

Diversity



Acknowledgements

Mainstay tenants and staff developed the Tenant Diversity Booklet for tenants to use as a guide when dealing with issues of discrimination and harassment that they encounter in their communities.

Thanks to Mainstay tenants for sharing their expertise and experiences.

Thanks to Sharon Williams and Stephen Gray and other Mainstay staff for all of their hard work.

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Table of Contents

Purpose of this Booklet	4
Introduction	5
Mainstay Mission, Vision, Values	6
What is Diversity?	7
The Effects of Treating Others Differently	8
How to Make Everyone Welcome	9
How to Deal with Discrimination and Harassment	13
How to Report Concerns	16
Scenarios	18
Frequently Asked Questions	18
Glossary of Terms	20
Resources	23
Emergency Contact Numbers	back cover

Purpose of this booklet

The purpose of this diversity booklet is to:

Help tenants

- Identify the different types of diversity within their communities
- Recognize discriminatory and harassing behaviours

Give tenants tools to

- Create and keep respectful and inclusive communities
- Address discrimination and harassment in their communities

Outline a process for tenants to reports concerns to Mainstay and have these concerns addressed

Introduction

Mainstay provides housing and support to tenants from diverse communities. This provides tenants with many social and cultural beliefs to draw upon in making their communities healthy and happy.

Mainstay believes that helping to create healthy and safe communities support tenants on their own road to recovery from mental illness and stigma

Mainstay tenants and staff developed this booklet because tenants asked for a tool to help them deal with challenges they experience in their communities.

The booklet is a guide and does not provide absolute answers and solutions.



Mainstay Mission, Vision, Values

Mainstay welcomes the diversity of its tenants, staff and stakeholders.

Mainstay's work is guided by the following:

Mission

Mainstay provides, promotes and supports quality affordable and accessible housing primarily for consumer/survivors as well as people with special needs.

Vision

Everyone has quality affordable housing

Values

- ✓ Each individual has the right to be treated with dignity and respect
- ✓ An environment, which is caring, open, trusting and accepting
- ✓ Diversity of people, perspectives, cultures, skills and other areas are celebrated
- ✓ Open, honest communication and access to information as important cornerstones in creating unity of purpose as well as empowering tenants and staff
- ✓ Tenants feedback and participation in matters that affect them are critical to Mainstay's ability to provide good quality affordable housing
- ✓ Committed to social justice as a philosophy, which guides our activities
- ✓ Supportive housing is fundamental to individuals/tenants health and well being and a key resource in the recovery process
- ✓ Promotion and support of tenants' highly individualized journey of recovery to improve quality of life

What is Diversity?

Diversity is

- The fact or quality of being different
- The celebration of and the understanding that people have similarities and differences and
- Respecting the different choices of others

Diversity includes having similar or different age, race, nationality, colour, religion, sexual orientation, sex, ethnic origin, income, physical or mental ability, language, or any other factor.



Did you know?

Toronto is the most diverse city in the world. Diversity is about everyone in the city.¹

Negative Behaviour and Language

Sometimes people do not respect diversity. This sometimes results in negative behaviour and language. Negative behaviour and language may include:

- ✓ Making jokes about people because of their ethnic background, nationality, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, income
- ✓ Making assumptions about people because they belong to a certain identified group (all immigrants, all people with mental illness... are like that)
- ✓ Describing people in a way that may seem insulting or threatening and ignoring people²

When you take part in or allow negative behaviour and language you are treating individuals or communities differently. This impacts on their well-being.

¹ Together We are One, Summary Paper On Diversity In Toronto, Tim Rees, Access and Equity Centre, City of Toronto, June 1998

² <http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing>

The Effects of Treating Others Differently

When we do not respect the diversity of our communities you are treating individuals of groups differently. This can have many impacts.

It can impact on how others feel. For example, they may feel:

- Depressed
- Angry
- Sad
- Worthless
- Alone
- Frustrated
- Betrayed
- Threatened and/or unsafe



It can impact on our communities. For instance:

- Communities can become unsafe
- It's hard to come up with shared solutions
- There is no shared ownership of the space
- Celebrations do not occur
- You can't rely on neighbours

We all need to respect diversity. We can help by using respectful language and asking others how they would like to be addressed.

Disrespectful Language

- ▶ Handicapped person
- ▶ Slow, low functioning
- ▶ Crazy, lunatic, psycho, wacko etc.

