



Blooming House Women's Shelter Inc.

Policies and Procedures Manual

Updated: July 29, 2019

Blooming House is a women's shelter that is based on the principles of harm reduction. The shelter operates as a volunteer and small staff facility to serve adult and young (18 and up) women. Access is determined by acknowledgement and agreement of Blooming House policies and procedures (including house rules). Blooming House has a maximum occupancy of up to 8 beds. In order to access a referral bed, guests must be referred either externally from community partners or internally after all other shelter options have been exhausted.

Our focus is to providing emergency shelter to women, transgendered women and individuals who self identify as women, who have no other options within the city of Charlottetown. Our aim is to foster a sense of belonging amongst guests and volunteers engaged with Blooming House.

Blooming House is supported by a coalition of service providers, community groups, and faith-based organizations.

Blooming House opened this year on January 25, 2019 to serve as an out of the cold shelter emergency option. The decision was made to remain open to serve the number of women on Prince Edward Island who are unable to find safe and sustainable housing. The shelter is open to guests from 8pm to 8am.

Blooming House is a scent-free environment.

Table of Contents

- [Blooming House Contact Information](#)
- [Shelter Guidelines](#)
- [Statement of Limitations](#)
- [Exceptions](#)
- [Critical Incident Reporting](#)
- [Types of Critical Incidents](#)
 - [Suicidal Ideation and Self-Harm](#)
 - [Threats](#)
 - [Bomb Threat](#)
 - [Threat to a third party](#)
 - [Personnel Security](#)
- [Definitions](#)
- [Shelter Policies](#)
 - [Accessing the Shelter](#)
 - [Open Hours](#)
 - [Reservation Policy](#)
 - [Leaving the Shelter](#)
 - [Storage Policy](#)
 - [Door Traffic](#)
- [Capacity](#)
- [Severe Weather Policy](#)
 - [For winter storms/blizzard:](#)
 - [For extreme cold weather:](#)
 - [For extreme hot or wet weather:](#)
 - [For weather warnings:](#)
- [Behavior](#)
 - [Intoxication](#)
 - [Destruction of Property](#)
 - [Sexualized Behavior](#)
 - [If the Guidelines are Violated](#)
- [Discharging Guests](#)
- [Belongings of Guests](#)
- [Brown Bag Policy & Safety](#)
 - [Brown Bag Intake](#)
 - [Brown Bag Policy](#)
 - [Brown Bag Safety](#)
 - [Brown Bag Privacy Guidelines](#)
 - [Medications](#)
 - [Responsibilities of Guests](#)
 - [Disposal Policy](#)
 - [Needle Policy](#)
 - [Smoking Policy](#)
- [Washroom Policy](#)
- [Taxi Policy](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [Inclusion & Reduced Barriers](#)
- [Trans-Inclusion](#)
- [Minimum Staff](#)
- [Phones & Musical Devices](#)
 - [Cell Phones](#)
 - [Landline Phone](#)
 - [Musical Devices](#)

- [Police Policies & Blooming House Women's Shelter](#)
 - [Calling the Police](#)
 - [When Police Can Enter the Space](#)
 - [Police do not Have the Right to:](#)
- [Sleeping](#)
- [Youth Under 18 Years Old](#)
- [Youth - 18 Years Old](#)
- [Shelter Procedures](#)
 - [Communication Log](#)
 - [Environmental Sensitivities](#)
 - [Kitchen / Food](#)
 - [Food Distribution Guidelines:-](#)
 - [Quiet Time](#)
 - [Movies](#)
- [Needle Stick Injury](#)
- [Spill Kit](#)
- [Disposal Policy](#)
 - [Brown Bags](#)
 - [Alcohol](#)
 - [Government issued documents or cards](#)
 - [Weapons](#)
 - [Illegal Substances/Medications](#)
 - [Personal documents](#)
 - [Sharps](#)

Blooming House Contact Information

Mailing Address:

Blooming House
P.O Box 963
Charlottetown PE
C1A 7L9

Website & Social Media:

www.bloominghouse.ca
www.facebook.com/bloominghousepei
www.instagram.com/bloominghousepei

Phone Number

Daytime: (902) 213-9969
Evening: (902) 367-0848

Email:

info@bloominghouse.ca

These policies and procedures are to provide consistency and safety for both staff and guests. The policies are not intended to exclude people or create unnecessary bureaucracy, but to ensure the safety of all and to create a welcoming environment. This manual is divided between policies and procedures but there may be some crossover between procedures and policy.

