *Agency XYZ* is committed to reducing barriers to create accessible and safe services for all women in need of support.

Agency XYZ acknowledges that women with experiences of violence typically reach out for support when in crisis. When women are unable to access services in this moment, they may be reluctant to reach out again when in need. It is therefore imperative in this moment that emotional support is provided, that she feels believed, that her safety and wellbeing are important and that all attempts are made to connect her with appropriate services.

Policy: When a woman is not able to access the services of *Agency XYZ* because:

- there is no vacancy at *Agency XYZ*; or
- she does not fit the eligibility criteria; or
- limited staffing and limited resources exist,

Agency XYZ will offer:

- initial contact services, including an immediate safety assessment and short-term plan;
- emotional support; and,
- referral to an alternative appropriate resource, with facilitated contact between the woman and the agency to which she is being referred, to the extent possible.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PROGRAM POLICY

1.5. Second Stage Housing Tenant Rent Contribution

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes that poverty, housing insecurity and homelessness have significant impacts on women experiencing violence and that these social and structural inequalities further marginalize women and increase their vulnerability to further violence. For women with children, these factors also make her more vulnerable to child welfare involvement, and/or create additional barriers to her getting her children back in her care. *Agency XYZ* recognizes the need for ongoing support and advocacy for women who are seeking safety and well-being. As such, *Agency XYZ* is committed to making Second Stage House financially accessible to all women who could benefit from such a program, as well as ensuring that a clear and consistent formula is applied when determining resident rent contribution within all Second Stage Housing programs.

Policy: **Income Eligibility**
Agency XYZ will use its best effort to select individuals who have low and moderate income at the commencement of residency of a Second Stage Housing.

Resident Rent Contribution

Women residing at *Agency XYZ* Second Stage Housing must pay a set percentage of their income for rent (currently set at 30%). Residents on Income Assistance pay the maximum shelter component provided for in the BC *Employment Assistance Act*. Resident income and rent will be calculated in accordance with the Women's Transition Housing and Support Program (WTHSP) Rent Scale, as outlined in the WTHSP Operating Agreement, Schedule F.

The Resident Rent Contribution will not exceed a set percentage (currently 30% of income), as determined from time to time by BC Housing, of the resident's income, and the following will apply:

- a. gross income is always used and will be based on either:
 - i. a review of the previous year's income tax return, plus a declaration of non-taxable income amounts; or
 - ii. an assessment of current income and assets.
- b. a minimum resident rent contribution is applied based on applicable household size and age of the resident;

- c. the resident rent contribution of a resident in receipt of Income Assistance will be fixed at an amount as set out in the WTHSP Operating Agreement, Schedule F, Part C; and
- d. a minimum resident rent contribution is applied based on applicable household size and age of the resident.

For the purposes of this policy, income is defined as:

- all income from earnings, including commissions and tips;
- all income from all public and private pension plans, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement;
- all income received under the Employment and Assistance Act, the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act, or successor legislation (“Income Assistance”);
- disabled Veteran's Allowance;
- alimony;
- workers’ compensation benefits; and
- Employment Insurance.

For the purposes of this policy, the following are exempt from inclusion in income:

- a. Excluded Government Payments:
 - i. a payment, refund, or credit from the provincial or federal government, including income tax refund, Canada Child Benefit, or Child Care Subsidy received for dependent children;
 - ii. a child benefit received from the Canada Pension Plan (CPP);
 - iii. a survivor’s death benefit received from Canada Pension Plan (one-time payment only);
 - iv. Income from foster parenting;
 - v. payments under the Child in Home of Relative and Extended Family Program;
 - vi. a special allowance for resettlement assistance; and
 - vii. payments received from the Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER) program, Rental Assistance Program, or a rent supplement funded by BC Housing.
- b. Excluded Employment Related Payments:
 - i. earnings of dependent children under the age of nineteen (19);
 - ii. earnings of dependent children aged nineteen (19) to twenty-four (24) who are full-time students;

- iii. earnings of dependent children of any age who, because of mental or physical infirmity, is considered a dependent for income tax purposes;
- iv. a one-time lump sum severance/settlement payment;
- v. a business expense deduction from self-employed earnings (Not exempted: management fees, salaries or wages paid to any household members, business-use-of- home expenses, capital cost allowance and rent (if the business is being operated out of the home) and any other expense of a personal nature); and
- vi. taxable benefits, including living out or travel allowances, medical coverage, uniform allowance, etc.
- c. Excluded Income for Veterans and Victims of War:
 - i. a periodic or lump sum war reparation payment; and
 - ii. a benefit from War Veteran's Allowance and Disability Pension from Veteran's Affairs Canada, including special allowances under the Veterans Disability Pension Program.
- d. Excluded Education or Training Payments:
 - i. student loans, equalization payments, student grants, scholarships, fellowships or bursaries received by a student aged nineteen (19) to twenty-four (24) in attendance at a post-secondary institution in British Columbia; and,
 - ii. a payment received for board and lodging of a student attending secondary school off the reserve.
- e. Other Excluded Payments:
 - i. extraordinary compensation payments, including Indian Residential School, Japanese Canadian Redress, Jericho Hill School for the Deaf, Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, Jordan's Principle;
 - ii. child support paid by the non-custodial parent and government benefits intended for the benefit of children (CPP children's benefits, WorkSafe BC child benefits, Public Guardian and Trustee payment for children, Post-Adoption Assistance, etc.);
 - iii. a one-time donation from a religious, charitable, or benevolent organization;
 - iv. insurance settlements, inheritances, and disability awards in the year they are received (in subsequent years these are considered as assets); and
 - v. income of live-in caregivers where their sole income source is dependent on them living in the unit to provide care for a member of the income tested household.

Residents on Income Assistance

Resident rent contribution for a resident on income assistance will be fixed at an amount set out in the WTHSP's Operating Agreement, Schedule F, Part C. *Agency XYZ* will set the resident rent contribution for each Second Stage unit by applying a flat rate applicable to the appropriate household size⁴ determined by BC Housing. If the flat rate charged for resident rent contribution changes, reasonable notice will be given by *Agency XYZ* to the resident, as determined by BC Housing.

When Minimum Rent Constitutes Financial Hardship

Agency XYZ will apply a minimum resident rent contribution based on applicable household size and age of the resident. BC Housing recognizes that the payment of a minimum rent may, in some situations, constitute an undue financial hardship for a resident. *Agency XYZ*, acting reasonably, has discretion to waive the minimum rent requirement on an individual basis if the minimum rent requirement would prevent a woman from accessing necessary services.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

⁴ All BC Housing funded programs that have a rent component are RGI, which means 30% of gross income or maximum Income Assistance shelter rate based on family size. See here for the shelter rate table based on family size: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables/income-assistance-rate-table>

PROGRAM POLICY

1.6. Departure Planning

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes that all women with experiences of abuse are entitled to safety and support and is committed to offering services that meet women's diverse needs throughout a woman's stay and upon departure. *Agency XYZ* acknowledges that its services will not meet the needs of all women, nor will every woman fit with *Agency XYZ's* current capacity, programming and policies. As such, in the event of an involuntary departure we believe in the importance of continuing to promote a safe, supportive environment so as to not replicate her experiences of powerlessness, trauma, shame or negative judgments. Furthermore, recognizing that women on average leave an abusive relationship 7 times before successfully leaving, we want to ensure that women continue to see *Agency XYZ* as a safe, supportive and accessible service that they can reach out to when needed.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to ensuring that when service is terminated, either voluntarily or involuntarily, that employees follow a clear and respectful process.

A departure may occur when a woman:

- achieves her goals and is ready to discontinue service;
- no longer wants to stay at *Agency XYZ* and receive service;
- refuses to adhere to the policies and procedures of *Agency XYZ*; and/or,
- has needs that exceed the resources and expertise of *Agency XYZ*.

When a Woman is Leaving Agency XYZ Voluntarily (Transition Housing, Safe House)

When a woman is leaving *Agency XYZ*, employees should check with the woman leaving to see what resources and supports she has in place and provide her with assistance linking to additional resources and safety planning if she desires.

When a Woman is Leaving Agency XYZ Voluntarily (Second Stage Housing)

A program participant may end their residency by providing a written thirty (30) days' notice to *Agency XYZ*. This notice must be in writing and must include:

- the address of the program accommodation;
- include the date this residency is to end; and
- be signed by the program participant.

When a woman is leaving [Agency XYZ](#), employees should check with the woman leaving to see what resources and supports she has in place and provide her with assistance linking to additional resources and safety planning if she desires.

When a Resident is Leaving Agency XYZ Involuntarily (Transition Housing, Safe House)

In the event that a woman is asked to leave [Agency XYZ](#), the manager must sign off on the decision. Employees should be honest with the woman about why she is being asked to leave and remain compassionate and non-judgmental in their approach. Every effort should be made by the employee(s) to assist the women in safety planning and linking her to other appropriate services and making alternate arrangements prior to her leaving [Agency XYZ](#). If appropriate (and where services exist), [Agency XYZ](#) can offer outreach and/or victims services to the woman once departed.

If employees are concerned that the woman being asked to leave involuntarily may respond aggressively or be abusive and that staff may be the target of that aggression, staff should ensure that they are not alone during the conversation.

When a Resident is Leaving Agency XYZ Involuntarily (Second Stage Housing)
[Agency XYZ](#) may choose to end a program participants residency at any time by giving the program participant less than 24 hours written notice if they have committed a serious act of violence towards, or has seriously jeopardized the health or safety of any staff, guests, or other residents or members of the community.

[Agency XYZ](#) may choose to end a program participants residency at any time by giving the program participant less than 24 hours written notice if:

- i. the program participant or their guests engage or behave in a manner that is abusive and/or a threat to the mental or physical health or safety of any staff, guests, other occupants of the building or members of the community; and/or,
- ii. the program participant or their guests engage in vandalism or willfully cause damage to the program accommodation or any aspect of the building.

[Agency XYZ](#) may choose to end a program participants residency by giving them a thirty (30) day written notice if:

- i. the program participant breaches any other requirement or provision of their residency agreement and fails to correct that breach to the satisfaction of *Agency XYZ*;
- ii. the program participant is absent from the program accommodation unit for one (1) month or longer without the prior written consent of *Agency XYZ* even if the program accommodation payment has been paid for that period;
- iii. number of occupants or physical makeup of the program accommodation changes without *Agency XYZ's* prior written approval; and/or,
- iv. the program participant has failed to pay the program fee to *Agency XYZ* or is chronically late in paying their fee.

