

Toronto Seniors Housing
Corporation (TSHC)

Tenant Volunteer Handbook



Published May 2026

**Toronto Seniors
Housing Corporation**

Welcome and Thank You for Volunteering!

NOTE: This is a working edition of the Tenant Volunteer Handbook. We expect this version to evolve into a final draft as we gather further feedback from tenants and staff. If you have feedback on this version, please share your thoughts with the TSHC team at Communities@TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca.

Welcome to the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) Tenant Volunteer Handbook. Thank you for the time, skills, and experience you bring to our community. To anyone thinking about getting involved, we hope you will join us in creating a place where neighbours feel supported and connected.



Tom Hunter
Chief Executive Officer

Because of volunteers, our buildings feel more like home for the seniors who live in them. You help bring people together and make our buildings more welcoming, and we are grateful for all you do.

As we work together to build stronger connections in our communities, this handbook marks an important step forward. It reflects our shared goal of supporting tenant engagement and making sure your voice is part of what shapes life in your building.

This handbook is here to support you in your volunteer role, whether you are just getting started or have been involved for some time.

As you read the handbook, I hope you'll reflect on what matters most to you in your home and how you can help support that.

Thank you for helping make TSHC not just a place to live, but a place to belong.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Hunter".

Tom Hunter
Chief Executive Officer
Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation

This handbook was created to support your efforts as a Tenant Volunteer each step of the way. It is designed to help new and existing Tenant Volunteers at TSHC.

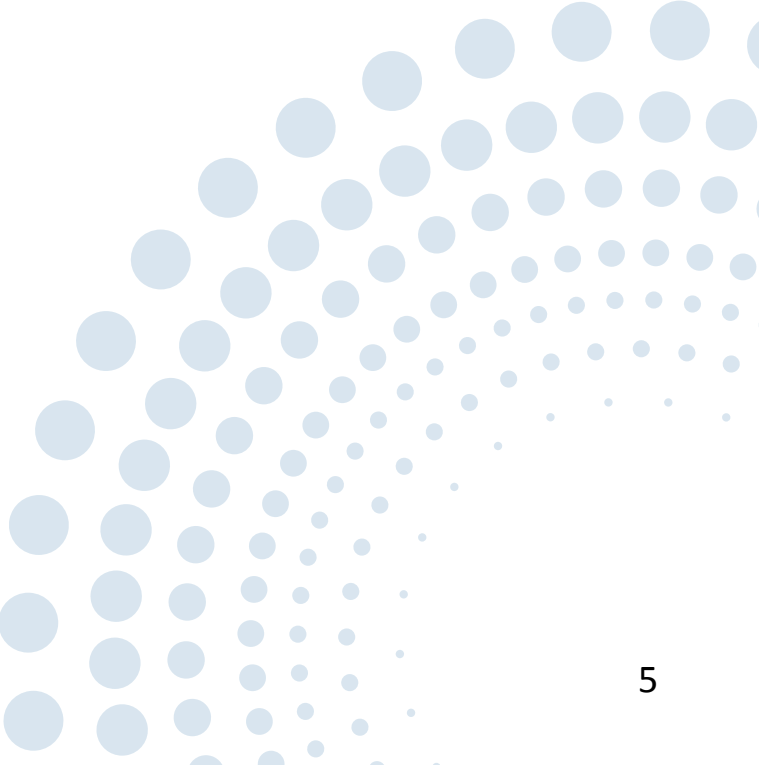
The goal of this handbook is to help you understand what it means to volunteer at TSHC. It doesn't include everything you need to know as a tenant, and it doesn't replace other tenant resources. Think of it as your guide to volunteering – and if you ever need information beyond that, staff are here to support you. We hope this guide serves both as a helpful reference and a reminder that your involvement makes a meaningful difference.

**Once again, welcome.
We're so glad you're here!**



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About Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC)

TSHC was created in 2021 as a part of the City of Toronto’s Tenants First Plan. We began operating in June 2022 with the aim of promoting aging at home and a better quality of life for seniors.

We partner closely with Toronto Community Housing to provide subsidized rental housing in a state of good repair for approximately 15,000 low- and moderate-income seniors, aged 59+, in 83 buildings across the city.

We provide tenants like you with access to services and support through an Integrated Service Model (ISM). This approach aims to help you age at home in comfort and with dignity, with a voice in your community.