Shelter Guidelines

- You must be 18 years or older to access.
- Respect other people, their belongings and space.
- Racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, threatening, and other disrespectful language or behavior is not tolerated. The shelter is a trans-inclusive space.
- Violence, threats, or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.
- No close physical contact or sexual activity.
- If we find or have reason to believe that you have alcohol, weapons, medication (excluding epi-pens, birth control, inhalers), drugs, inhalants, and/or needles on your person after intake, or that you've consumed drugs or alcohol on the property, you risk losing access to the shelter.
- Your belongings are your responsibility. Blooming House is not responsible for them.

These guidelines apply to all of the property, including outside. If you choose not to respect these guidelines you may be asked to leave.

The philosophy of Blooming House Women's Shelter is to be a safe place for individuals identifying as women without other shelter options for the night. The shelter is open from 8pm until 8am.

- Any belongings left behind are considered abandoned and will be thrown out/donated.
- Beds are held until 11pm after completing an intake. Beds are not held after 11pm and if you have not checked-in you may lose your bed. Women can check on the availability of beds at any point even if they have not accessed by 11pm either by calling/texting the shelter number or stopping by the shelter.

Attn: Some policies may change during Severe Weather. See Severe Weather Policy for details.

In the shelter space:

- Only staff can answer the door and let people in
- Don't prop open the door or open the windows
- Please be conscious of your time in the washroom (**see Washroom Policy**)
- Only one person per washroom
- You will lose your bed reservation if you have not checked-in by 11pm
- Only water and/or small snacks are permitted in the bedroom. Permission must be granted by staff.
- Confidentiality of guests accessing the shelter is to be observed by everyone, including other guests.

Statement of Limitations

The information in this Manual is provided for reference purposes only and should not be considered a substitute for laws and requirements impacting the Shelter's functions. Obligations relating to the Shelter may continue to evolve. Policy is subject to such changes, which may happen in advance of the revision of this Manual.

Exceptions

There are times when the staff may make exceptions to these policies in extenuating circumstances or emergencies. It makes things very difficult when staff do not follow the policies consistently. We ask that if there is something in these policies that is creating a problem for a shelter guest or a volunteer, please speak to the Shelter Coordinator before making an exception.

Where discretion is available to Shelter volunteers and staff in the execution of their duties, this Manual is not intended to preclude the exercise of that discretion. It is intended to ensure that the exercise of such discretion is properly documented and communicated to ensure participant understanding.

Critical Incident Reporting

Critical incidents must be documented and reported to ensure proper responsiveness. It is also important that reporting is done in a timely manner to ensure that incidents are documented accurately.

After a critical incident is diffused and all parties involved are safe and secure, a Critical Incident Report (CIR) will be prepared by the involved staff person(s) and forwarded to the Shelter Coordinator, immediately.

If a critical incident is of a nature where the police have been involved, the public may be impacted or if it has resulted in media involvement, the Board of Directors of Blooming House is to be notified immediately with the CIR to be prepared following notification.

Types of Critical Incidents

Suicidal Ideation and Self-Harm

- Suicidal ideation means wanting to take your own life or thinking about suicide. However, there are two kinds of suicidal ideation: passive and active. Passive suicidal ideation occurs when you wish were dead or that you could die, but you don't actually have any plans to commit suicide. Active suicidal ideation, on the other hand, is not only thinking about it but having the intent to commit suicide, including planning how to do it. (*Marcia Purse, 2019*)
- Self-injury, self-inflicted violence, self-injurious behavior or self-mutilation is defined as a deliberate, intentional injury to one's own body that causes tissue damage or leaves marks for more than a few minutes which is done to cope with an overwhelming or distressing situations.
- Suicide becomes a greater risk when self-harm is no longer an effective coping method. It ceases to offset the feelings caused by stress or trauma (*Whitlock & Knox, 2007*)
- In a crisis situation, self-harmers who have become desensitized and habituated to pain through repeat harming episodes, may view a suicide attempt as less frightening (*Stewart, 2014*)
- Because self-harm can turn into suicide, it is highly recommended that every guest who self-harms be assessed for suicide risk (SIOS, n.d.).
- Each guest must be observed for signs of self-harm or suicidal ideation. If staff believe there is a risk that a guest is engaging in self harm, they must be placed in the observation room and routine checks done every 20 minutes. If you believe a guest is suicidal, please assess the situation and call 911 if needed, for the safety of the guest.
- The Shelter Coordinator will be sent a copy of the critical incident report during shift and will follow up in any way required.
- Guests will not be permitted to keep any sharps in their possession, including safety razors. If staff feel a guest is able, they may allow a guest to take a safety razor into the washroom for shaving purposes. Guest will be given ten minutes to use the safety razor for personal care and then must surrender the safety razor back to staff. If this policy is not followed by guests, emergency services may be called.