Agency XYZ's notice must be in writing and must include:

- the address of the program accommodation;
- the date of the residency agreement and therefore the right to occupy the program accommodation will end;
- the reason for ending the residency agreement; and
- be signed by the provider.

In the event that a resident is asked to leave *Agency XYZ*, the manager must sign off on the decision. Employees should be honest with the woman about why she is being asked to leave and remain compassionate and non-judgmental in their approach. When appropriate, every effort should be made by the employee(s) to assist the women in safety planning and linking her to other appropriate services and making alternate arrangements prior to her leaving *Agency XYZ*. If appropriate (and where services exist), *Agency XYZ* can offer outreach and/or victims services to the woman once departed.

If employees are concerned that the woman being asked to leave involuntarily may respond aggressively or be abusive and that staff may be the target of that aggression, staff should ensure that they are not alone during the conversation.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PROGRAM POLICY

1.7. Pet-sheltering

Rationale: The links between violence against women and animal maltreatment and abuse are well documented, as are the challenges faced by women with pets trying to secure safe shelter when leaving a violent situation. The love and connection women feel for their pets can significantly impact their ability and/or willingness to leave their pet behind with the abuser. *Agency XYZ* recognizes that women may potentially stay in a violent and unsafe situation when they do not have a safe place for their pet to live and that staying may increase their risk of further and/or more severe violence.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to reducing barriers that prevent or deter women from leaving violence by providing safe shelter to women and their pets experiencing violence.

Eligibility

- i. A resident with a disability that requires, as a result of the disability, the assistance of a guide or service dog (that is certified as a guide dog or a service dog by the Registrar of Guide Dogs and Service Dogs under the Guide Dog and Service Dog Act (British Columbia) for daily living may have a guide or service dog.
- ii. The following pets⁵ will be eligible to access pet shelter at *Agency XYZ*: *(list species, breeds and size of eligible pets)*.
- iii. The following pets will be prohibited access to the pet shelter at *Agency XYZ*: *(list species, breeds, size, and other factors such as aggressive behavior, that will prohibit access)*.
- iv. The pet(s) behaviour must be appropriate for a communal living environment.
- v. The pet(s) must be free of fleas and other pests.
- vi. The pet(s) should have basic vaccinations.
- vii. Cats and dogs should be spayed/neutered.

If the pet is not up to date with basic vaccinations, has fleas and/or is not spayed/neutered, *Agency XYZ* will work with their community partners to get

⁵ A pet is defined as a domesticated animal kept for pleasure or companionship.

the pet the medical care it needs in order to enable them to be sheltered in the pet-sheltering program at [Agency XYZ](#).

Resident Pet Care

- i. Residents are solely responsible for the care of their pet(s) throughout their stay at [Agency XYZ](#). This includes providing food and water, cleaning the cage or kennel daily, providing any medication, cleaning the litter box daily, walking the dog in a safe area designated by staff and cleaning up after it, and notifying staff if a pet needs veterinary care.
- ii. Residents with pets will sign the [Pet-sheltering Agreement \(see pg. 58\)](#) outlining the expectations of pet care during their stay to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone at [Agency XYZ](#).

Staff Responsibility

- i. Staff will ask women about pets and concerns about pet safety when initial inquiries are made about crisis support, as well as upon intake, in risk assessments, and in safety planning.
- ii. Select staff will support residents in regards to the care of their pet(s) when deemed necessary and appropriate.
- iii. Staff who have allergies, fears or other concerns that prohibit them from engaging with certain, or all animals, will be provided with accommodations and/or exemptions from interacting with pets. No staff member is expected to be in direct contact with any animals that they are uncomfortable with.
- iv. Staff will build relationships, collaborate and partner with local Animal Welfare Organizations, Humane Societies and veterinarians to support the sheltering of pets at [Agency XYZ](#) and ensure relevant and appropriate care is available to pets in the program when needed.
- v. Pet supplies will be maintained and be made available to residents with pets.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PROGRAM POLICY

1.8. Pet-sheltering Health and Safety

Rationale: It is the duty of *Agency XYZ* to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practical, that all employees, volunteers and the women and their dependents they serve are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. *Agency XYZ* believes that safety and the prevention of accidents, injury or loss is essential to the efficient operation of *Agency XYZ*. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all staff are aware of the safety and security policies and protocols related to the sheltering of pets which are to be employed to promote the personal health and safety of employees, volunteers and the women and their dependents they serve.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to fostering a safe living environment that supports the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and all women and their dependents accessing its services and programs. This includes, but is not limited to, transparency regarding the pet-sheltering program, personal safety, controlling who the pet has contact with, cleanliness and allergen reduction. *Agency XYZ* will ensure that systems, policies and procedures are in place and reviewed regularly to promote the highest level of safety and security. All staff, residents and visitors will be oriented on the implementation of applicable safety and security policies and procedures.

Agency XYZ is committed to the following protocols to promote the safety and security of residents, staff and volunteers.

Safety

- i. All potential residents will be informed that the *Agency XYZ* site is pet-friendly and will be asked by staff if they have any health or safety concerns about staying in a pet-friendly site, so they can be best accommodated.
- ii. Staff will assess for aggressive pet and/or anti-social behaviours during intake.
- iii. Staff retain the right to deny pets at intake due to overcrowded conditions or if the pet's condition, temperament, behavior or other factors would compromise the health, safety and/or well-being of the residents and/or other animals.

- iv. Pets will only have contact with the pet's owners and select staff/volunteers. If the pets are kept in a separate kenneling area, then only the staff and owners will be permitted to enter the facility.
- v. Pets are only allowed in designated areas of the *Agency XYZ* site and its property. Pets are prohibited in the (*list areas that are prohibited such as the kitchen, common areas, etc.*) to avoid unwanted contact between other residents, staff and pets.
- vi. Large dogs should be muzzled and leashed while walking through common areas.
- vii. Cats and other smaller animals should be transported in a secured carrier while walking through common areas.
- viii. Staff retain the right to ask the resident to find alternate accommodation for their pet once their stay has commenced if there are issues with the pet's condition, temperament, behaviour or other factors that may compromise the health, safety or well-being of the residents or other animals. If rehousing the pet is required, staff will work with community partners to support the resident to find alternate accommodation for her pet(s).
- ix. Staff who have allergies, fears or other concerns that prohibit them from engaging with certain, or all animals, will be provided with accommodations and/or exemptions from interacting with pets. No staff member is expected to be in direct contact with any animals that they are uncomfortable with.

Noise and Odors

- i. *Agency XYZ* will do a deep clean of the pet-sheltering rooms between all residents' stays.
- ii. If noise from a particular pet becomes excessive, staff may ask the resident to re-house the pet elsewhere, such as with a partnering Animal Welfare Organization.

Allergies

- i. *Agency XYZ* will inform all potential residents that the *Agency XYZ* is pet-friendly, and ask if they have any health and safety concerns so they can best be accommodated.
- ii. Pets are only allowed in designated areas of the *Agency XYZ* and its property. Pets are prohibited in the (*list areas that are prohibited such as the kitchen, common areas, etc.*) to prevent unwanted contact between other residents, staff and pets and to avoid the potential spread of allergens.

- iii. *Agency XYZ* will employ frequent and extensive cleaning to reduce allergens (*define frequency and extent of cleaning*).
- iv. *Agency XYZ* will provide portable HEPA Air Purifiers for pet free rooms to reduce allergens.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PROGRAM POLICY

1.9. Abandoned Pets

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* respects the rights and dignity of the people and animals it serves. We acknowledge that women leaving violence may encounter a multitude of barriers and challenges in securing safety and wellbeing. There may be instances when women leave their pet(s) behind at the *Agency XYZ*. When this occurs, *Agency XYZ* is responsible for continuing to provide safe and supportive services to all residents, pets included, until they are retrieved by their owner or are found alternate safe housing.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to ensuring the safe-keeping of pets who have been voluntarily or involuntarily left behind.

A pet(s) may be left behind when:

- A resident can no longer take care of the animal;
- A resident leaves the *Agency XYZ* and does not come back for the pet;
- The housing options available to a resident do not allow for pets.

When the Pet is Abandoned

- i. In the instance that a pet is abandoned, *Agency XYZ* will continue to care for the pet for *X* number of days (*define length of time*), while making attempts to connect with the pet owner and/or their emergency contact to determine when they will come and retrieve the animal.
- ii. If after *X* number of days (*define length of time*), the pet has not been retrieved by the owner or emergency contact, *Agency XYZ* will take legal ownership of the pet. This policy will be clearly communicated to residents and outlined in the [Pet-sheltering Agreement \(see pg. 58\)](#) that residents with pets will be required to read and sign upon intake. At this time, *Agency XYZ* will work with community partners to re-house the pet.

When Agency XYZ Agrees to Continue to Provide pet Care after Departure of Resident

- i. In situations when residents are leaving *Agency XYZ* but request that their pets remain behind will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If *Agency XYZ* agrees to continue to provide care for a determined amount

of time, the resident will sign an [Extended Care Contract \(see pg. 67\)](#) that outlines the parameters of the pet's stay.

- ii. If the pet(s) require immediate medical care during their extended stay, the pet owner will be responsible for the financial costs that the veterinarian will provide. If the pet(s) is on medication or special food, the pet owner will provide a sufficient amount of these provisions before leaving.
- iii. If the resident fails to retrieve her pet(s) by the expiration of the [Extended Care Contract \(see pg. 67\)](#), the pet(s) has been relinquished and *Agency XYZ* will take legal ownership of the pet. *Agency XYZ* may then place the pet(s) for adoption or other disposition with a local Animal Welfare Organization and the woman forfeits all legal rights to the pet(s).

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

Personnel Policy Templates

PERSONNEL POLICY

2.0. Recruitment and Selection

Rationale: As an organization that serves a diverse population of women, *Agency XYZ* welcomes and values diversity amongst its staff. It seeks to ensure that all candidates for employment are treated fairly, and that selection is based solely upon the individual merits of candidates and on selection criteria relevant to the post. Given the nature of the work and the vulnerability and marginalization of the women we serve, our agency uses several tools in its selection process, including interviews, vulnerable sector criminal records check, and references, to help us ensure that potential staff have the skills and sensitivity to support women and their dependents in a safe, supportive, non-abusive, non-coercive and non-judgmental manner.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to a hiring process that ensures equal opportunity for potential candidates and a fair and consistent selection process that is consistent with employment legislation and good practice and free from discriminatory practices.