What Do You Gain from Volunteering?

Why volunteer? Quite simply, because the benefits to yourself, and others, are well-documented... and priceless. Research has shown there are three incredible benefits to volunteering:

1. Improves your physical and mental health

Volunteering keeps you moving and thinking at the same time. Volunteers report better physical health than non-volunteers. The research also shows that volunteering reduces stress and increases positive, relaxed feelings as a volunteer. When you spend time in service to others, you can feel a sense of meaning and appreciation, both given and received, which can have a stress-reducing effect.

2. Provides a sense of purpose and teaches valuable skills

The work that Tenant Volunteers do can be essential to everyday activities in TSHC communities, giving you a sense of purpose, especially when you lend your time and talent in the areas you find meaningful. Senior volunteers experience greater increases in life satisfaction and self-esteem.

3. Nurtures new and existing relationships.

Volunteering leads to increased social interactions and helps build a sense of community. One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to participate in a shared activity.

“If I can do anything to help out the place I live, or make it better, I’m more than willing to.”

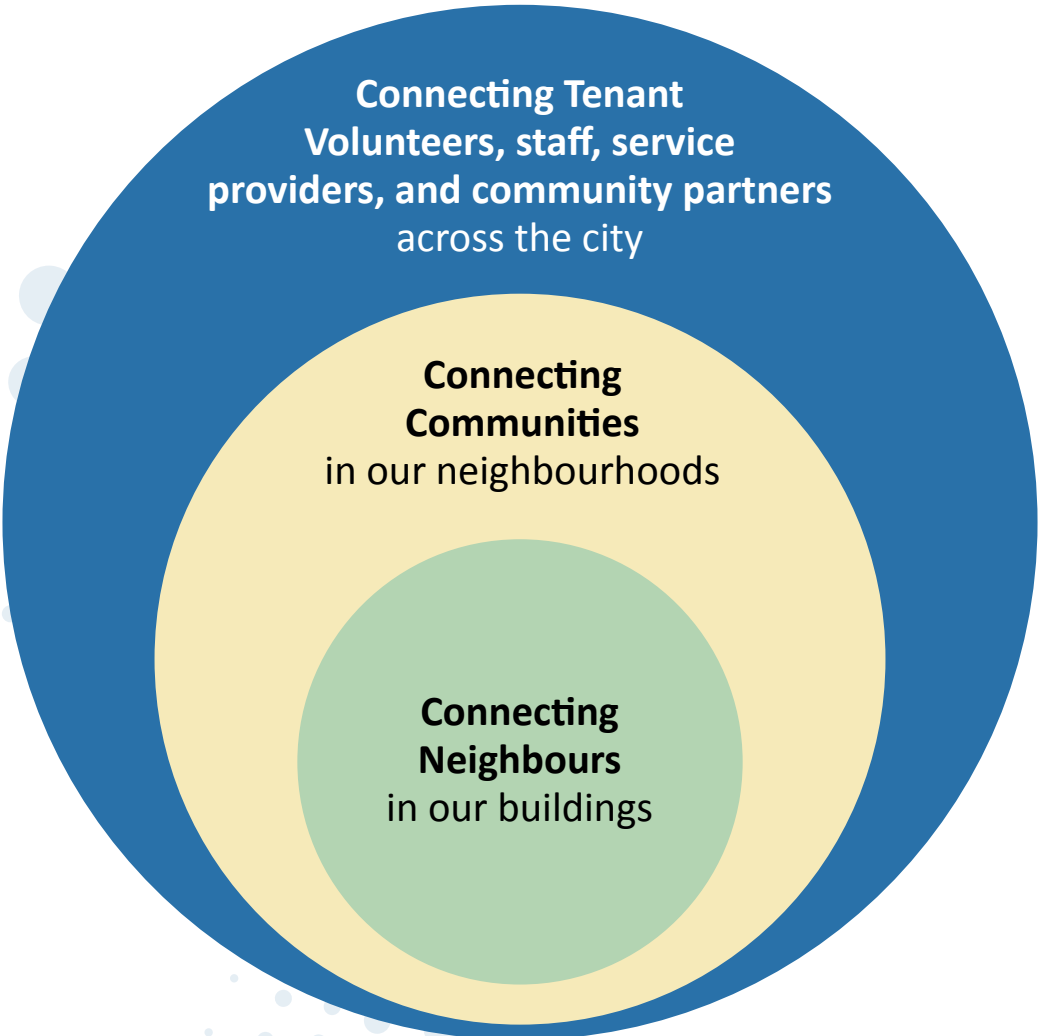


How TSHC Engages with Tenants – Community Connect+

In 2024, TSHC introduced an approach to tenant community participation called Community Connect+. This approach was approved by the TSHC Board of Directors and was co-designed with the help of tenants through consultation and workshops. TSHC also did research into how other organizations successfully engage their tenants and adopted some of the lessons learned.