Threats

- Any time a threat is received, either verbal or written, the affected staff member(s), with assistance from the Shelter Coordinator as necessary, will prepare a CIR.

- If a staff member receives a telephone threat, they will attempt to determine the following, where practicable:
 - identity of the caller
 - telephone number of caller as shown on “Caller ID”
 - location of the caller
 - who the intended victim is
 - if the caller knows where the intended victim is located
 - if the caller has a weapon
 - where and when the threat is to be carried out
 - if there is a history of violence.
- When a threat is received, staff will immediately notify the Shelter Coordinator who, depending on the seriousness of the threat itself and the perception of the impacted staff as to the seriousness of the threat, may notify the Charlottetown City Police.
- The Shelter Coordinator will take the following action(s) depending on the nature of the threat and the party threatened:
 - The Shelter Coordinator will discuss the incident with the staff member once the immediate danger has passed
 - The Shelter Coordinator will advise the staff member of potential courses of action (e.g. Shelter Coordinator to contact person who made threat, to contact the police, etc.).
- Primary consideration will be given to the staff member’s safety and security in determining the courses of action.
- If the police are to be contacted:
 - The staff member or person and witnesses if any, who received or were present during the threat, will contact the police directly.
 - The Shelter Coordinator may follow up with the police and advise the police of the names of the staff members (or all staff) threatened.
 - Affected staff members will report any further contact they have with the person who made the threat, to the police and to the Shelter Coordinator immediately.

- All parties, including staff and the Shelter Coordinator, will cooperate with the police by providing any information to police that would assist them in their investigation, subject to legal restrictions on access. If the police challenge information disclosure, the Board of Directors of Blooming House will be notified.
 - Any further contact with the police will be reported to the Shelter Coordinator immediately. The Shelter Coordinator will notify the Board of Directors of Blooming House
- If the Shelter Coordinator writes a letter to the person who made the threat, a copy of the letter will be provided to the staff member who was threatened, and a copy will be placed in the client's file.
- The Shelter Coordinator will inform all Blooming House staff, in writing, of any threats made, and provide instructions for how to deal with the person who made the threat if that person comes to the Shelter. Further, the Shelter Coordinator will consult with the Board of Directors of Blooming House and provide staff with notice of any changes in security measures and contact restrictions with the client.
- The Shelter Coordinator will determine whether other persons in the building should be informed of the situation.
- The Shelter Coordinator will discuss the incident with all staff members involved.
- If the staff members involved do not agree as to the action(s) to be taken, the final decision will rest with the Board of Directors of Blooming House.

Bomb Threat

- If a staff member receives a call or message of any sort from someone claiming that a bomb has been placed in the Shelter, the staff member will inform the Shelter Coordinator, who will immediately:
 - notify the police;
 - evacuate staff using the fire drill procedure; and
 - keep staff out of the building until police advise otherwise.
- Staff member(s) and the Shelter Coordinator will provide police with any information in their possession, which may assist police in their investigation.

- The Shelter Coordinator (or the supervisor who handled the incident) will prepare a CIR.

Threat to a third party

- If a staff member receives information that someone is threatening a third party, the staff member will immediately inform the Shelter Coordinator. The Shelter Coordinator will then notify the party who was subject to the threat, so that they can take the necessary steps and precautions (e.g. contact the police, etc.).
- At the request of the party who was the subject of the threat, the Shelter Coordinator or staff person may provide written information relating to the threat to both the party subject to the threat or to the police.
- The Shelter Coordinator will advise staff of the action, if any, to be taken in relation to the party making the threat.
- If a person should be removed from the Shelter or a staff person's office, staff will immediately contact the Shelter Coordinator, who will make the determination whether to notify the police.
- The Shelter Coordinator will conduct a debrief with staff regarding the incident.

Personnel Security

- Blooming House staff will avoid scheduling client appointments outside of regular shelter hours. If a circumstance arises where staff must schedule a client appointment outside of office hours, they will notify the Shelter Coordinator for approval.

