



### **Safe Harbour House Philosophy:**

Safe Harbour House will avoid the creation of rule-bound, institutional environment that provides short term support in the rush to have young people become independent.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- Safe Harbour House focus will be on helping disadvantaged youth who are homeless or in housing need to achieve the transition to adulthood and from dependence to independence.
- A holistic approach to meeting the youth's needs based on an understanding of adolescent development. This environment will help to build competence and feelings of achievement for residents.
- A formal case plan and agreement between Safe Harbour House and the residents as to how the facility and local community resources will be used in making the transition to adulthood. A supported transition that is not time limited therefore youth are able to 'practice' independent living.
- Safe Harbour House believes an investment in education, training, life skills and meaningful engagement will improve long-term life chances.
- A successful physical, psychological, emotional and social transition requires strong adult support, opportunities to experiment and explore (including making mistakes), learning to nurture healthy relationships, the gradual learning of skills and competencies related to independent living.
- Developmental assets must be a focus for youth who are homeless or in crisis.
- Education is at the center of Safe Harbour House's response to youth homelessness. This is the key strength of the model and a priority for all residents. Youth will be given the opportunities, tools and resources to access education. These means will produce longer term, sustainable outcomes and reduce the risk of a return to homelessness. Research indicates higher education will lift youth out of poverty.
- Safe Harbour House will encourage youth engagement with other youth, adults and community in order to nurture meaningful and supportive relationships based on caring and respect. Peer relationships will be encouraged among residents but this will be nurtured, not forced.
- Safe Harbour House will utilize a client-centered approach in case management/case planning. This will include residents having a say in their program design, be engaged as part of quality assurance and play a major role in determining their pathway out of homelessness. The case management tool will be flexible/ongoing and responsive to the needs and assets/abilities of the youth. We will not put an emphasis on control, curfews and restrictions, however there are House rules which must be respected.
- Staff will strive to balance youth-led, harm tolerant approach with the need to maintain a safe, sober living environment for youth and staff in the House.
- As a last resort, Safe Harbour House will discharge residents without an exit plan.
- Safe Harbour House youth will develop case/action plans to outline individual goals, related activities, resources and supports that will help them achieve their objectives. The plans will be



youth driven and flexible, accommodating gradual progress and age-appropriate change in plans. Goals will be developed in regards to education and training, careers, housing, health and wellbeing as identified by the individual.

- Safe Harbour House will provide programming through a combination of in-house resources and community-based service providers.
- Life skills development will be offered in-house and/or through external service providers. The workshops may include budgeting, fire safety, social skills, health, nutrition, cooking, repairs and maintenance, skin and hygiene, environmental awareness, anti-oppression, community contacts and first aid.
- Programming should include three aspects: individual, covering self-esteem, positive affirmation, healthy living, emotional wellbeing, family and other important relationships. Second aspect is community and involves recreational programs including games and movie nights, nightly dinners and other team activities. The third aspect is work related and covers activities such as resume writing, mock interviews, literacy, numeracy, IT skills, career guidance and educational tutoring.
- Safe Harbour House recognizes that many youth who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness may be suffering from trauma and not able to completely engage in education, work or training for the short term. However, residents are expected to engage in programming as soon as possible after admission.
- Safe Harbour House staff will nurture and support positive relationships as well as engage and relate to youth. Staff will strive to be positive role models for the residents and enable and empower youth to achieve their full potential. The existence of rules, roles and expectations must be balanced with opportunities for the youth to explore, become independent, make mistakes and achieve success. And based on adolescent development.
- The length of stay at Safe Harbour House will be based on the needs of each youth, their readiness for independent living and their financial stability. This is a distinguishing factor of Safe Harbour House ideology.
- The provision of a community of peers and caring adults will emphasize mentorship. To incorporate Housing First it may be necessary and appropriate to provide and ensure aftercare assists with a successful transition to adulthood and independent living.