Community Connect+



- The goal of Community Connect+ is to strengthen tenant voices, reduce isolation, and improve staff-tenant relationships.
- Tenant Volunteers play a very important role in the Community Connect+ approach. TSHC staff work with Tenant Volunteers to connect in their buildings, connect within their region, and connect across the entire City/TSHC portfolio. Without Tenant Volunteers, the Community Connect+ model could not reach its full potential. It is an approach designed by tenants, for tenants.
- At the building level, Tenant Volunteers are encouraged to join the Tenant Circle where multiple Tenant Volunteers come together to plan community activities, share information, and discuss issues with each other and staff.
- At the regional or neighbourhood level, Tenant Volunteers are invited to attend regional-level meetings multiple times a year, where education sessions and consultations take place.
- At the City level, there are twenty-four (24) Tenant Volunteers who take part in the Senior Tenants Advisory Committee, and six (6) tenants that take part in the Implementation Table. These groups provide advice to TSHC leadership about policies, procedures, and programs that impact tenants.
- There are two tenant members on the TSHC Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is determined by the City of Toronto, not TSHC. The Board supervises the management of the business and affairs of TSHC. Tenant applicants must be current TSHC tenants with experience in areas such as social housing, governance, or seniors’ services.



Being a Tenant Volunteer at TSHC

Becoming a Tenant Volunteer is a great way to get more involved in your building's community and make a positive impact, both for yourself and others.

To be a Tenant Volunteer in a TSHC community means playing a meaningful role in shaping the place you call home. TSHC buildings are more than just residences. They're communities built around connection, dignity, purpose, and shared experience.

As a tenant, you already understand the day-to-day realities of life here – whether it's the familiar faces in the lobby, the rhythm of your building's activities, the challenges that come with health or mobility changes, or the comfort of being surrounded by neighbours who have similar lived experience. Tenant Volunteers are leaders in their communities, which is what makes them so important.

Volunteering within a TSHC community can take many forms. For instance, you might:

- Help plan a game night in the rec room
- Support building events alongside staff and fellow tenants
- Check in on neighbours
- Welcome new tenants to help them feel at home from day one

Every tenant is welcome to volunteer.

You don't need special training, perfect health, or a lot of extra time – only a willingness to participate in whatever way feels right for you. Whether you've lived in the building for years or just moved in, whether you're outgoing or more reserved, your involvement makes a real difference. When tenants step forward, the entire TSHC community becomes warmer, more connected, and supported. If you've ever thought, "Maybe I could help?" the answer is yes, you absolutely can.

Your contribution truly matters.



What Does Volunteering Look Like at TSHC?

Tenant Volunteers contribute in ways that feel comfortable to them. There is no **chain of command**, no formal titles, and no expectation that anyone take on responsibilities that feel like work. Volunteers participate in ways that strengthen community life, support neighbours, and help make the building a welcoming place to live. To help describe the kinds of contributions volunteers often make, TSHC uses three simple groupings:



- Flexible
- Interest-based
- Completely optional

Volunteers may do things that show up in one grouping or may do things that are represented in multiple groupings. That is okay – it is about whatever feels right for them.

These groupings describe activities, not fixed roles.

1. Community Connectors

Helping neighbours feel included and informed.

Community Connectors may:

- Welcome new tenants and help them feel at home.
- Share information about upcoming activities, meetings, or building notices.
- Encourage neighbours to participate in community events.
- Help reduce isolation by checking in socially with neighbours.

2. Activity and Event Helpers

Activity and event supporters help run fun and safe social gatherings.

Activity and Event Helpers may:

- Suggest ideas for social activities or events.
- Help prepare for events (setting up tables, decorating, greeting tenants).
- Participate in planning events with staff and other tenants, including events funded through the Community Activities Fund (CAF).
- Lend a hand during or after events, depending on comfort and ability.