Definitions

The shelter is staffed by paid staff, the Shelter Coordinator and a small number of volunteers.

Guests: The people who access Blooming House for shelter or other resources.

Volunteer: The people who volunteer their time to help make the shelter operate and are referred to as volunteers.

Staff: The people who are paid to work overnight in the shelter, providing support to guests and volunteers. Staff provide orientation to new volunteers and may delegate tasks throughout each shift.

Shelter Coordinator: This staff member will coordinate daily intake of guests, after-hours and, crisis intakes. They will supervise the state of supplies and cleanliness of the shelter, as well as ensure everything is running effectively with appropriate staff and volunteers in place. The Shelter Coordinator is responsible for coordinating staff and volunteers and for ensuring proper data collection on number of guests accessing services, number of repeat guests, etc. They will be available for crises as they arise during non-office hours.

Referral Bed: A bed where a guest has been referred from one of our Community Partners (another shelter, Food Bank, Soup Kitchen, Canadian Mental Health Association, Hospital, Jail etc.) or the Blooming House staff team.

Emergency Bed: An emergency bed is a bed given to guests who arrive at the shelter without calling ahead.

Harm Reduction: This view celebrates positive changes that individuals make, regardless of how small, and recognizes the importance of meeting people where they are in their lives instead of holding them to unrealistic standards. Respect for choice and agency is central. Harm reduction focuses on prioritizing urgent needs first (i.e. keeping people healthy) while still supporting less likely but important outcomes (i.e. abstinence with substances). Realistic interventions ensure that irreparable harm is minimized (i.e. avoiding HIV transmission) so that recovery is always an option down the road. More broadly, harm reduction approaches strive to be person-centred, compassionate, and nonjudgmental. People who engage in risky behavior are still valuable community members. People who take risks deserve to have their human rights defended. This approach works to reduce stigmatization and stereotypes by humanizing all people.

Shelter Policies

Accessing the Shelter

The accessibility of the shelter is determined by how many beds are open and the environmental dynamics. If there is an open referral bed by 11pm it could turn into an emergency bed. An intake is necessary for anyone accessing the shelter (guest, drop-in, or re-access). In addition, each guest must place any belongings that are not permitted in the shelter in a brown bag that is locked up and given back when the guest leaves the shelter space (please see **Brown Bag** policy).

Open Hours

The shelter open hours (for guests) are 8pm to 8am. It is important that these times are held firm and we cannot allow guests in early or stay late. There are no cut-off times for entrance;

only the availability of beds and team consensus on the number of drop-ins determines the number of people who can access the shelter (please see **Severe Weather** policy).

Reservation Policy

If guests have made a reservation during the day, they must check in by phone or text by 9pm to confirm they still need a bed. If they don't check in, the bed will be considered vacant. If they do check-in, the bed will be held until 11pm. At that point, if a guest does not show up by 11pm, their bed will be considered vacant.

If a guest doesn't check in at 9pm or arrive at 11pm, they will be unable to make a reservation for the following night. They will still be permitted to walk in and call about availability once the shelter is open.

Leaving the Shelter

If a guest wants to leave the shelter at any time, they must take all personal belongings with them, and their bed will not be held. If guests who are staying at the Shelter want to access their brown bag, (other than for medication) they must take all of their belongings with them and leave shelter and re-intake upon arrival. Their bed will not be held.

When a guest leaves the shelter for whatever reason, and for whatever amount of time, this must be recorded in the communication log. Information to be included:

- date and time
- name of guest
- reason given by the guest (if possible)
- events leading to the guest leaving (if possible)

Storage Policy

Guests may store a limited numbers of labelled/bagged/boxed items in the storage holding area for up to 72 hours. In order to do so, guests must leave contact information upon intake. If the guests accesses the Shelter in the next 72 hours, the time limit begins over again. If guests do not access with 72 hours, staff will make all reasonable efforts to contact the guest (phone call, text or email) before disposing of items. Blooming House Women's Shelter will in no way be held responsible for guests belongings and, in order to access the storage area, guests must sign a liability waiver agreeing to these terms.

Guests personal belongings may not be left in the bedrooms longer than the 12 hours of access. A small bin will be provided for guests to place their clearly labelled belongings in the storage area that they wish to have regular access to.

Door Traffic

- The door to the shelter is locked at all times and cannot be propped open.
- Guests can step outside (for a smoke, conversation, air, etc.) in the designated smoking area. Smoking will only be allowed in the designated outdoor area.

