

CityHousing Hamilton Corporation



CATEGORY		06	Partnership Development and Support Services	DATE APPROVED: March 28, 2019
SECTION		01		Residents
POLICY		02	Resident Advocacy	INTERNAL POLICY

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

CityHousing Hamilton (CHH) is dedicated to providing person-centred support and education to empower and aid residents in maintaining their current housing. CHH recognizes the value of residents having affordable, adequate, and safe housing conditions to improve their economic, social, and physical well-being, in turn allowing them to contribute and participate in their community, creating healthier and more dynamic neighbourhoods.

CHH recognizes the multiple barriers residents' face, which can adversely impact their wellbeing. All residents will have access to supports of Partnership Development and Support Services. CHH will also work with members of the community, who may act as an advocate on behalf of residents, to empower and support them in leading a quality life.

2.0 SCOPE

Applies to all CityHousing Hamilton employees, students, interns, and volunteers.

3.0 POLICY

CityHousing Hamilton (CHH) is committed to support residents, by ensuring that they have the tools and knowledge to best understand and access their rights, including the right to have their voices heard and their needs met.

CHH will actively listen to resident concerns, requests, and suggestions to help identify their diverse needs and to ensure that they receive quality and equitable social services within CHH and in the community at large.

CHH recognizes the complex needs of its residents, and staff are committed as best as they can

to advocacy and resolving resident issues. Every case will be individually assessed by Partnership Development and Support Services staff to determine whether advocacy is appropriate and/or required, as staff must advocate within the boundaries of CHH policies and comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and standards. When staff are unable to advocate they will make referrals to outside agencies as appropriate. CHH will work with members of the community to listen to and address concerns and suggestions, as well as respond to requests for information.

All media related inquiries must be referred to the Chief Executive Officer or duly authorized designate for a response.

4.0 PROCEDURE

Following the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* and *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*, staff will maintain confidentiality following legislative requirements and understanding the sensitive nature of resident's personal information. Acknowledging that an individual is or has been a resident is a breach of confidentiality.

The head of household and lease holder, aged 18 years of age or older, must sign a general a *Consent to Release* at the initial application for residency, and the annual inspection and lease renewal, which is only relevant to subsidy eligibility. For anyone under the age of 18 residing alone in a CHH property, a consent must be signed by the resident, in addition to their parent and/or guardian. Valid consents (signed within the last 12 months) must be on the file in order to release any information. Where a valid consent is not available, written or verbal consent by the resident will be honoured.

A resident will identify an emergency contact on their household composition form or in writing, within 12 months or sooner. The resident may add or remove an emergency contact from the file at any time. It is the responsibility of the resident to update the information. If no emergency contact is changed or updated at the annual renewal process, staff will make no changes to the information on the resident file.

A resident may identify an individual, family member, relative, or friend to act as communicator contact on their behalf. The communicator contact would relay information to the resident on behalf of CHH and vice versa. The communicator contact has no decision making authority, unless Power of Attorney documentation or similar is on file. The resident may add or remove the communicator contact from the file at any time. It is the responsibility of the resident to update the information. If no communicator contact is changed or updated at the annual renewal process, staff will make no changes to the information on the resident file.

When a resident is accompanied by a third party to an appointment or meeting with CHH, consent is presumed only during the time that both parties are in attendance at the office.

CHH staff are permitted to release relevant information to residents directly as long as the requested information is not considered to be third party information. The *FIPPA* and *MFIPPA* legislation must be followed when responding to requests for third party information. Staff must be in compliance with the CHH Policy *Access to Information 01.03.06*. Staff are directed to consult with a manager to seek clarity in the release of information to a resident or third party when unsure.

Staff will work with residents related to any needs and concerns that are identified by the resident or third party, to positively influence the overall wellbeing of the resident. Staff will follow CHH policies and procedures while assessing the needs of the resident. If resident requests for assistance and information are outside of the scope of the CHH staff, staff will refer residents to the appropriate service provider to assist.

CHH managers and property managers are permitted to release information that are maintenance related resident inquiries from legal advocates, elected officials, or the general public.

CHH staff are not permitted to answer any inquiries from media, legal advocates, elected officials, or the general public regarding all other inquiries related to applicants and/or residents of CHH. Such inquiries are to be made in writing to CityHousing@hamilton.ca. Staff responsible

for maintaining the email account will acknowledge inquiries within two (2) business days and forward the inquiry to the appropriate staff person for response and resolution as applicable.

Exception

Paralegals may work directly with legal advocates and only in Landlord Tenant Board related matters, where the advocate has been identified through a legal proceeding and/or documented consent is on the file.

6.0 RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that all staff are trained on this policy.

7.0 DEFINITIONS

Communicator contact: An individual that has been selected and identified to aid in contact. This individual is only able to relay information between the party and another party, and has no decision making authority.

Emergency contact: An individual that that has been selected and identified as the first person to initiate contact with in an urgent situation – such as an illness, injury, or death. This person cannot make any decisions, unless otherwise documented.

Third party: someone who is not one of the main people involved in an agreement, or case, but is involved in a minor role. This would include the general public, elected officials, government agencies, social service agencies, media, community advocates, lawyers, private investigators, friends, or relatives.

8.0 REFERENCES AND RELATED POLICIES

CityHousing Hamilton Policy *Access to Information 01.03.06*

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), 1990

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy

Housing Services Act, 2011

Human Rights Code

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), 1990

9.0 ATTACHMENTS

Access to Information Flow Chart

Consent form

Confidentiality Form

Access to Information

10.0 RATIONAL FOR CHANGE