3. Tenant Voices and Advisors

Sharing tenant perspectives in discussions that shape community life.

Tenants in this grouping may:

- Take part in Tenant Circle meetings and fill out CAF Applications.
- Attend Regional Tenant Volunteer Meetings or information sessions that happen throughout the year.
- Offer feedback on building activities, services, or community needs.
- Participate in advisory committees, such as the Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) when they choose to get more involved.

Recognizing Initiative

There are many Tenant Volunteers that bring their own experience, energy, or enthusiasm to community activities. Some enjoy taking a more active role in making things happen, and we appreciate this. The Community Connect+ approach has been built on a model of inclusiveness. All volunteer participation – whether it’s at the building level, regional level, or at STAC – is shared, collaborative, and based on mutual respect. Volunteers are always welcome to take a more active role if they wish, but no one is expected to “lead” and no one is placed above others. Everyone contributes in the ways that feel right for them.



Your Tenancy and Your Volunteer Involvement

- Being a Tenant Volunteer is separate from being a tenant. Your home is your home – your tenancy is never affected by whether you volunteer or not.
- Volunteering has no impact on your tenancy, lease, or your rights as a tenant.
- Stopping or taking a break from volunteering does not affect your tenancy in any way.
- Your tenancy continues exactly the same, whether you choose to volunteer or not.

Tenant Volunteers and TSHC Staff

Tenant Volunteers play an important part in helping build strong, welcoming communities. Your involvement is valued and makes a real difference.

At the same time, **volunteering does not create a staff role or decision-making authority within TSHC**. Staff are responsible for managing the building, programs, and services, while volunteers choose how they want to contribute to community life.

Volunteers work *with* staff – not *as* staff – and help strengthen the sense of community by supporting activities, sharing information, and offering tenant perspectives.

Everyone's role is important...
and each one is different.



Respecting Each Other

Tenant Volunteers come from diverse backgrounds, which can help you expand your social circles and learn from others.

TSHC Volunteer Code of Conduct

As more tenants began to volunteer at TSHC, it became important to create and support an environment where volunteers felt excited and supported to volunteer. Between 2023 and 2024, staff worked with several Tenant Volunteers – including the Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) – to create the Tenant Volunteer Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct was developed with tenants so that it was meaningful for volunteers.

All TSHC Tenant Volunteers must sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct as part of their involvement in the efforts of their building.

Inclusivity Statement

Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation is strongly committed to diversity and inclusion within its community and encourages participation from Indigenous peoples, racialized persons/persons of colour, persons with disabilities, women, LGBTQ2S persons, and all others.

TSHC also strives to maintain an environment free from bullying.

Anti-Bullying Statement for Tenant Volunteers

Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation is committed to a community where dignity and respect are upheld. Bullying, harassment, or discrimination – whether verbal, physical, or online – will not be tolerated.

Tenant Volunteers are expected to lead with respectful behaviour, intervene when safe to do so, and promptly report concerns through TSHC channels.

How Can a Tenant Become a Tenant Volunteer?

If you want to volunteer in your building:



1. Talk to TSHC staff:

You can talk to your Community Services Coordinator (CSC) or Senior Services Coordinator (SSC). They can give you information about how to join the Tenant Circle and help you sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct.



2. Show up to an event:

Look at your building’s bulletin boards. There are usually events, programs, and volunteer opportunities posted that you can take part in. While you are there, look for Tenant Volunteers (they sometimes wear a T-shirt or name tag) or staff and introduce yourself.

If you are already a Tenant Volunteer and know someone – or are approached by someone – in your building who wants to be a volunteer, you can connect them to the SSC or CSC for the building.

If you are interested in the **Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC)**, you can contact your local SSC for more information. These roles are filled approximately every two years. To join STAC, you must be a registered TSHC tenant in good standing.

If you are interested in the **TSHC Board of Directors**, you can contact the City of Toronto Public Appointments Secretariat for more information. The Board of Directors is determined by the City of Toronto, not TSHC. They review applications, conduct interviews, and recommend candidates to the Corporation’s Nominating Panel for City Council approval. Applicants must be current TSHC tenants with experience in areas such as social housing, governance, or seniors’ services.



How Does a Tenant Stop Volunteering?

