

Understanding the RGI Process & Special Priority Housing Categories

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Agenda

- About Ernestine's Women's Shelter
- Legislation – RGI & SPHC
- Applying for Special Priority Housing Category
- Completing the SPGC (SPP) Application



Who Are We?

- We provide support & shelter for women and their children escaping violence.
- Additionally, we provide 24-hour crisis assistance, support programs, and counselling.
- We honor diversity and the unique needs of the individual by working within an Anti-racism and Anti-oppression framework.

Services We Provide

Women's Program - VAW Shelter

A 32-bed purpose-built emergency shelter and 24-hour crisis line for women and their children fleeing violence.

Child & Youth
Program

Transitional
Housing and
Outreach Support

Housing &
Legal

Skills
Exchange

Legislation

- The legislation that guides the criteria for RGI and Special Priority Housing Category is the Housing Services Act, 2011
- <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06#BK81>



RGI Process

- Applicant of household has to be 16 years of age to apply
- All applicants must have legal status in Canada and documents to prove their status (Canadian Citizen, PR holders, Convention & Refugee claimants and when PR is requested.
- Required to have income. For example: OW, ODSP, Employment, EI, Pension, Support payments



Applying for Priority -SPP

- The survivor, or a person on their behalf (with consent), can apply for the SPHC program by completing an application package
- The application package must include
 - Completed SPP application
 - Record of abuse signed by the verifier
 - Survivors of domestic violence require cohabitation documents
 - Survivors of human trafficking do not require cohabitation documents



Applying for Priority -SPP

- To access the SPHC program, an applicant must have an eligible Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) application on the centralized waitlist for Toronto
- Once RGI eligibility had been determined, a household is eligible to be included in the special priority category if the member of the household has been the subject of abuse by another individual
- The abusing individual is or was living with the member of the household or is sponsoring the member as an immigrant; and
- The abused household member intends to live permanently apart from the abusing individual. In addition to the eligibility criteria mentioned above, the must have taken place in Canada.



Definition of Abuser

- With respect to a member of a household, the individuals referred to are the following:
 - An individual who is related to the member or any other member of the household
 - An individual who is or has been in an intimate partner relationship with the member or any other member of the household
 - An individual on whom the member or any other member of the household is emotional, physical or financially dependent
 - An individual who is emotionally, physically, or financially dependent on the member or any other member of the household
 - An individual sponsoring the member or any other member of the household as an immigrant

Definition of Abuse

“abuse” means, with respect to a member of a household,

- (a) Any of the following done against the member by any individual described in the subsection (2),
- (i) One of more incidents of,
- Physical or sexual violence
 - Controlling behaviour
 - Intentional destruction of or intentional injury to property
- (ii) words, actions or gestures that threaten the member or lead the member to fear for his or her safety
- (b) Trafficking of the member done by any individual

Definition of Human Trafficking

- “trafficking” means, with respect to a member of a household, one or more incidents of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of the member by improper means, including force, abduction, fraud, coercion, deception and repeated provision of a controlled substance, for an illegal purpose, including sexual exploitation or forced labour.

Three Month Application Rule-SPP

- Applications for special priority status should be made within three months of separation from the abuser

The service manager has discretion to **consider accepting applications beyond the three months after separation:**

- Provided verification of abuse as outlined extenuating circumstances has been met
- The service manager is satisfied that the abuse is ongoing at the time of the request

SPCH Application

- The Special Priority Program Application contains five sections: A, B, C, D, E
- **Every section must be completed** or may lead to an adverse outcome
- Applying as a domestic abuse and violence victim – complete all sections except D
- Applying as a human trafficking survivor – complete all sections except C

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/9034-special-priority-application-form.pdf>

SPCH Application

Section E: To be completed by a professional

- The individual who is able to verify abuse must complete this section
- Professional consent and declaration
 - Name and License number/professional registration number are required
- Eligibility checklist
 - All Questions must be answered
- Signatures – double signature is required if you do not hold any of the professional designated titles

Completed SPHC Package

The applicant must submit the following:

- A completed SPP application package with a detailed record/letter signed by:
 - The professional
 - The social service community agency (2 signatures) must be on letterhead or
 - Someone who is familiar with the abuse (notarized affidavit required)

Verifiers

A Person with professional relationship to you must help with completing the application. Examples Include:

- Doctor
- Lawyer
- Law Enforcement Officer
- Registered Nurse/Registered Practical Nurse
- Minister of religion authorized under provincial law to perform marriages
- Teacher
- Guidance Counselors
- Counselors from shelter
- Registered early childhood educator
- Managerial or administrative employee working with a housing provider
- Indigenous elder, Indigenous Traditional person or Indigenous Knowledge Keeper
- Indigenous person who provides traditional midwifery services
- Member of the college of Midwives of Ontario
- Registered social worker/social service worker
- Psychotherapist, registered psychotherapist or registered mental health professional

Verification/Record of Abuse

- Identify what you are applying for – SPP/RG/SPP Internal Transfer
- Must be on agency letterhead
- Applicant name, who are the members of the household
- The date the record was prepared
- Name, occupation, and professional designation and the date professional relationship began
- Contact information of the verifier
- Accurate description of the circumstances that demonstrate the applicant is or has been abused and the applicant has fears for their safety
- Clarification of living arrangements
- Did the household rent or own?
- Who is apart of the household?
- Household finances
- HT – if no ID tell us the current status

Completed SPHC Package

Proof of Cohabitation

- Documents that demonstrate a common address with the abuser
- All cohabitation documents must be dated within 1 year of the application
- Cohabitation must be demonstrated in Canada

Additional Information

- When a file has been denied the applicant has 30 business days to submit additional information
- Need more time – contact the staff person who made the decision and request an extension
- No new information – remain on the central wish list

Portable Housing Benefit

Effective July 1st, 2018, households approved for SPP have the options to select ***either***:

- *RGI Housing*
 - *Portable Housing Benefit (rental assistance)*
- Households that select to receive the benefit will no longer be on the waitlist
 - Amounts for Portable Housing Benefit will be reassessed annually based on the applicant tax return
 - The program is administered by the ministry of finance
 - The Portable Housing Benefit decreases wait times for housing assistance for those who need it urgently

Terminal Illness Priority & Disadvantage status

- Doctor must confirm that applicant has less than 2 years to live
- Medical forms needs to be completed by the doctor
- Disadvantage status (DA) is provided to individuals who are currently residing at shelter



**THANK
YOU!**



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