Eligibility

At no time will *Agency XYZ* discriminate against any applicant on the basis of race, ethnicity, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or conviction unrelated to employment, except where such discrimination constitutes a bona fide occupational requirement.

It is the intent and desire of *Agency XYZ* that equal employment opportunity will be provided in employment, promotions, wage, benefits and all other privileges, terms and conditions of employment.

Selection

All employment practices will be based on prevailing B.C. Human Rights and Employment Standards Legislation.

Candidate selection is based upon the assessment of education, training, experience, skills and abilities, required certification, personal suitability,

eligibility to work in Canada, eligibility for bonding, absence of a job-related criminal record, positive reference checks, and other factors considered relevant by *Agency XYZ* and in compliance with the collective agreement where applicable.

Prior to making a final selection, *Agency XYZ* will conduct a minimum of three (3) reference checks and a criminal record check on all external applicants.

Criminal Record Check

Agency XYZ will ensure that all potential employees and volunteers working with children and/or vulnerable adults, or any employee as required by contract, shall have completed a vulnerable sector criminal record check according to the requirements of the Criminal Records Review Act (RSBC1996) Chapter 86, prior to the commencement of employment and *[define frequency of subsequent criminal record checks e.g., every five years]* thereafter. Any criminal record result will be reviewed by our agency using our Safety and Security policy on criminal records checks. (See [Safety and Security Policy 3.1](#)).

The candidate is responsible for the cost of the Criminal Record Check.

Results will be treated as confidential for all candidates. The criminal record check will become part of the employees file for the successful candidate. For the unsuccessful candidates, the criminal record checks will be destroyed.

References

Agency XYZ requires that candidates provide official documentation of all employment requirements and three (3) references which include the most recent employer. In the event that the most recent employer is not available or appropriate, the candidate will be asked to provide alternate references. In the event that an employee of *Agency XYZ* is transferring to a different position within the agency, further references will be foregone as they were provided to the Agency at the time of initial hire.

References will be checked and the information obtained will be used by the selection committee to assess suitability for the position.

Employment requirements and credentials will be verified at the source and if there is a question of validity, the Executive Director or appropriate Program Director will consult with the candidate and failing satisfactory verification will bring this to the attention of the selection committee.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PERSONNEL POLICY

2.1. Remuneration

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes the importance of transparency and clarity in regards to staff remuneration. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all staff have a clear and consistent understanding of the compensation they receive while employed by *Agency XYZ*.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to a policy of remuneration which is internally and externally equitable and competitive with other similar non-profit organizations and also recognizes and encourages individual performance. The purpose of the policy is to:

- Ensure the fair and equitable salary treatment of *Agency XYZ* employees.
- Set salary levels which will enable *Agency XYZ* to attract, recruit and retain qualified employees and reward employees' years of service and performance.
- Promote individual performance.
- Fulfill the organizational mission, vision and promote strategic direction.
- Produce job satisfaction.
- Support morale by clearly providing visible job and salary growth.

Wages

Upon hiring, *Agency XYZ* will provide successful candidates with a letter of appointment, specifying the details of their remuneration.

Remuneration will be dispensed (*define out how often payments are made e.g., biweekly*) through (*define how payments will be made e.g., direct deposit, cheque*). A comprehensive statement detailing all payments, allowances and deductions shall be provided for each pay period.

Salary Adjustments

Agency XYZ is committed to providing fair wages and benefits and to offer wage increases, from time-to-time, based on the merits of an employee's performance and increases in the cost of living. As budgetary conditions permit, *Agency XYZ* will award increases to employees for their contributions to the organization, based upon (*define criteria e.g., their skills, improvement on the job, formal training and/or certification, outstanding performance and*

applicable salary structure).

Agency XYZ will conduct annual performance reviews (and/or as deemed necessary) with each employee. A performance review does not guarantee a wage increase. Wage adjustments will be made according to the (*define considerations e.g., position and responsibilities, job performance, personal initiatives, safety adherence, attitude and cooperation*).

The Board of Directors must approve all adjustments and compensation for the Executive Director. The Executive Director must approve all adjustments and compensation for Program Managers. Program Managers, in consultation with the Executive Director must approve all adjustments and compensation for program staff, including the Program Coordinators.

Health and Welfare Benefits

As determined by funding (*define considerations e.g., contract funding, grant funds, collective agreement*), *Agency XYZ* will provide (*define staff eligible for benefits*) employed for at minimum (*define minimum number of hours/week*) with health and welfare benefits. Health and Welfare Benefits will include:

- *define details of health and welfare benefits e.g., BC Medical Service Plan, Dental Plan, Extended health plan.*

Staff may opt out of participating in any health and welfare benefits by written request to the (*define who request needs to be made to e.g., finance manager*).

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PERSONNEL POLICY

2.2. Orientation and Training

Rationale: Working with women and their dependents who have experiences of abuse requires: sensitivity and compassion; understanding of the intersections of gender-based violence and the systemic barriers that impact experiences of violence and access to services; and, concrete skills, such as crisis intervention and non-violent conflict resolution. It is essential that staff are competent and comfortable in all areas of their job responsibilities. As such, *Agency XYZ* ensures employees are qualified to fulfill their job responsibilities and to promote awareness and compassion to the diverse women they serve. The aim of this policy is to ensure that employees are sufficiently oriented to *Agency XYZ* and trained to meet the needs of program participants.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to ensuring that all staff have the appropriate skills, training, qualifications and knowledge for the services that they perform.

Orientation

Within an employee's first (*define time frame e.g., within one week*) of employment, *Agency XYZ* will provide all new employees with an orientation (*define what will be covered in an orientation such as:*)

- to *Agency XYZ's* written policies and procedures, including program, personnel, health and safety, safety and security, occupational health and safety and emergency management and service continuity procedures;
- to the agency, including pertinent details of the work environment, its layout, colleagues, and facilities;
- pay and administrative practices;
- locations of first aid equipment;
- safe work procedure; and,
- training in crisis intervention, de-escalation training, domestic violence safety planning and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Training

Agency XYZ will ensure that staff have the following trainings: (*list trainings required e.g., those required by BC Housing*):

- crisis prevention training and/or de-escalation training, non-violent intervention;
- Standard First Aid and CPR (At least one (1) staff member certified in Standard First Aid and the appropriate CPR level training must be on duty at all times);
- Indigenous awareness training;
- mental health first aid training;
- domestic violence safety planning;
- substance use awareness and safety training, including naloxone training;
- 2SLGBTQAI+ awareness training;
- trauma-informed practice training; and,
- staff self-care training.

Additional training will be provided as appropriate and necessary. Training that an employee is directed to take by her immediate supervisor or that is required by *Agency XYZ (define potential trainings e.g., First Aid)* is paid for by the organization.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PERSONNEL POLICY

2.3. Standards of Conduct Policy

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes that employees may confront challenging ethical demands and dilemmas in their work. The aim of this policy is to ensure employees of *Agency XYZ* are well informed about the standards of conduct expected of them. As such the Standards of Conduct policy is essential to the maintenance of a healthy and safe environment, the ethical integrity, accountability and the preservation of *Agency XYZ's* credibility with the public and the women we serve.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to providing a safe, healthy workplace that promotes a high level of job satisfaction and a respectful work environment. *Agency XYZ* believes that it is a shared responsibility of all its employees and volunteers to work towards this environment. The standards for conduct are directly tied to accomplishing our organization's stated mission. To assist *Agency XYZ* in maintaining a safe and healthy work environment, we require all employees and volunteers to conduct themselves in a professional manner, at all times.

All employees and volunteers of *Agency XYZ* shall maintain an appropriate and professional relationship with present or former program participants, volunteers and colleagues, consistent with a professional code of ethics and *Agency XYZ* policies.

All employees and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner appropriate to a community social service environment and demonstrate the highest level of integrity, honesty and consideration for others and for the organization in the performance of their duties.

In order to preserve the mission of *Agency XYZ* and secure a safe and healthy workplace, unacceptable actions, omissions, or conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Behaving in an abusive manner to clients. This includes verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse/harassment and emotional abuse;
- Discriminatory and/or disrespectful behaviour towards clients or colleagues;
- Willful damage or destruction of the organization's property or property of another employee or volunteer;
- Possession of a weapon while on the premises or while conducting business

on behalf of the organization;

- Conduct that is hazardous to employee or volunteer safety;
- A criminal offence under the Criminal Code; or
- Any other act, conduct, or omission that is materially detrimental to the business, reputation, or financial position of the organization; [or]
- Initiating or participating in intimate or otherwise nonprofessional relationship with clients or behaving in a manner that is perceived to be sexual in character, either during or outside of work hours;
- Fraternizing or having personal relationships with clients outside of work;
- Visiting in clients' rooms, homes, or apartments unless for official business reasons;
- Lending or giving money to clients or to each other;
- Providing services to clients outside of work e.g., child care;
- Driving clients in their own or the client's car, except in cases where it is required as part of your work;
- *(Add other prohibited conduct)*

Compliance with the Standards of Conduct policy is a condition of employment. Violation of this policy will be seen as a matter of serious consequence and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

PERSONNEL POLICY

2.4. Conflict of Interest Policy - Employees

Rationale: Non-profits such as *Agency XYZ* have a role in protecting the public interest. Any erosion in public confidence and the integrity and accountability of *Agency XYZ* is particularly harmful. It is crucial that all employee professional, personal, and occupational interests do not affect their judgment, competence or relationships with those they serve or with whom they do business and that all activities and responsibilities are conducted in an atmosphere that is free of actual or apparent conflicts of interest.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that: all employees and volunteers are well informed of what constitutes a conflict of interest; raise awareness; and, encourage disclosure and discussion of anything that may be a conflict during the course of their employment. This will protect the integrity of *Agency XYZ*, the decision-making process and enable the public and women we serve to have confidence in the integrity, intentions and actions of the management, employees, board members and volunteers.

Policy Management, employees, volunteers and Board members of *Agency XYZ* are expected to act in the best interests of *Agency XYZ* and its program participants and adhere to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity.

Management, employees, volunteers and Board members must keep their role as private citizens separate and distinct from their responsibilities associated with *Agency XYZ*. Personal gain shall not conflict with duty to *Agency XYZ*.

A conflict of interest may be apparent, perceived, potential or real and can arise in a personal or professional context and may be financial or otherwise.

An employee shall be considered to have potential conflict of interest:

- Where an employee or volunteer's private affairs or financial interests are in conflict with his/her work duties, responsibilities and obligations, or may result in a public perception that a conflict exists;
- Which could impair the employee or volunteer's ability to act in the public interest;
- Where an employee or volunteer's actions would compromise or undermine the trust which the public places in the organization;
- *(Add other conflicts).*

Acceptance of Gifts

Acceptance of personal gifts beyond moderate courtesy and the acceptance of compensation or rewards from individuals or agencies because of the position they occupy in *Agency XYZ* is prohibited. Occasionally minor gifts can be accepted with the knowledge of (*state role within organization e.g., Supervisor, Executive Director*) if such gifts are a nominal expression of courtesy or appreciation, are not such as to bring suspicion on the employee's objectivity and impartiality and do not compromise the integrity of *Agency XYZ*.

No employee shall sell goods or services to a client(s) nor accept money or loans from a client(s).

Related Parties

No employee of *Agency XYZ* shall hire, engage or contract with a related party (i.e., a family member or close personal or business associate) to supply labour, materials or services to *Agency XYZ*, whether for a fee, remuneration or other consideration. If the employee feels a related-party transaction is in the best interests of the organization she shall immediately refer the matter to the (*identify who e.g., Executive Director, supervisor*) for decision and shall take no further part in it.

Other Remunerative Employment

Employees may engage in remunerative employment with another employer, carry on a business, or receive remuneration from public funds for activities outside their position provided that:

- It does not interfere with the performance of their duties as a staff member;
- It does not bring *Agency XYZ* into disrepute;
- It is not performed in such a way as to appear to be an official act or to represent the organization's opinion or policy;
- It does not involve the use of *Agency XYZ's* premises, services, equipment or supplies to which the staff member has access by virtue of their employment.

Avoiding Conflict of Interest Allegations

Employees should not place themselves in a situation where they are under obligation to any person who might benefit from, or seek to gain, special consideration or favour. The honesty and impartiality of employees must be above suspicion.

If a potential conflict exists because of an employee's personal related interest in a matter, the employee shall advise their supervisor immediately.

It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to immediately discuss any personal conflict of interest with the [Agency XYZ](#) Board of Directors. Senior managers must comply with the conflict of interest provisions under the [Societies Act \(British Columbia\)](#) - See section 62.

An intentional failure to declare a real or apparent conflict of interest may be cause for discipline up to and including dismissal.

This policy is intended to supplement, but not replace, any applicable standards of practice outlined by the various accreditation and registration boards that govern our professions in regards to conflicts of interest.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

2.5. Conflict of Interest Policy – Board of Directors

Rationale: Non-profits such as [Agency XYZ](#) have a role in protecting the public interest. Any erosion in public confidence and the integrity and accountability of [Agency XYZ](#) is particularly harmful. It is crucial that all Board professional, personal, and occupational interests do not affect their judgment, competence or relationships with those they serve or with whom they do business and that all activities and responsibilities are conducted in an atmosphere that is free of actual or apparent conflicts of interest.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all Board members are well informed of what constitutes a conflict of interest, raise awareness, and encourage disclosure and discussion of anything that may be a conflict during the course of their tenure. This will protect the integrity of [Agency XYZ](#), the decision-making process and enable the public and women we serve to have confidence in the integrity, intentions and actions of the management, employees, board members and volunteers.

Policy Board members of [Agency XYZ](#) are expected to act in the best interests of [Agency XYZ](#) and its clients and adhere to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity.

Board members must keep their role as private citizens separate and distinct from their responsibilities associated with [Agency XYZ](#). Personal gain shall not conflict with duty to [Agency XYZ](#).

A conflict of interest may be apparent, perceived, potential or real and can arise in a personal or professional context and may be financial or otherwise.

Any Board member is in a conflict of interest when the Board member has a direct or indirect material interest in a matter to be considered by the board, including but not limited to a board member:

- who could benefit from a contract or transaction with [Agency XYZ](#);
- who could indirectly benefit (such as through an immediate family member) from a contract or transaction between [Agency XYZ](#) and a family member or company in which they have an interest;
- who could benefit personally, in a way generally unavailable to others, from any decision of the board, or as a result of any confidential information he or she receives as a Board member;
- who serves as a Board member, officer or employee of another organization

- whose interests are conflicting or competing with those of [Agency XYZ](#).
- *(Add other conflicts)*

All directors will comply with this policy and the conflict of interest provisions under the [Societies Act \(British Columbia\)](#).

Related Parties

Board members' relatives may be employed by [Agency XYZ](#) if there is no direct working or reporting relationship between the employee and the Board or any committee on which the related Board member serves. No Board member may participate in a hiring decision if a relative has applied for the position.

Property

Any Board member who owns, or has an interest in, any land, building, lease or mortgage that is offered for sale or assignment to [Agency XYZ](#) shall declare that interest at the first opportunity and shall not discuss or vote on any matter pertaining to it. No Board member shall use her position, or knowledge gained from the position, to acquire such an interest in a way that gives the Board member an advantage over the general public.

Avoiding Conflict of Interest Allegations

Unless a conflict is significant, ongoing or both, the Board member in conflict need not resign from the board, but must:

- declare the conflict fully and promptly including the nature and extent of the Board member's interest;
- not participate in any discussions regarding the matter;
- leave the Board meeting prior to the Board's discussing or voting on the matter;
- abstain from voting on the matter and matters related to it; and,
- refrain from any action intended to influence the discussion or vote.

Any Board member who is in a significant or ongoing conflict, or both, between her personal interests and the interests of the organization must remedy the conflict or resign from the Board.

Any situation that may give the appearance of a conflict of interest must be declared and treated as if it were an actual conflict.

Intentional failure to declare a real or apparent conflict of interest may be cause for dismissal from the board.

A Board member's disclosure of a conflict of interest must be evidenced in at least one of the following records:

- the minutes of a Board meeting;
- a consent resolution of Board members; or
- a written record addressed to the Board members and delivered to the registered office of *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

Safety and Security Policy Templates

SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICY

3.0. General Safety and Security

Rationale: It is the duty of *Agency XYZ* to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practical, that all employees, volunteers and program participants are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. *Agency XYZ* believes that safety and the prevention of accidents, injury or loss is essential to the operation of *Agency XYZ*. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all staff are aware of the safety and security policies and protocols which are to be employed to promote the personal health and safety of employees, volunteers and the program participants they serve.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all women and their dependents accessing its services and programs. This includes, but is not limited to, personal safety, providing a safe and secure place to store belongings, cleanliness and creating a welcoming atmosphere.

Agency XYZ will ensure that systems, policies and procedures are in place and reviewed regularly (*define frequency of review*) to promote the highest level of safety and security. The safety and security policies and procedures are in accordance with current Occupational Health and Safety Regulations contained within the Workers Compensation Act.

Agency XYZ will maintain their facilities and services, including having effective safety and security measures.

All staff, clients and visitors will be oriented on the implementation of applicable safety and security policies and procedures.

Agency XYZ is committed to the following protocols to promote the safety and security of clients, visitors, staff and volunteers. (*Include statements about:*)

- *Security/alarm systems*
- *Security checks (e.g., frequency)*
- *Working alone policy and procedure*
- *Answering of phones*

- *Staffing (e.g., 24 hours a day)*
- *Security of staff office*
- *Front door security (e.g., Who opens door, Procedures if person unidentified)*
- *Staff criminal record checks (See [Safety and Security, Criminal Record Checks Policy 3.1](#))*
- *Emergency management and service continuity procedures (See [Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policies 5.0 – 5.16](#))*
- *Security and confidentiality of client information*
- *The use of hazardous cleaning materials that are in accordance with Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) guidelines)*

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICY

3.1. Criminal Record Checks

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* has a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to secure the health and safety of employees, volunteers and the women and their dependents they serve. Criminal records checks of all potential employees, volunteers and practicum students promotes a safe environment for employees and for the women and their dependents served by *Agency XYZ*.

Furthermore, *Agency XYZ* is committed to a hiring process that ensures equal opportunity for potential candidates and a fair and consistent selection process that is consistent with employment legislation and good practice and free from discriminatory practices. The aim of this policy is then two-fold: To promote the safety of employees, volunteers and the women and their dependents served by *Agency XYZ*; and, to provide clarity in regards to hiring decisions where a criminal record exists. This written policy and procedures as to how *Agency XYZ* will proceed with criminal record checks and deal with the results, will eliminate confusion or suspicion of unfair treatment or discrimination when selecting and hiring.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all women and children accessing its services and programs and ensures that all potential employees, volunteers and practicum students working with children and/or vulnerable adults, or any employee as required by contract, shall have completed a vulnerable sector criminal record check according to the requirements of the Criminal Records Review Act (RSBC1996) Chapter 86, prior to the commencement of employment and *(define frequency of subsequent criminal record checks e.g., every five years)* thereafter.

Agency XYZ must ensure that all potential employees, volunteers and practicum students working with children and/or vulnerable adults, or any employee as required by contract, are aware that appointment to the position is dependent upon a criminal record check.

Results from the criminal check will be treated as confidential for all candidates. The criminal record check will become part of the employees file for the successful candidate. For the unsuccessful candidates the record checks are destroyed.

Criminal Record

When the results of the criminal record check indicate that there is a criminal record that is relevant to the position applied for, a review must take place with respect to the applicant's suitability for appointment. If the decision is to hire the individual with a criminal record, subsequent criminal record checks will occur (*indicate frequency*), in accordance with provincial and federal requirements.

Any change to an employee's criminal record status must be reported to the employee's supervisor or Executive Director immediately. This includes being charged with an offence, whether a conviction has been determined. An employee of *Agency XYZ* who is convicted of a criminal offence or who engages in criminal activity, where the offence or activity harms or compromises the reputation or position of *Agency XYZ*, or where the offence or activity interferes with an employee's ability to perform his/her duties and responsibilities, may be subject to termination of employment.

Agency XYZ will keep evidence on file that the criminal record checks were completed.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICY

3.2. Client Valuables and Personal Effects

Rationale: As a communal living environment, *Agency XYZ* recognizes the potential for loss and/or theft of valuables and belongings. To safeguard against such occurrences and the potential conflict that may result, *Agency XYZ* will provide program participants with a safe and secure place to store their belongings.

Agency XYZ also recognizes that the lives of women with experiences of abuse can be tumultuous and that women may leave *Agency XYZ* abruptly, either voluntarily or involuntarily. This can result in women and their dependents leaving valuables or personal effects at *Agency XYZ*. The aims of this policy are to: promote the safe keeping of program participants valuables; to relieve *Agency XYZ* of responsibility when the loss, damage or destruction of women's belongings, or those of their dependents, occurs while residing at *Agency XYZ*; and to clarify procedure when valuables or personal effects are left at *Agency XYZ* after departure.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to fostering a safe and secure environment for women, their dependents and their belongings. However, *Agency XYZ* is not responsible for the loss, damage or destruction of women's belongings, or those of their dependents, while they are residing in *Agency XYZ*.

Security of Client Valuables and Personal Effects

Agency XYZ will provide all program participants with a safe and secure place (*indicate where e.g., locker*) to store their belongings.

Unclaimed Client Valuables and Personal Effects

When program participants leave valuables or personal effects at *Agency XYZ* after departure, reasonable attempts will be made to contact her. If after 30 days no contact has been made, and/or no attempts have been made on behalf of the woman to retrieve her belongings, they will be: *[Indicate what will be done with the belongings e.g., stored for (define timeframe e.g., 3 months); disposed of; or donated to (indicate where)]*.

When making the decision what to do with the program participants' belongings, *Agency XYZ* will take into consideration factors such as the value of

the item(s), ethical considerations, conflicts of interest and costs associated with storage, disposal or donation (*add any additional considerations*).

If a pet(s) is left behind, refer to the [Abandoned Pets Policy 1.9](#).

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICY

3.3. Medication Management Policy

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes that experiences of abuse may result in multiple and compounding mental, emotional and physical health impacts. The use of substances, including prescription and over the counter medications can assist women to cope with the impacts of their experiences of abuse. Recognizing this, *Agency XYZ* provides women with a safe and secure place to store their medications. The medications are the property of the program participant and therefore the administration of the medication is the responsibility of the program participant. Furthermore, the BC Pharmacists, [Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act](#) prohibits anyone who is not licensed as a pharmacist from dispensing a “limited access drug.”

The aim of this policy is to ensure that women have a safe place to store their medications, are empowered and have control over their medications while ensuring that they are safely out of the reach of other residents of *Agency XYZ*.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* acknowledges a woman’s right to be able to store and dispense her own medication(s). *Agency XYZ* will provide women with a safe and secure place (*indicate where e.g., lock box in her room*) to store their medications. Medications should only be used by the program participant to whom they are prescribed and be kept out of reach of children. Shared use of medications between program participants is not permitted.

Staff will support program participants who express their need for assistance/reminders to take medication.

If a program participant has medications stored unsafely on-site, staff will have a conversation with the woman to talk about why the guidelines are in place and ask how best to support her to adhere to them (e.g., using provided lockboxes or storing medications in a safe central location).

If *Agency XYZ* staff become concerned that a program participant is currently, or at risk of, overmedicating or self-harm, staff will have a discussion with them about their concerns and offer to provide assistance with her prescription medication dosages.

If a program participants use of medications results in safety or cooperative living concerns, they will be discussed with the resident and, if concerns continue, could result in an end of stay.

Procedures⁶:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

⁶ Include client and staff guidelines for self-administration of medication (e.g., the labeling, storage and access of medications; procedures when a woman has vials of multiple mixed pills; procedures for talking with and supporting a woman's autonomy and health if staff notice a woman is not taking her medication or is taking too much or too little of her medication).

Health and Safety Policy Templates

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

4.0. Occupational Health and Safety

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* recognizes that all employees are entitled to work in a healthy and safe environment and have the right to be informed of any hazards in the workplace. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all employees are aware of their obligation to follow *Agency XYZ* guidelines and safe work procedures and of the training they are entitled to promote personal safety, the safety of colleagues and of the program participants accessing *Agency XYZ* services and programs.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to the health, safety and wellness of its employees and to providing a healthy and safe environment that minimizes the risk of workplace injuries, accidents and illness. *Agency XYZ* is responsible for providing employees with adequate instruction and training in health and safety and for addressing unsafe situations in a timely, effective manner. *Agency XYZ's* Occupational Health and Safety Program shall be developed and administered in accordance with WorkSafe B.C. Regulations. All employees are required to know and follow *Agency XYZ's* guidelines and safe work procedures.

Occupational Health and Safety Representative/Committee

A Health and Safety Committee/Health & Safety Representative shall be established and maintained (*define number of employees on the committee and how they are selected*). The Health & Safety Representative/Committee is responsible for addressing any and all employee safety concerns at *Agency XYZ*, ensuring that employees have a safe and healthy workplace.

The committee will meet (*define frequency e.g., monthly or as needed*). Minutes of each Health and Safety meeting will be posted/saved on *Agency XYZ's* (*insert location e.g., OH&S bulletin boards*).

An inspection of all *Agency XYZ* work environments will take place a minimum (*define frequency*).

The OH&S Representative/Committee shall comply with and enforce all health and safety regulations and provisions within the WorkSafe B.C., and the

provisions under W.H.M.I.S. (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System).

All Health and Safety equipment will be regularly maintained and supplies replenished as required.

Hazardous Materials

Agency XYZ will ensure that all employees are trained in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHIMS) and provided education for any hazardous materials they may come in contact with while carrying out their work responsibilities.

Standard First Aid and CPR

[Where funded for Transition Houses] *Agency XYZ* will ensure that one staff member on duty is certified in Standard First Aid and the appropriate Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) level of training (CPR Level B is required for agencies serving children) at all times. Where it is applicable to an employee's position, *Agency XYZ* is responsible for providing such employee with First Aid and CPR training.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

4.1 Client Health and Wellbeing

Rationale: Women with experiences of abuse have often lived in an unsafe environment where they had little control over their environment and the risks within it. *Agency XYZ* believes that the safety and security of women and children accessing its services is paramount. The aim of this policy is to ensure employees are aware of their duty to promote a healthy and safe emotional and physical environment and to address unsafe situations in a timely effective manner.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to the health, safety and wellness of program participants accessing its services and to providing a healthy and safe environment that minimizes the risk of injuries, accidents and illness. Management and employees of *Agency XYZ* are responsible for addressing unsafe situations in a timely and effective manner.

When Services are Delivered in a Development Over Which *Agency XYZ* Does Not Have Full Control

When services are delivered in a development over which the organization does not have full control (e.g., hotel room), management and employees of *Agency XYZ* will do their due diligence in promoting a healthy and safe environment. This includes being familiar with the health and safety policies of the development and ensuring women are oriented to them (e.g., fire regulations and procedures, guest or client privacy protections and confidentiality policies).

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

4.2. Food Handling

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* is accountable for the safe handling and preparation of food and can fulfill this responsibility by conforming to the legislated regulations and best practice guidelines for food safety.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* will ensure that all food handling, preparation, storage and serving is in accordance with the [Food Premises Regulation of the Health Act](#) (or successor legislation). In the event that this legislation does not apply, *Agency XYZ* will follow accepted best practice guidelines for food safety.

Agency XYZ will ensure that all individuals handling food have the level of training on food safety, nutritional standards and food handling that is required by provincial regulations. Staff will follow the procedures for safe handling and preparation of food. *Agency XYZ* will ensure women have access to information about food safety by *(insert methods of sharing information e.g., hanging posters in kitchen areas, discussing food safety at resident meetings)*.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

4.3. Standards of Maintenance - Buildings, Grounds, Units

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of employees and program participants at all times. The maintenance of *Agency XYZ's* buildings, grounds and units is important not only for the program participants, employees and volunteers, but benefits every person who enters the *Agency XYZ* as well as prolonging the life of the buildings and maintaining them in a state of good repair.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* will take all necessary steps to keep the property and premises well maintained, clean, safe and free from hazards. It will maintain the development's mechanical systems in a working order sufficient to provide hot water, heating and ventilation. *Agency XYZ* will ensure that the facilities meet all current building and zone requirements, complies with all legal requirements and acts promptly when repairs are necessary.

The standards of maintenance, health and safety required by law shall be the absolute minimum standards of *Agency XYZ*. *Agency XYZ* will comply with any municipal or regional by-laws regulating water use, snow removal or other aspects of property maintenance.

Agency XYZ will ensure that there is a financial contingency plan built into their financial policies that includes funds being put aside annually and built up for regular maintenance and unexpected repairs.

If *Agency XYZ* delivers services in a facility over which they do not have full control (e.g., a hotel room) *Agency XYZ* will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the facility meets the following guidelines:

- i. clean, safe and free from hazards;
- ii. mechanical systems are maintained and in a working order sufficient to provide hot water, heating and ventilation;
- iii. meet all current building and zoning regulations;
- iv. have a pest control, inspection and treatment plan in place to deal with any outbreaks of pests;
- v. comply with fire regulations and fire safety measures.

Grounds Keeping

Agency XYZ will manage snow and ice removal in order to:

- Comply with municipal bylaws for snow removal and ice treatment.
- Maintain common walkways and egresses to meet minimum safety and access requirements for residents and emergency services.
- Maintain site surface drainage.
- Manage ice and snow build-up on building envelope (e.g., roofs, overhangs, icicle removal).

Building Maintenance

Agency XYZ will maintain routine and preventive maintenance programs on their building(s) including:

- Building exteriors will be cleaned regularly and show no signs of decay or disrepair and grounds will be kept free of litter and any unsightly material.
- Exterior maintenance will include roof drain and gutter cleaning, cyclical window washing, care and maintenance of exterior finishes, re-lamp, graffiti removal and identification/elimination of hazards.
- Interior maintenance will include mechanical and electrical systems, HVAC, elevators, interior finishes, containment and identification/elimination of hazards, key storage systems, lock devices, enter-phone systems, fire annunciation and sprinkler systems, video surveillance systems, and alarm systems.
- Building components, machinery and fire protection equipment will be inspected and/or serviced at least annually at an appropriate time of year for the specific component.

Agency XYZ will comply with government regulated waste management practices including:

- Participate in recycling and other waste management programs where applicable.
- Provide routine waste removal service (e.g., litter pick-up, abandoned household goods)
- Administer a pest management program.

Agency XYZ will provide routine and cyclical cleaning to common areas to achieve the objectives of BC Housing cleaning standards. *Agency XYZ* will comply with legislated standards governing storage, usage of products and equipment, and personal protection equipment.