Volunteering is just that – voluntary. We understand this is not a permanent commitment or mandatory contribution.

- If you wish to stop volunteering, you should contact your Community Services Coordinator (CSC).
- From time to time, there may be situations where a Tenant Volunteer is subject to removal from participating as a volunteer. These situations are rare and the volunteer will go through a formal, transparent, and confidential process with TSHC to exit from their responsibilities.



What if I Have a Complaint About a Tenant Volunteer?

If you have a complaint about service or the conduct of a fellow tenant, you can contact the Solutions Team at Toronto Seniors Housing. The Solutions Team manages our complaints process, working to quickly resolve tenant complaints in a fair, efficient, and transparent manner.

The complaints process is available to tenants if they feel the normal interactions that occur between tenants and staff have not met their needs or addressed their issues.

The complaints process is not intended to replace the normal interactions that occur between tenants and staff, and it is not intended to be used prior to an issue first being raised with appropriate local office staff or the Tenant Support Centre.



If local staff or the Tenant Support Centre are unable to resolve your concern and you would like to escalate the issue, you may do so by making a complaint with our Solutions Team, either by phone at **416-945-0888** or by email at Solutions@TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca.

For issues involving discrimination or harassment, you can also contact the Solutions Team by phone at **416-945-0888** or by email at Solutions@TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca.

“We volunteer because we want to, and because we want people to have a positive experience to enjoy.”



Resources for Living and Volunteering in a TSHC Community

Community Activities Fund (CAF)

Every year, TSHC sets aside its Community Activities Fund (CAF) budget exclusively for the use of tenant-led events and initiatives in TSHC buildings.

➤ In 2024, the budget was over \$300,000.

- The total CAF budget is distributed across the 83 buildings in the TSHC portfolio. These are called **CAF Building Budgets**.
- CAF Building Budgets are distributed through an equitable process and are calculated using a formula that is based on factors like the size of each building.



Why is this important for a Tenant Volunteer?

CAF funding is one of the most important resources available to Tenant Volunteers to help achieve their priorities. It is important for Tenant Volunteers to understand the rules and steps associated with this funding.

With staff support, the Tenant Circle will decide on the events, activities, and equipment they want to prioritize at their building for the year. Once these priorities are set, the Community Services Coordinators (CSCs) will work with you to complete application forms. The CAF Application Form captures important details about the event or initiative being planned.

Adjustments can be made throughout the year, with help from the CSCs and agreement from the Tenant Circle. A majority decision ensures that all tenants were given the opportunity to have input into any additional or new choices. Additional meetings with tenants will be undertaken if required.

Since TSHC is a public company using taxpayer dollars, there is a strict policy and procedure in place for how CAF dollars are used, distributed, and tracked.

- All CAF spending must first have an approved application.
- It is the responsibility of TSHC staff to execute any purchases or transactions associated with CAF funds because it must follow the purchasing and financial rules of the company.

Below are summary lists of the types of expenses that are eligible and not eligible for CAF dollars.

Eligible expenses through CAF funding:

- Smaller equipment that supports social recreational programming and enhancing community (e.g., gaming supplies, craft supplies)
- Food/refreshments for community events and recurring community gatherings (e.g., monthly social tea, BBQs)
- Event-related supplies (e.g., cutlery, trolleys, or serving platters)
- Audio-visual supplies and smaller equipment for recreational room activities (e.g., microphones, projectors)
- Tools and gardening supplies
- Decorative items and seasonal décor
- Recreational supplies and equipment (e.g., mahjong tables, foosball tables, and ping pong tables)

Ineligible expenses through CAF funding:

- Alcohol or gifts
- Supplies or equipment for private use
- Items that are not accessible to the wider community (e.g., video game consoles)
- Duplicating items which can be provided by partner agencies or



- TSHC staff (e.g., mop, bucket, vacuum cleaner)
- Gardening products (e.g., soil, seeds, and plants)
(Note: While this expense is ineligible for CAF dollars, it can be purchased through other TSHC funds. Share this idea with your CSC, who can pass it along to building staff.)
- Costs to maintain activities beyond the funding term
- Items for events outside the building premises
- Larger equipment that exceeds \$1,500 and has a lifespan of two years or more
(Note: These purchases are ineligible for CAF dollars but may qualify through other TSHC funding. Share these ideas with your CSC, who can pass it along to building staff.)