Respectful Language

- ▶ Person with a disability
- ▶ Person who has cognitive difficulties
- ▶ Mental illness

Respectful language helps all people feel welcome.



How to Make Everyone Welcome

We can all help create an inclusive community.

Inclusion means accepting each other and working together to build strong, healthy communities.

Our Tenant Communities

- ✓ Develop, promote and support the differences in your communities by providing opportunities for tenants to share their diversities at community events (coffee groups, tenant meetings and multicultural day)
- ✓ Recognize the right of all tenants to practice, enjoy and share their different values, beliefs and practices that do not violate Canadian laws
- ✓ Take a firm stand against taunts, abuse, threats, graffiti or physical attacks against other tenants
- ✓ Identify and explore our own attitudes and values about interacting in, and with diverse groups
- ✓ Display diverse artwork, posters and pictures in common spaces of buildings
- ✓ Identify and address barriers that prevent tenants from fully participating in the organization and their community
- ✓ Make sure that everyone knows about social and other activities that occur in tenant communities. (Annual tenants seasonal celebration, General Members Meeting, and tenant meetings)
- ✓ Improve the atmosphere in our buildings by speaking up on behalf of tenants who are the targets of harassment



Mainstay is committed to:

- ✓ Identifying skills and initiatives of tenants
- ✓ Consult with tenants about meeting dates and times so that all tenants have the opportunity to participate
- ✓ Invite tenants to attend tenant meetings/ activities of other buildings (a way for tenants to meet each other and learn new ideas)
- ✓ Develop an atmosphere of cultural awareness in the organization
- ✓ Identify cultural practices of tenants and showcase them at community and organizational activities
- ✓ Actively involve tenants in developing and delivering tenant programs such as, coffee groups, information sessions and tenant meetings
- ✓ Find out what kind of services or activities tenants are interested in having in their communities and facilitate them in developing and maintaining activities
- ✓ Be responsive to all tenants and their communities by developing and maintaining a diverse and aware workforce
- ✓ Inform new tenants about different opportunities to participate in tenant communities and the organization
- ✓ Employ staff that reflect the diversity of the tenant population
- ✓ Ensure tenants have a recognized and active place on the Board of Directors



How to Deal with Discrimination and Harassment

Sometimes individuals, groups or society can act in a way that is discriminating or harassing.

Discrimination means treating people differently or negatively because of their race, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation etc.

Harassment means making disrespectful comments and actions over and over because of the person's race, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation etc.

Here are some suggestions to deal with discrimination and harassment:

- Become aware of the Ontario Human Rights Code and other laws that address harassment, discrimination and hateful treatment of others
- Acknowledge that racism /discrimination exists in community/society
- Point out and name the behaviour that is discriminating or harassing
- Say no to stereotyping, racist jokes and slurs, offensive behaviour and language, graffiti and physical violence
- Tell the person when you find their behaviour or languages offensive and unacceptable
- Ask the person to apologize
- Openly talk about discrimination to family, friends, and supports
- Seek assistance from professionals and people you trust such as your Supportive Housing Worker, family doctor, case worker, family member, friend
- Acknowledge anger, depression, sadness, frustration, and betrayal
- Find out the underlining reasons for the behaviour
- Report hate crimes and threats to your local police and to Mainstay Housing

A Hate Crime is:

A crime against a member of any identifiable group of people within a society motivated by feelings of hostility. Groups include race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other similar factor.

Hate activity could take the form of:

- Acts of Violence
- Graffiti (e.g., hate group symbols or slogans)
- Flyers/literature/hate mail with messages promoting hatred against “identifiable” groups
- Obscene or threatening phone calls
- Sexual assaults, intimidation, harassment, bomb threats
- Music and videos inciting hatred against an identifiable group

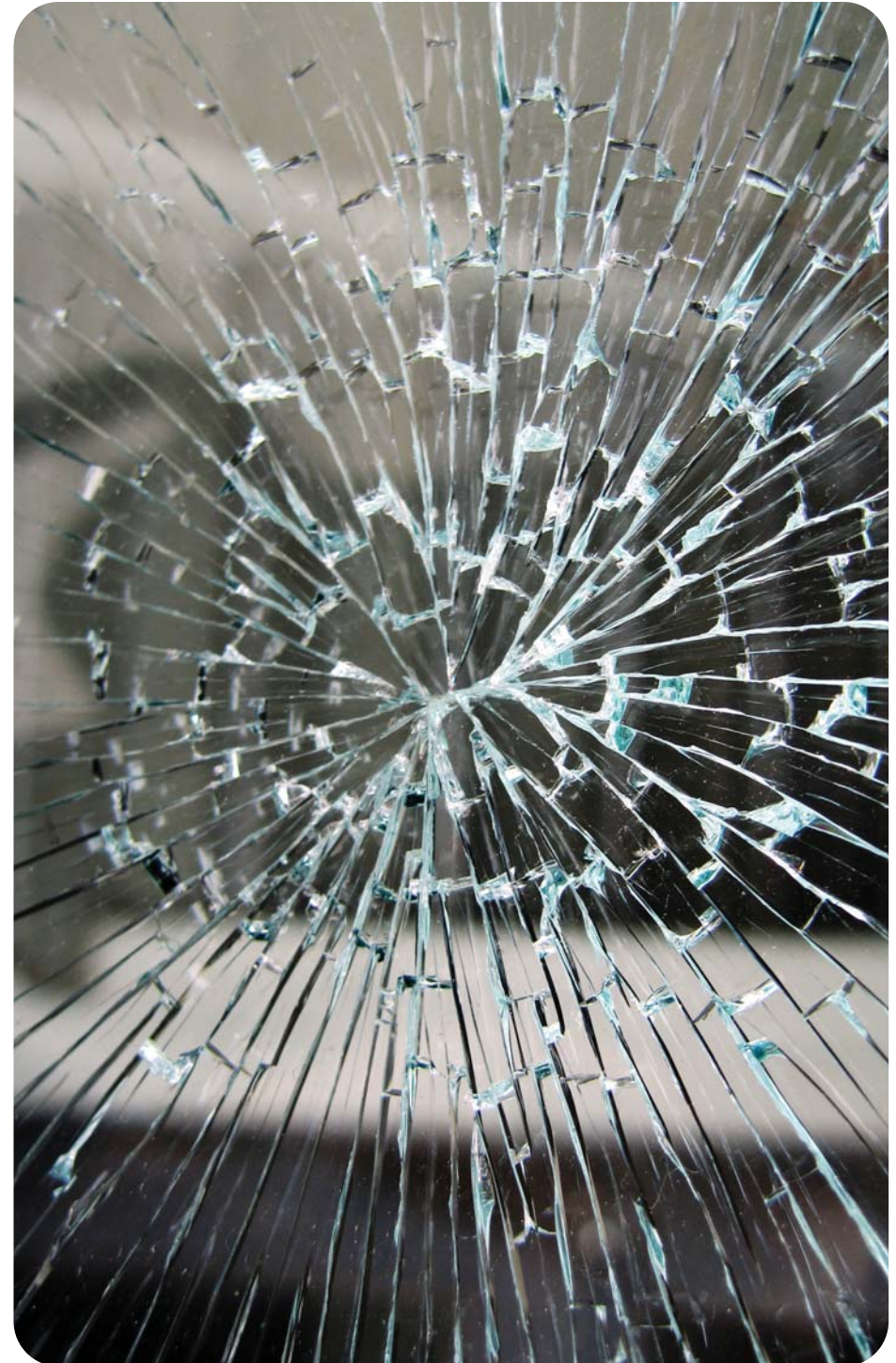
A threat is: An expression of the intent to harm, injure or damage. For example, saying and meaning that they will hit you.

Did you know?

A hateful incident ranging from harassment and abuse to physical violence is a criminal offense. Writing and distributing hateful literature that is likely to stir up hatred is a criminal offense.

Helpful Hints:

- Put people first, not their disability
- Emphasize people’s abilities, not their limitations



How to Report Concerns?

It is your decision whether you report a concern about discrimination or harassment. Mainstay encourages all tenants to report concerns so that they can be addressed.

Who should I report incidents to?

- Supportive Housing Worker
- Support worker, case manager, family member, other trusted person
- Family doctor, psychiatrist, nurse
- The police and Mainstay Housing if it is a hate crime, threat or violence

If you report a concern to Mainstay we will follow a process to look into it. Here are the steps.

Step One: Clarify Concern

- a) Clarify what was said or the behaviour
- b) Tell person to stop
- c) Education to the person why what they said/did was not ok
- d) Report the concern to your Supportive Housing Worker



Step Two: Report Concern

- a) Speak to your Supportive Housing Worker face-to-face or over the telephone
- b) Speak to your support worker if you require help to write your concern
- c) If possible put your concern in writing and give it to your Supportive Housing Worker
- d) Request a meeting with your Supportive Housing Worker. We encourage you to bring your support worker

What happens after I make a report to my Supportive Housing Worker?

Step Three: Mainstay Investigation

Verbal Report

(in person or over the telephone)

- Supportive Housing Worker will ask you to tell him or her about what happened
- Supportive Housing Worker will note your concern and speak to his/her manager

Written Report

- Supportive Housing Worker will contact you either by telephone or in writing
- Supportive Housing Worker will request a meeting with you. You are encouraged to bring your support worker

Supportive Housing Worker will:

- a. speak to the tenant (s) who the report was made against
- b. speak to anyone else who you identified was present when the concern occurred
- c. gather any additional information
- d. will discuss with his/her manager

Step Four: Resolution

The goal of this process is that you are satisfied with the outcome and any discriminatory or harassing behaviour stops.

SHW will

- a. request a meeting with you to discuss outcomes
- b. may request a meeting with you and the other person
- c. will send a letter to you about the investigation and outcome

Some outcomes might be:

- You or tenants clear up a misunderstanding
- Tenants learn about discrimination and harassment
- Tenants learn about unacceptable behaviour and stop it
- Guidelines are set up to help guide future tenant interaction
- A tenant who is harassing may be evicted
- The investigation helps you decide on other action

Scenarios

- 1) Jodi and Samuel live in the same building. Jodi is often overheard making negative and homophobic comments about Samuel to other tenants who reside in the building. Samuel reported to other tenants that he is feeling uneasy and uncomfortable. What should Samuel do?
- 2) Louisa starts complaining to other tenants about a new tenant who moved in. Louisa says the hallways stink of the smell of curry since the new tenant moved in and starts making racist comments. Louisa approaches the new tenant and asks her to stop stinking up the building and start cooking “Canadian” food. What should the new tenant do?
- 3) Tenant A lives in a building where tenants often gather in common areas of the building. As tenant A passes, other tenants often make rude comments on how she dresses, looks and walks. Tenant A feels humiliated and hurt by the comments. What could tenant A do?

Options to address the above scenarios

- Clarify with the person what they said
- Ask them to stop the behaviour
- Speak to the Supportive Housing Worker and support worker or someone you feel comfortable speaking with
- Put your complaint in writing and give it to the Supportive Housing Worker.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) If I feel uncomfortable bringing concerns to my Supportive Housing Worker, can I tell my case worker instead?
YES – Tenant(s) at Mainstay Housing are encouraged to share their concerns. They can do so by bringing concerns to their case worker or someone else they trust. Make sure you have signed a consent form so that this person can tell Mainstay about your concerns.

- 2) What should I do if no one believes me and thinks that I am just delusional?
It's important to express your concerns, whether it's to your Supportive Housing Worker, case worker or someone else you trust
Keep talking to people until you find someone who takes the time to listen. If you are not happy with a discussion with someone tell them so. At Mainstay you can talk to a manager if you feel your concerns have not been heard.
- 3) Will I lose my housing for reporting my concerns to the Supportive Housing Worker?
NO – All tenant(s) are encouraged to report their concerns to their Supportive Housing Worker to ensure a positive environment and quality of life for all the tenants. No tenant will lose their housing because they brought their concerns to their Supportive Housing Worker.
- 4) What should I do if I feel I'm being treated differently because of my race, sex or gender?
Report your concerns to your Supportive Housing Worker, case worker or someone else you trust. It's important to let someone know how you are feeling and what events took place, so that they can help you address your concerns.
- 5) Can I complain directly to the Mainstay's head office?
YES – To a Tenant and Member Services Manager. However all tenants will be encouraged to first speak with the Supportive Housing Worker regarding any concerns. .
- 6) How would I know that my complaint will remain confidential?
Mainstay Housing respects your right to privacy and has strict rules around sharing information. All information received will be treated with respect. Information may be shared with another Mainstay staff only on a need to know basis. Please see our privacy brochure for more information.

Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal People: At term frequently used to describe the first inhabitants of what is now Canada and their descendants.

Bias: A one-sided opinion, preference, prejudice or leaning formed without good reason that influences an individual's or group's ability to assess a particular situation without bias or accurately.

Culture: The ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, habits and way of life or a group of individuals who share certain historical experiences.

Disability: Inborn or assigned quality(s) of an individual that may prevent full participation in educational, social, economic, political, religious, institutional or formal activities of a group, or that may require accommodation to enable full participation.

Discrimination: Obvious or systemic denial of equal treatment, civil liberties and opportunity to individuals or groups, on the basis or race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, age religious or political affiliation, marital or family status, physical, developmental or mental disability, sexual orientation.

Dominant Group: The group of people in a society that is largest in numbers and which successfully shapes or controls other groups through social, economic, cultural, political or religious powers.

Ethnic group: a group of people who share a cultural heritage, such as nationality, language or religion.

Exclusion: The act of shutting out or keeping an individual from a group, place or privilege.

Gay: Attraction to the person of the same gender (sex).

Gender: Roles and meaning given to men and women based on their presumed biological sex.

Harassment: the act of tormenting by continued persistent attacks and criticism

Hate Propaganda: Ideas and beliefs transmitted in written, verbal or electronic form to create, perpetuate or promote antagonistic and belligerent attitudes and actions directed against a specific group of people.

Homophobia: fear of transgendered people, lesbians, bisexuals and gay; and the hatred, intolerance and disgust that this fear brings.

Immigrants: people who have arrived and settled in Canada in their lifetime.

Inclusion: To be treated, regarded or accepted as a part of the whole or group.

Lesbian: Women who are attracted to the same gender (sex).

Multiculturalism: A federal policy introduced in 1971 which endorses equal status for all cultures.

People of Colour: Includes people other than those with white skin of the dominant group living in Canada.

Prejudice: A state of mind; a set of attitudes held by one person or group about another person or group.

Racism: A system in which one group of people exercises abusive power over others on the basis of skin colour and racial heritage.

Sexual Orientation: The direction of one's sexual interest toward members of the same, opposite, or both sexes.

Sexism: Discrimination based on gender, especially discrimination against women and Attitudes, conditions, or behaviors that promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender.

Social Justice: A concept based on the belief that each individual and group within a given society has the right to equal opportunity, civil liberties and full participation in the social, educational, economic, institutional and moral freedom and responsibilities of that society.

Stereotype: A false or general idea about a group or which people which results in the unconscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences.

Threat: To express an intent to cause harm, injury or damage.

Transgendered: A broad term used to include and unite all individuals who do not comply with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.

This glossary of terms include terms that were taken from a handbook: Hate Activities: Communities Can Respond, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, Compiled by the Community Advocacy Committee on Anti-Hate and Anti-Racism. Cassandra Fernandes, Consultant.



Resources

- 1) Access and Equity Centre
City of Toronto
55 John Street, Station 1060, 6th Floor, Metro Hall
E-Mail Address: AccessandEquity@city.toronto.on.ca
- 2) Across Boundaries (ethno-racial community mental health centre)
acrossboundaries.ca or 416-787-3007
- 3) Alone in Canada: 21 Ways to Make it Better
A self-help guide for single newcomers. Available in 21 languages.
Available at : CAMH.net or 416-595 -6111 or 1 -800-463 -6273
- 4) www.diveristyatwork.com
- 5) Ontario Human Rights Code- www.ohrc.on.ca
- 6) www.settlement.org
general information on migration and settlement issues
- 7) 211 Toronto- is a free, multilingual information line connecting people to community, social, health and government services in Toronto and surrounding areas.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Name	Phone Number
Bell Relay Service	1.800.855.0511
Co-op Taxi	416.504.2667
Crime Stoppers	1.800.565.8603 TTY: 416.467.0493
Distress Centre	416.598.1121 or 416.486.1456 TTY: 416.408.0007
Fire Department	911 TTY: Call Bell Relay Service – they will call 911
Food Share — Toronto Hunger Hotline	416.392.6655 TTY: 416.392.3778
Mainstay Housing after hours Emergency	416-339-1024
Mainstay Head Office	416-703-9266 TTY: 416-703-9267
Poison Information	416.813.5900 TTY: 416.597.0215 and 1.877.750.2233
Police	911 TTY: Call Bell Relay Service – they will call 911
Toronto Police Dept. – non-emergency	416.808.2222 TTY:416.467.0493
211– Resource Line	TTY: 416.392.3778
Ontario Interpreter Services (after hours emergency interpreter service)	1-866-256-5142 TTY: 1-866-831-4657