Energy Management

Agency XYZ will repair and replace equipment with Energy Star rated products and maintain the facilities so that its water and energy consumption does not increase over time. *Agency XYZ* will inspect work areas regularly to check safety hazards are identified and corrected.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

4.4. Pest Control, Inspection and Treatment Plan

Rationale: A pest infestation has implications for an entire building, the employees and the program participants residing in the building. Pest control is an integral component to providing safe and comfortable housing.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to maintaining a healthy and pest free environment and has a pest control, inspection and treatment plan in place to deal with any outbreaks of pests. Pest inspections will occur *(define how frequently)*.

Agency XYZ will adopt procedures to recognize and address existing and/or potential infestation and be proactive to prevent infestation.

Agency XYZ will ensure that employees and program participants are aware of the pest control policy and procedures and are active in maintaining a healthy and pest free environment.

In the event that pests are reported (e.g., lice, scabies, bed bugs) effective and efficient control procedures and treatment plan will be initiated as promptly as possible. *Agency XYZ* will communicate; treat and follow up in a timely manner and in accordance with the policy and procedures.

Agency XYZ recognizes its legal obligation to take necessary measures to mitigate the risk of pest infestation and will engage only licensed pest control operators who meet regulatory requirements.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

4.5. Fire Regulations

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* believes that the safety of employees and the program participants that they serve is paramount. The aim of this policy is to ensure that employees and all individuals accessing services are aware of the systems, policies and procedures related to fire safety and thus promote a high level of safety.

Policy: *Agency XYZ* endeavors to protect all persons on its premises from the hazards of fire and is committed to ensuring that applicable fire protection codes and internal standards are respected. Specifically, *Agency XYZ* is committed to ensuring:

- i. that in case of fire, adequate means of exit exists for all persons on the premises;
- ii. all doorways and fire exits are correctly maintained, kept free of obstructions and available for safe and effective use at all times;
- iii. that all fire detection and annunciation equipment required to give warning in the event of a fire is properly installed and maintained;
- iv. that all equipment for containing or fighting fire (e.g., fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers) comply with all applicable codes and standard and are maintained in proper working order;
- v. that appropriate fire safety training is developed and provided to all staff, including knowledge of [fire safety policies](#) and practices and [evacuation policy](#) and procedures;
- vi. that all premises and fire protection devices receive a fire safety inspection at reasonable intervals that are reflective of the BC Fire Code regulations⁷.
- vii. *agency XYZ* will; comply with fire regulations and that the following fire safety measures are taken;

⁷ The B.C. Fire Code Regulations require that fire protection devices be maintained in operating condition in accordance with Part 6 & 7 of the BC Fire Code <https://free.bcpublications.ca/civix/content/public/bcfc2018/1929151251/774163422/?xsl=/templates/browse.xsl>. In most cases the Fire Code does not specify in detail the necessary inspection, maintenance, and testing procedures; instead, it references standards such as those developed by the National Fire Protection Association, Canadian Standards Association, and Underwriters Laboratories of Canada.

- a. retain records on site pertaining to the annual inspection, testing and maintenance of fire protection systems including smoke alarms, and the review of the Fire Safety Plan⁸.
 - b. post the annual Fire Inspection Certificate (including any remedial action plans if necessary).
- viii. maintain a Fire Safety Plan (See Policy 5.1. Building Fire) that includes policies and for emergency preparedness and response procedures, such as:
 - a. control of combustibles around the perimeter of buildings;
 - b. protection of emergency equipment; and
 - c. storage and housekeeping.
- ix. that all staff and volunteers are aware of and comply with this policy; and,
- x. that the Fire Safety Plan is posted and publicized to clients and included in their orientation, including knowledge of location of fire exits, and requests to help keep all exits clear of obstructions.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

⁸ Also referred to in this document as Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Building Fire.

Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy Templates

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE CONTINUITY POLICY

5.0. Emergency Management and Service Continuity

Rationale: *Agency XYZ* believes that the protection and safety of employees, volunteers and the women and children it serves is of paramount concern. It is also committed to protecting the property and environment of the organization. The aim of the Emergency Management & Service Continuity (EMSC) Program Policy is to provide a framework and guiding principles for the organization and its employees to respond effectively to an emergency, continue to provide essential services, and then resume full operations. Thereby enhancing personal safety and the safety and security of employees, volunteers and the program participants and their dependents using the services of the organization.

Agency XYZ recognizes climate change and its implications for communities, organizations and individuals. As such, Women's Transition Housing and Support Programs' Emergency Management & Service Continuity planning includes climate risk management and proactive measures to mitigate the potential impacts of climate change risks and disasters on the organization and its employees, volunteers and program participants through relevant and effective plans.

Emergency Management and Service Continuity planning does not historically take into account intersectionality and how people may be impacted differently due to their gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, ability and immigration status. This policy and all of *Agency XYZ's* Emergency Management and Service Continuity Program documents have been developed using Gender Based Analysis Plus to ensure that they are inclusive and applicable to the lived realities of women with experiences of violence.

Policy: **Risk Management**

Agency XYZ will:

- i. Identify, prepare, and maintain an Emergency Management and Service Continuity Program to ensure that they can regain operational capability and continue to deliver critical services, so far as it is reasonably practicable, when faced with a disaster or emergency.
- ii. Establish telecommunications with reliable message capabilities during office hours, and a 24-hour emergency line.
- iii. Post the annual Fire Inspection Certificate (including any remedial action plans if necessary).
- iv. Not disturb hazardous materials that may be present at their facilities but are safe in their present state (e.g., walls, ceiling, floors or exterior), without first accessing any known inventories or ensuring a hazmat assessment is conducted in the area planned for disturbance or renovation. *Agency XYZ*, its employees and/or contractors will follow safe work procedures, including controlling any hazard that poses a health and safety concern to persons at the organization.
- v. Follow BC Housing's purchasing guidelines regarding all subcontractors and hired services maintain minimum liability coverage.
- vi. Where subcontractors are hired, provide contract administration and follow BC Housing specifications in doing so.
- vii. Where there is only one service provider and alternative services cannot be obtained, *Agency XYZ* will contact BC Housing for approval.

Emergency Management and Service Continuity Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Leadership will provide leadership, commitment and assume overall EMSC Program responsibility and authority.

An *EMSC Program Coordinator* will be appointed to head the EMSC Team and lead the development, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance of the EMSC Program.

Emergency Management & Service Continuity (EMSC) Team

Agency XYZ will establish an EMSC Team, ideally with representation from a variety of staff positions in *Agency XYZ*. The EMSC Team will have the full support and commitment of Senior Leadership for the EMSC Program process and have adequate resources to fulfill their responsibilities. The EMSC Program Coordinator will be a member of this team. The EMSC Team will report to the Executive Director and hold the following responsibilities:

- i. Ensure that appropriate policies, plans, and procedures are in place to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from an adverse

- risk event as well as direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants.
- ii. Oversee and facilitate the Risk Assessment.
 - iii. Assume authority for the carrying out of the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan in the event of an adverse risk event.
 - iv. Ensure that staff and volunteers are adequately trained in the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Program and the relevant documentation.
 - v. Ensure that all EMSC Program documentation is up to date and accurate and is regularly monitored, exercised and shared with staff and community partners as required.
 - vi. Liaise with the local and/or regional community Emergency Managers (i.e., informal networking, presentations, information sharing) to ensure that community plans and practices are aligned with those of the organization and that the needs of the women, children and youth experiencing violence, and at risk of violence, are taken into account in the community emergency plans.
 - vii. Manage the response to an adverse risk event and execute the actions as documented in the EMSC Plan if activated.
 - viii. Monitor the maintenance of the organization buildings, systems and equipment to ensure that potential dangers are prevented from occurring and handled in a timely manner, when identified. This should include scheduled testing of critical systems and equipment.

EMSC Program Planning Components

A. Emergency Management & Service Continuity (EMSC) Program Guidelines
Agency XYZ will follow the [EMSC on-line toolkit](#) specifically built to assist with the development of EMSC plans and procedures. This step-by-step process provides instructions, samples and templates for addressing how to mitigate, prepare, respond, continue, and eventually recover from adverse risk events, to resume services and programs.

B. Emergency Management & Service Continuity (EMSC) Plan
Agency XYZ will develop, implement, and maintain an Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan. The EMSC Plan will direct the actions of staff, volunteers and residents in the event of an adverse risk event. The development of the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan will follow the four pillars of Emergency Management: Prevention and Mitigation; Preparedness;

Response; and Recovery; and ideally include a process for cooperation, collaboration and communication strategies with municipal, Indigenous, regional, Provincial and Federal Emergency Management officials' efforts to maintain an integrated response during a disaster or emergency situation.

Agency XYZ will work with community partners and emergency managers in advance to develop a relevant and viable Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan and to ensure community response plans are inclusive of the unique needs and experiences of violence against women organizations and women, children and youth experiencing violence, or at risk of violence, during an adverse risk event.

The Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan will include a number of elements, such as:

- Facility and service description.
- Reference to this Policy.
- Defined roles and responsibilities, line of authority and designated alternates.
- EMSC team members.
- Scope of potential emergencies/disasters (i.e., based on results of the risk assessment).
- Site-specific emergency preparedness and response procedures.
- Emergency contact lists for staff, volunteers, clients, partner agencies and other key stakeholders.
- Plans for collaboration and coordination with partners.
- Communication systems, procedures and protocols (internal and external).
- Media relations.
- Strategies and procedures for continuity of critical services and programs.
- Relocation and transportation strategies.
- Logistics support and resource requirements.
- Alternate strategies and arrangements with key dependencies (e.g., partner agencies, vendors/suppliers).
- Defined process for training and exercising on a regular basis.
- Defined process for maintenance of the EMSC Plan.

The Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan is meant as a guide and can be flexible and adaptable to be effective in different types of adverse risk events.

C. Risk Assessment

Agency XYZ will conduct a risk assessment that includes risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation.

The risk identification will encompass identifying, recognizing and describing risk sources that could disrupt *Agency XYZ's* services and program. The risk analysis will consider the causes and sources of risks, their positive and negative consequences and the likelihood of those consequences, should they occur, on the *Agency XYZ's* operations, residents, staff, community and associated stakeholders, related infrastructure and the environment.

The risk evaluation will compare the results of the risk analysis with internal and external risk criteria to determine whether the risk impacts or its likelihood is acceptable or tolerable to *Agency XYZ*.

Agency XYZ will institute an ongoing risk assessment process to monitor the sources of risk.

D. Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Procedures

Once the risk assessment is completed and Leadership has approved the findings, *Agency XYZ* will develop Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) procedures to address the identified potential adverse risk events. These procedures may include actions to prepare for, respond to and recover from the event. It will be necessary to train and drill/exercise staff on how to respond to these adverse risks event using the Emergency Preparedness and Response procedures.

E. Service Continuity Planning

In the event of an adverse risk event, *Agency XYZ* will aim to continue to be open to the public. However, there may be times when it is not safe for staff or program participants to continue to provide services onsite and services need to be relocated. If the organization is unable to continue service delivery, *Agency XYZ* will be reopened, and services resumed only after emergency officials and the EMSC Team have deemed that it is safe to do so. In determining when facilities will reopen and services resume, the EMSC Team will consider the stabilization of the building and the safety and capacity of staff.

Following an adverse risk event, a revised schedule of services may be offered in alignment with increased responsibilities, reduced capacity, and what can safely be offered. In some cases, it may be possible to relocate residents to an alternate location thereby continuing to provide essential services. Clear direction will be provided regarding delegating of authority and succession planning. Reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that the documents required to ensure continuity of service are protected and backed up and stored off-site.

Agency XYZ is committed to responding to the impacts of adverse risk events on staff and residents. *Agency XYZ* will ensure necessary supports are in place as part of the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Program so that, when needed, staff are able to access wellness services, counselling and support they need.

F. Training & Exercising

Staff Training

All employees of *Agency XYZ* will be oriented to, trained and knowledgeable about the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Program. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that all staff are familiar with their roles and that regular training, drills and exercises take place.

In the event of an adverse risk event (e.g., fire, flood, earthquake, wildfire, severe weather, extreme heat, air quality or utility failure), staff are to respond immediately and ensure program participant and personal safety to the best of their ability. *Agency XYZ* will train staff and other key members of the community on their Emergency Management & Service Continuity Program and other relevant plans, policies and procedures. *Agency XYZ* will also provide information and encouragement to staff about personal emergency preparedness.

Drills & Exercises

Agency XYZ will regularly exercise the Emergency Management & Service Continuity (EMSC) Plan and test Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures by engaging staff and, when appropriate, residents in emergency drills and exercises. Exercising all aspects of a plan is considered best practice as this will help *Agency XYZ* to practice and identify ways to refine and improve existing plans and procedures.

The EMSC Program Coordinator is responsible to ensure that exercises and drills are scheduled. Drills will be conducted regularly as deemed appropriate by the EMSC Team. Exercises of the EMSC Plan will be conducted at least annually using a variety of exercise formats and approaches to familiarize staff with their roles and responsibilities and validate the contents of the Plan using realistic risk scenarios.

Following every drill/exercise, the EMSC Team will hold a review meeting to identify what went well, what should be improved or considered, and what may be a better way to do tasks or practice them. The EMSC Team will identify goals and objectives for corrective actions or addressing new issues identified; and will update the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Program including any related documentation.

G. Maintenance

Agency XYZ will review the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Program including all documentation at least annually or when significant changes occur that would impact the validity of its plans such as:

- new hazards are identified or existing hazards change;
- organizational changes including staff contact information;
- relocation or addition of new buildings;
- new or changes to services or programs;
- computer system changes;
- issues identified after training, drills, or exercises;
- after an actual adverse risk event occurs;
- legislation or regulation changes;
- facilities / Infrastructure changes; or,
- funding or budget-level changes.

As climate changes are projected to intensify in the future, the organization will regularly revisit and update its Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan to incorporate all potential climate scenarios and update with emerging information.

The Emergency Management & Service Continuity Program is a sustainable process that requires all related documentation to be signed off by the Leadership. *Agency XYZ* will conduct scheduled evaluations to validate conformance to strategies, plans and procedures and have the results documented. *Agency XYZ* will conduct audits and reviews at planned intervals to determine conformance and effectiveness of the implementation and

maintenance of the EMSC Program and its planning components. *Agency XYZ* will ensure that the EMSC Program review process incorporates ongoing analysis and evaluation, as well as corrective action planning and review.

H. Emergency Supplies

Agency XYZ will establish emergency supplies and equipment that are readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by it. Employees will be orientated to the location and the use of emergency supplies and equipment. The emergency supplies will be sufficient to support all staff and program participants for at least 72 hours.

I. Emergency Responders

During an adverse risk event where life, safety or property are at risk, *Agency XYZ* will first contact emergency service authorities such as police, the fire department, or ambulance. Directions provided by first responders will be followed under all circumstances, even if they differ from what is outlined in the organization's Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan.

As the adverse risk event continues and emergency service authorities are present for an extended period of time, a liaison between *Agency XYZ's* EMSC Team and emergency service authorities will be established to ensure both parties work cooperatively and have the access and information they need to fulfill their responsibilities.

Outside assistance from local fire, ambulance, police, and emergency managers will be available in most serious incidents, but because it takes time to request and dispatch external assistance, it is essential for staff of *Agency XYZ* to be prepared to carry out the initial emergency response until first responders arrive.

Staff, leadership and the EMSC Team at *Agency XYZ* will be prepared to make emergency response decisions when required, without being able to count on input or guidance from first responders.

J. Warnings and Alarms

Agency XYZ will ensure that an alarm system adequate to warn staff, volunteers and program participants when there is an adverse risk event on-site, is maintained, and regularly tested. *Agency XYZ* will ensure that its staff have an adequate knowledge of alarm system operations and protocols as they relate to their responsibilities in an adverse risk event and will make reasonable efforts

to ensure communication protocols are in place between its staff and alarm system service providers.

Agency XYZ will assign responsibility to a designated staff member (EMSC Program Coordinator or member of the EMSC Team) to monitor weather and climate information for advance warning of a natural disaster. When forewarning of an emergency or disaster is obtained, *Agency XYZ* will take additional measures to ensure the safety of people and the security of its buildings as time allows and the threat requires. This may include the cancelling of on-site or off-site programs and/or the evacuation of the building(s) as deemed appropriate by the EMSC Team. Staff will be provided with the authority to make changes to programming activities off-site when an emergent situation requires that a program be cancelled, rescheduled, relocated or otherwise changed to ensure the safety of program participants and staff. Staff and volunteers will be provided training for recognizing and responding to adverse risk events when conducting programming on- and off-site.

K. Human Resources

Agency XYZ will ensure that, at minimum, Human Resources policies are updated and reflect necessary considerations for staff during and post an adverse risk event. These may include:

- Staff contact information and communications plan: A clear communication plan to ensure employees (both on- and off-site) of *Agency XYZ* will be notified of an adverse risk event and appropriate actions to take by the EMSC Team.
- Staff training: All staff will be oriented and trained on *Agency XYZ's* EMSC plan and their roles and responsibilities during an adverse risk event.
- Staff hours: When necessary, the organization will accommodate staff (i.e., flexible work schedules and working remotely) while also, when safe and appropriate, continuing to operate and offer services to the public.
- Staff vacation and leave: Clear policies will reflect staff entitlement and access to leave, particularly sick leave if needed during and/or after an adverse risk event to care for themselves or family members.
- Health and wellness: *Agency XYZ* will ensure that wellness and counselling support is available for staff post-adverse risk event.

L. Security

Agency XYZ will undertake reasonable measures to ensure the security of staff, volunteers, program participants and its building(s). In the case of an adverse

risk event that threatens human safety or human life, first responders will be contacted immediately. Staff will provide information and assistance to first responders as required, and directions provided by first responders will be followed.

M. Insurance

Agency XYZ will ensure that sufficient insurance is maintained to mitigate emergency and disaster related risks with respect to:

- General Liability
- Workers' Compensation coverage
- Property (including building damage and repair or replacement of assets, including but not limited to, furniture, equipment, materials and supplies)
- Cyber Insurance
- Interruption of Service (including relocation spaces for staff and program participants and setting up office and communication systems) need to investigate whether agencies would consider business interruption policy from their insurance provider

Agency XYZ assigns responsibility to a designated staff member (i.e., EMSC Program Coordinator or members of the EMSC Team) to regularly monitor that insurance coverage is sufficient to meet the organization's needs and that the terms and scope of the insurance policies are understood and administered appropriately in an adverse risk event.

N. External Aid and Resources

Agency XYZ will take reasonable steps to establish relationships with other organizations—commercial, public, not-for-profit, foundation, charity, and government -- that could provide assistance in the of case an adverse risk event. Whenever possible, these relationships will be established in advance of an adverse risk event and contact information and familiarity with services available should be maintained by the EMSC Program Coordinator to ensure quick access in case of an emergency. This will be documented in the Emergency Management & Service Continuity Plan.

External aid and resources could include:

- space for displaced program participants;
- space for an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC);
- transportation of staff and residents;

- specialized services and resources for ensuring continuity of essential services;
- funding for stabilization, salvage and restoration, including disaster recovery services; and,
- funding and support for preventive measures.

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.1. Building Fire

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of [Agency XYZ](#) to protect to the best of their ability the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. [Agency XYZ](#) and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement and monitor Building Fire Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers, residents and program participants in the event of a building fire.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by [Agency XYZ](#) to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a building fire and possible evacuation. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by [Agency XYZ](#).

Fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and other fire safety equipment will all comply with applicable codes and standards and will be inspected at least annually to ensure they are in working order.

Storage of flammable materials will be supervised by an EMSC Team member and conform with municipal by-laws and fire codes. Nothing will be stored in a way that might invalidate [Agency XYZ's](#) insurance policy.

All [Agency XYZ](#) buildings will have an emergency [plan for evacuating](#) and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. [Agency XYZ](#) will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at [Agency XYZ](#).

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Building Fire](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.2. Flood

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: Flooding is common in BC and happens almost annually in some parts of the province. Therefore, it is critical to know what to do. It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement and monitor a Flood Preparedness Plan and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of a flood. *Agency XYZ* will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, volunteers and program participants from the potential effects of a flood.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours are readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a flood. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a flood or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Flood](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.3. Evacuation of the Building

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect to the best of their ability the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement and monitor Building Evacuation Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers, residents and program participants in the event of an emergency.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

In the event of an emergency including fire, building flooding, earthquake, floods and other natural hazards, threatened harm or violence or other kinds of building emergencies, residents, staff, clients, visitors and volunteers may need to evacuate the building to one of the designated assembly areas depending on the type and severity of incident:

1. The **Primary** location is identified as close to the building if it is safe to assemble.
2. The **Alternate** location is identified as further away from the building if it is not safe to assemble nearby.
3. The **Inside** location is identified as a nearby indoor location to assemble when the weather conditions are not suitable outdoors.

Buildings	Designated Assembly Location(s)
[building name, address]	
1. Primary	
2. Alternate	
3. Inside Location	
[building name, address]	
1. Primary	
2. Alternate	
3. Inside Location	

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Evacuation of the Building](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.4. Utility Failure

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor a Utility Failure Preparedness and Response Plan and Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of a utility failure. In the event of utility failure such as power outage, gas leak, gas odour, water leak or flooding, water being turned off by the city, water main failure, heat loss or electrical outage, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, volunteers and program participants from the potential effects of an interruption in utility services and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a utility failure. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Utility Failure](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.5. Earthquake

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect to the best of their ability the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement and monitor Earthquake Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of an earthquake. In the event of an earthquake, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, volunteers and program participants from the potential effects of an earthquake.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of an earthquake. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for [evacuating](#) and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Earthquake](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.6. Pandemic

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor a Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan and Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of a pandemic or any other type of health emergency. In the event of a pandemic or health emergency, employees will implement the established plan of action to control the spread of infection, protect employees, program participants, and volunteers and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a pandemic. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Pandemic](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.7. Air Quality

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: Wildfires are common in BC and happen almost annually in some parts of the province and as a result, poor air quality is prevalent all over the province. Therefore, it is critical to know how to protect the health and well-being of individuals. It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement and monitor an Air Quality Event Preparedness and Response Plan and Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants. In the event of an air quality event, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, volunteers and program participants and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours are readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of poor air quality. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Air Quality](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.8. Extreme Heat

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: Extreme heat conditions are becoming more common in some parts of BC. It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor Extreme Heat Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of extreme heat. In the event of extreme heat, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, program participants, and volunteers and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of extreme heat. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Extreme Heat](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.9. Cyber Incident

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to establish a cybersecurity process which consists of all the technologies and practices that keep computer systems and electronic data safe. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor Cyber Incident Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of a cyber incident. In the event of cyber incidents such as loss of access to the systems, ransom or virus attack, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect systems and data from the potential effects of exposing critical and confidential information.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Cyber Incident](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.10. Hazardous Material Release

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor Hazardous Material Release Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of a hazardous material release.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours are readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a hazardous material release. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Hazardous Material Release](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.11. Evacuate the Area

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of [Agency XYZ](#) to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. [Agency XYZ](#) and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor an Evacuation Preparedness and Response Plan and Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of an emergency. In the event of an emergency that requires staff and program participants to evacuate the area, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, program participants, and volunteers and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours and a grab-and-go bag will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by [Agency XYZ](#) to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of an evacuation of the area. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by [Agency XYZ](#).

All [Agency XYZ](#) buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. [Agency XYZ](#) will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at [Agency XYZ](#).

Prior to an evacuation of the area, [Agency XYZ](#) will ensure that plans, processes and modes of transportation are in place to transport all program participants and staff in the event of a community evacuation.

Prior to an evacuation of the area, [Agency XYZ](#) will work with surrounding Women's Transition Housing and Support Programs about accommodating their program participants in the event of a community evacuation. [Agency XYZ](#) may develop reciprocal agreements outlining what the two organizations can offer each other in the event of an emergency.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Evacuating the](#)

Area

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.12. Severe Weather

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of [Agency XYZ](#) to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. [Agency XYZ](#) and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor Severe Weather Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of a severe weather event. In the event of severe weather employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, program participants, and volunteers and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability. Severe weather may include thunderstorms, wind storms, hail, blizzards, ice storms, extreme cold, hurricanes, tornados and heavy rain.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by [Agency XYZ](#) to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of severe weather. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by [Agency XYZ](#).

All [Agency XYZ](#) buildings will have an emergency plan for [evacuating](#) and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. [Agency XYZ](#) will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at [Agency XYZ](#).

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Severe Weather](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.13. Shelter-in-Place

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect, to the best of their ability, the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement, and monitor a Shelter-in-Place Preparedness and Response Plan and Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of an emergency. In the event of a need to shelter-in-place, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, program participants, and volunteers and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours are readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a need to shelter-in-place. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Shelter-in-Place](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.14. Tsunami

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect to the best of their ability the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement and monitor Tsunami Preparedness and Response Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants in the event of a tsunami. In the event of a tsunami, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, volunteers and program participants from the potential effects of a tsunami.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours and a grab-and-go bag will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a tsunami. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers, and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Tsunami](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.15. Wildfire

Rationale: Refer to Emergency Management and Service Continuity Policy 5.0.

Policy: It is the policy of *Agency XYZ* to protect to the best of their ability the health and safety of employees, volunteers and program participants. *Agency XYZ* and the Emergency Management and Service Continuity (EMSC) Team will develop, implement and monitor a Wildfire Preparedness Plan and Procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff, volunteers and program participants. In the event of a wildfire, employees will implement the established plan of action to protect employees, volunteers and program participants and continue to meet program participants' needs to the best of their ability.

Emergency supplies necessary to support staff and program participants for up to 72 hours and a grab-and-go bag will be readily available and maintained at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ* to ensure essential services are maintained in the event of a wildfire. Employees are orientated to the location and use of emergency supplies at all sites owned, leased or operated by *Agency XYZ*.

All *Agency XYZ* buildings will have an emergency plan for evacuating and protecting program participants in case of a fire or other emergency. *Agency XYZ* will conspicuously post the emergency plan, emergency numbers and instructions on what to do in case of fire or other emergency, including where to assemble, as well as include them in the orientation of new program participants residing at *Agency XYZ*.

Procedures: Refer to [Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures for Wildfire](#)

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

5.16. Labour Dispute

Policy: *Agency XYZ* is committed to providing essential services at all times. In the event of a labour dispute, every effort will be made to continue to provide essential services to program participants. If in the event of a strike or lockout, a situation of an emergency nature arises, the Employer and the Union will agree to provide services of an emergency nature.

Procedures:

Policy created date:

Policy review date:

Policy designate / overseen by:

Definitions

2SLGBTQAI+ - means an evolving acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, queer, and additional identities.⁹

Advocacy - to support a woman to make choices and act on them based on their own values and needs by helping to ensure that their circumstances, needs and rights to assistance are fully understood by relevant service providers and/or systems. To highlight and respond to the barriers and injustices which put women at risk of Violence with the aim to end Violence and oppression in women's lives. To influence improvements to women's safety by promoting individual and systemic responses that will help ensure these responses are available, accessible and relevant to women and children.¹⁰

At Risk of Violence - means situations where a woman indicates that she and/or her children are at risk of experiencing Violence.¹¹

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) -

- **equity** is defined as the removal of systemic barriers (e.g., unconscious bias, discrimination, racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, etc.), enabling all individuals to have equitable opportunity to access and benefit from the program;
- **diversity** is about the variety of unique dimensions, identities, qualities and characteristics individuals possess along with other identity factors; and
- **inclusion** is defined as the practice of ensuring that all individuals are valued and respected for their contributions and are supported equitably in a culturally safe environment.¹²

Food - portions of food from at least three (3) of the food groups in the Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide sufficient to meet the intake requirements outlined in the Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.¹³

⁹ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹⁰ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹¹ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹² Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research Practice and Design (2024). <https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/nfrf-fnfr/edi-eng.aspx>

¹³ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

Income - means the total income before income tax from all sources of the Resident in accordance with the Rent Scale.¹⁴

Inter-Agency Service Linking - building collaborative working relationships with other Violence Against Women service providers, including other WTHSP services, in order to ensure that WTHSP service providers can effectively connect women and children who access their services to a broad range of other agencies as required.¹⁵

Initial Contact Services - information gathering and relationship building, safety assessments and short-term planning, discussion of immediate needs and service availability, and referrals to other resources as appropriate.¹⁶

Personal Supports for Women and Children - the provision of crisis and emotional support, safety planning and access to information and education regarding the dynamics and impact of violence against women and children.¹⁷

Referrals, Advocacy and Supported Access to Services - referrals to external services and resources and support and advocacy to assist women in accessing those resources.¹⁸

Conflict of Interest - a substantiated or perceived conflict of interest means that the personal interests, whether personal, business or professional, of an employee and/or a volunteer take precedence over and may compromise the interests and obligations of the Agency and/or the people served by the Agency.

Violence means violence against women and/or their children including physical, emotional, economic, financial, sexual and/or spiritual abuse, including domestic, family, gender-based or intimate partner violence.¹⁹

The following definitions were extracted from CSA Z1600: Standard for Emergency and Continuity Management Program, Version 2017.

Continuity Plan — documented collection of procedures and information that is developed, compiled, and maintained in readiness for use in an incident to enable an organization to

¹⁴ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹⁵ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹⁶ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹⁷ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹⁸ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

¹⁹ BC Housing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Operating Agreement, Nov 2022

continue to deliver its critical activities at an acceptable pre-defined level. *AKA Service Continuity Plan*

Emergency Management — an ongoing process to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from an incident.

Evacuation — an emergency response procedure for the movement of people, animals, and/or materials from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas to a safe place.

Hazard — a potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon, or human activity that could cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption, or environmental degradation.

Incident — a situation that might be or could lead to, a disruption, loss, emergency, or crisis. *AKA Event.*

Mitigation — the actions taken pro-actively to reduce the risks and impacts posed by incidents.

Preparedness — the measures taken in advance of an incident to ensure an effective response and recovery.

Prevention — the measures taken to avoid an incident or stop it from occurring.

Recovery — the activities and programs designed to return conditions to a level that is acceptable to the organization following an incident.

Response — the actions taken immediately before, during, or after an incident to manage its consequences.

Risk — the combination of the likelihood and the consequence of a specified hazard(s) being realized, with reference to the vulnerability, proximity, or exposure to the hazards, which affects the likelihood of adverse impact.

Risk assessment — the overall process of risk identification, risk analysis, and risk evaluation.

Shelter (sheltering) — an emergency response procedure used by people to take cover from a threat (i.e., severe weather, seismic events, or other natural hazards).

Shelter-in-place (SIP) — an emergency response procedure used in situations where the threat or incident is internal or external to a facility or location and the people use the space(s) within the facility or location as an “insulator” against the threat. Note: *The threat can be safety (i.e.,*

chemical spill, airborne hazardous material, etc.), security/human-related (i.e., active assailant, protest, etc.), or animal.

Threat — the presence of a hazard and an exposure pathway. Note: *Threats could be natural, human caused (intentional or non-intentional), or technological.*

Vulnerability — the conditions determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of an organization to the impact of hazards. Note: *It is a measure of how well prepared and equipped an organization is to minimize the impact of, or cope with, hazards.*

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