Use of Space at TSHC

In most TSHC buildings, there is a common space of the building that can be booked as a room for private and shared events. TSHC staff are responsible for managing the bookings of these spaces. This process is called the “Use of Space” approach.

- TSHC Use of Space Policy and Procedure can be found on the **TSHC website** here: <https://www.torontoseniorshousing.ca/book-a-community-event-or-program/>.

You can also contact your building staff, Community Services Coordinator (CSC), or email your request to UseOfSpace@TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca

Why is this important for a Tenant Volunteer?

Tenant Volunteers often need to use a common space to host events that have been planned by the Tenant Circle. Once an event is planned, TSHC staff will help volunteers book the room.

It is important to officially book the common space, otherwise different groups or individuals could also book at that time or enter the room thinking it is free for their use.

Who to Contact and When

Your main contact

In your role as a Tenant Volunteer, **your most important and main contact is your Community Services Coordinator (CSC)**. They are the staff responsible for supporting Tenant Volunteers at TSHC through various policies, procedures, and processes.



You can call the Tenant Support Centre if you need to know the name of your CSC or ask another member of the building staff in your community (such as the superintendent or SSC).

Join the Volunteer Email List

As a volunteer, you can also put your e-mail address on a list to receive special communications from TSHC. Staff will send useful information to volunteers on this e-mail list on a regular basis for volunteers – this includes invitations to events, links to useful seniors’ resources, and important information about TSHC policies and procedures. If you want to join the Tenant Volunteer email list, let your CSC know and they will add you.

Note: As your landlord, TSHC will share information that impacts tenants to everyone. The volunteer email list is voluntary and won’t be used to share information related to tenancies.

Below is more general information about your key contacts as a TSHC tenant:

Your building staff

Your building staff are available Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Their contact information is listed on the blue bulletin board (**Blue Board**) in your building.

Seniors Services Coordinator (SSC):

Helps you with rent reviews, forms, and finding support services (not repairs or maintenance).

Maintenance Team

Responsible for repairs in your home, common areas, as well as cleaning and other duties in your building. The team includes:

- **Superintendent:** Leads the team and is your first point of contact for repairs
- **Custodial Maintenance Person (CMP):** Helps with repairs and maintenance
- **Cleaner/Custodian:** Keeps common areas clean and safe

Your regional staff

- **Regional Operations Manager (ROM):** Leads regional staff
- **Community Housing Supervisor (CHS):** Supervises the maintenance team
- **Tenant Engagement and Services Supervisor (TESS):** Supervises the tenant support staff, including SSCs

Useful Links and Resources

This document was designed to help Tenant Volunteers succeed in their role. That said, we acknowledge that this document refers to many other policies, procedures, documents, and websites that will be important to the reader. Below is a list of useful and important links and resources:

- **TSHC Website:** <https://www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/>
- **TSHC Tenant Support Centre:** 416-945-0800
- **Tenant Welcome Guide:** <https://www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Tenant-Welcome-Guide/>
- **TSHC Policies:** <https://www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Policies/>
- **CAF Policy:** <https://www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Policies/#TenantPolicyCommunity>
- **Use of Space Policy:** <https://www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Book-a-Community-event-or-program/>
- **Other tenant policies:** <https://www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Policies/#TenantPolicyTenancy>

- **Information about the Integrated Service Model:** <https://www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Health-and-Community/Our-Integrated-Service-Model/>
- **City of Toronto: dial 311**
- **City of Toronto community services: dial 211**
- **Community Safety Unit:** 416-921-2323
- **Information about RentSafe TO:** <https://www.Toronto.ca/Community-People/Housing-Shelter/Rental-Housing-Rights-Information/Rental-Housing-Standards/Apartment-Building-Standards/RentSafeTO-For-Tenants/>
- **City of Toronto Seniors directory:** <https://www.Toronto.ca/wp-Content/Uploads/2024/12/93e2-CS-24-0180SeniorsDirectoryFullDraftC7.pdf>

TSHC Social Media

- **Facebook** - <https://www.Facebook.com/TorontoSeniorsHousing/>
- **YouTube** - <https://www.YouTube.com/@TorontoSeniorsHousing>
- **LinkedIn** - <https://www.Linkedin.com/Company/Toronto-Seniors-Housing-Corporation/>





“Volunteering is my gift.
It’s from my heart.”



Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation