



Vulnerability Definition Policy and Vulnerability Operational Guideline

Policy Owner: Resident and Community Services, Asset Management

Approval: Board of Directors

First Approved: Dec 16, 2014

Effective Date: Dec 16, 2014

Policy Statement:

For the purposes of this policy, Toronto Community Housing adopts the City of Toronto's definition of vulnerability and its related commentary, as set out below:

“The City of Toronto – Working Group on Vulnerable Individuals defines vulnerability as the result of interaction between the challenges a person faces and the resources that they can access when facing those challenges. A vulnerable resident¹ must be assessed in context - a person's vulnerability or resiliency will depend on their circumstances, environment and resources in the broadest sense. Vulnerable persons may be isolated, without identified supports, reclusive, have underlying medical problems and/or mental health issues posing a threat of harm to themselves and/or others. Physical harm to the self may be due to reduced ability to manage activities of daily living, substance misuse, isolation, poor insight and/or reluctance to accept support services (*Toronto Public Health – Vulnerable Adults/Seniors Team, 2012*).

Commentary: The following factors are essential to understanding vulnerability:

¹ For clarity, in the City of Toronto definition of vulnerability, “resident” refers to a resident of the City of Toronto.



- **Poverty:** A lack of income limits the resources that a person can draw upon in times of crisis.
- **Structural Inequalities:** Challenges can be exacerbated by discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.
- **Social networks/Social support:** The ability to draw up on social supports in times of crisis can help a person cope with challenges.
- **Personal limitations:** Physical and mental illnesses/impairments may inhibit a person's ability to respond to challenges.
- **Physical location:** Some areas have greater access to resources and supports than others and this may impact a person's ability to get help.”

Purpose:

Responsive to the City of Toronto’s approach to vulnerability, and consistent with Toronto Community Housing’s mandate and statutory and legislative obligations, this *Vulnerability Definition Policy* guides Toronto Community Housing’s approach in responding to vulnerable residents whose tenancy with Toronto Community Housing is or may become at risk.

Scope:

This *Policy* applies broadly to all Toronto Community Housing interactions with its residents through its employees, contractors, volunteers, agents and other third parties. This *Policy* shall inform the development of policies, strategies and initiatives that will have an impact on Toronto Community Housing residents.

Principles:

As a social housing landlord, Toronto Community Housing has an obligation to support vulnerable residents in preserving their tenancies, subject to the availability of resources and within the context of its statutory and legislative obligations. For example, in applying this *Policy*, Toronto Community Housing must consider its obligations under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* including its obligation to ensure that its residents are able to live



independently. Equally, Toronto Community Housing must consider its obligation to support the enjoyment of all of its residents to their leaseholds and to a safe environment and community consistent with its obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006*. Further, in applying this *Policy*, Toronto Community Housing must ensure that it is compliant with the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

To support its successful application, Toronto Community Housing will ensure that this *Policy* and its related procedures and processes are appropriately communicated to its residents and other stakeholders, and that appropriate training is provided to its employees, contractors, volunteers, agents and other third parties.

Policy Details

Toronto Community Housing Vulnerability Operational Guideline:

In applying the City of Toronto's definition of vulnerability to the context of Toronto Community Housing's mandate and operations, in the first year of this *Policy*, the following Toronto Community Housing *Vulnerability Operational Guideline* is adopted:

"Vulnerability is defined as the interaction between the challenges that a Toronto Community Housing resident² faces in fulfilling their obligations as a residential tenant and the resources that they can access while facing those challenges. Vulnerable residents can be reasonably expected to enjoy a successful tenancy when steps are taken by Toronto Community Housing, working together with other service system partners, to connect vulnerable residents to appropriate and available resources (e.g., family and health, social services, and community supports).

Vulnerability may affect the ability of a Toronto Community Housing resident to live independently as required by the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. In such cases, the resident may require more intensive supports than are available within the social housing context. In these cases, Toronto Community Housing will make reasonable efforts to ensure that the resident's needs are assessed and that the resident is connected with appropriate and available housing, shelter or support options before their tenancy with Toronto Community Housing is terminated."

² For clarity, for the purposes of this *Policy* and the *Vulnerability Operational Guideline*, a "resident" of Toronto Community Housing means a "tenant" as defined in the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006*



Compliance and Monitoring:

This policy and the *Vulnerability Operational Guideline* will be reviewed and evaluated annually, and amended, if required.

Governing and Applicable Legislation:

- Ontario Housing Services Act, 2011
- Ontario Residential Tenancies Act, 2006
- Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- Ontario Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990

Related Procedures and Processes:

In order to operationalize this policy, the owners of this policy, in consultation with Toronto Community Housing's Legal Services Department, and others as appropriate, shall develop and implement related procedures and processes.

Approval and Review:

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Approvals
First approval:	December 16, 2014	None	Board of Directors
Revision #1	n/a	n/a	n/a

Next Revision Date: December, 2015