- Guests are encouraged to inform staff when they are going outside or leaving the property.
- Only a staff person can open the door or admit people into the shelter when someone knocks.
- Please do not let any new people into the building without asking why they are attending the shelter. This includes volunteers, guests, drop-ins, and police (please see **Police** policy).

Capacity

Capacity at the Blooming House Women's Shelter is up to 8 beds. In the event of too many guests, Staff will call the Emergency Housing Hotline (1-833-220-4722).

Severe Weather Policy

In the event of severe weather, as defined below, the shelter will remain open during the daytime hours to accommodate guests during a storm. This policy outlines what types of weather would qualify for the extension of hours and how the shelter will operate during this situation.

For winter storms/blizzard:

Winter storms are defined by Environment Canada as a major snowfall of 25cm or more within a 24-hour period or significant snowfall that is combined with other cold weather precipitation types such as: freezing rain, strong winds, blowing snow and/or extreme cold.

Blizzards are defined by Environment Canada as a time when winds of 40 km/hr or greater are expected to cause widespread reductions in visibility to 400 metres or less, due to blowing snow, or blowing snow in combination with falling snow, for at least 4 hours.

If government offices are closed due to a winter storm, the shelter will remain open during the day until the Soup Kitchen opens at 11am and transport guests to the Soup kitchen via taxi. However if the Soup Kitchen remains closed, guests will be allowed to stay at the shelter for the day. The same shelter rules will apply and guest may keep their beds throughout the day into the second night.

For extreme cold weather:

If the temperature drops below -35 degrees Celsius, the shelter will remain open during the day until the Soup kitchen is open at 11am and will pay the cab fare of all guests to transport them to the Soup Kitchen in a warm vehicle to prevent extended periods outside. The shelter will coordinate with staff at the soup kitchen to arrange the same for returning to the shelter in the evening and will open at 6pm to accommodate this.

Decision to extend the hours of the Blooming House shelter will be made using this policy and at the discretion of the Shelter Coordinator. Appropriate staffing will need to be in place to open the shelter early and the ability to do so will be based on this. For extending the overnight hours into the daytime, the overnight staff will remain until they are relieved by incoming staff. Coordination of bringing in extra staff and volunteers will be done by the Shelter Coordinator.

For extreme hot or wet weather:

If the temperature goes above 30 degrees Celcius, at the discretion of the Shelter Coordinator, the shelter will open early in the evening to accommodate.

Decision to extend the hours of the Blooming House shelter will be made using this policy and at the discretion of the Shelter Coordinator. Appropriate staffing will need to be in place to open the shelter early and the ability to do so will be based on this. For extending the overnight hours into the daytime, the overnight staff will remain until they are relieved by incoming staff. Coordination of bringing in extra staff and volunteers will be done by the Shelter Coordinator.

For weather warnings:

If a weather warning has been issued by Environment Canada, at the discretion of the Shelter Coordinator, the shelter will modify its hours as needed.

Decision to extend the hours of the Blooming House shelter will be made using this policy and at the discretion of the Shelter Coordinator. Appropriate staffing will need to be in place to open the shelter early and the ability to do so will be based on this. For extending the overnight hours into the daytime, the overnight staff will remain until they are relieved by incoming staff. Coordination of bringing in extra staff and volunteers will be done by the Shelter Coordinator.

Behavior

Non-admittance or being discharged from the shelter is behavior-based. This could include but is not limited to, threats of any nature, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, or physical assault. Any actions that put other individuals or staff at risk of harm are not tolerated and that person will be asked to leave. Police are called if the individual refuses to leave. Volunteers can receive Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training in order to de-escalate situations of conflict. Staff can wear personal alarm systems (“panic buttons”) that can alert police in case of emergency.

Intoxication

During the intake conversation, staff assesses if a guest is intoxicated. Consistent with our low-barrier philosophy, guests who are intoxicated will be admitted as long as they:

- can move safely with minimal assistance,
- can communicate with shelter staff, and
- follow the rules expected of all guests.

If staff believes that the person may be a risk to themselves or others, staff may ask if and when the individual used drugs or alcohol. If a guest is significantly intoxicated on a severe weather

night and has to be discharged, staff will call ambulance services. If the person is a risk to themselves or other people, an ambulance will be called. Such guests cannot be permitted to stay at the shelter until they have been medically cleared.

Destruction of Property

If someone commits an act of willful and serious property damage they will be asked to leave. Staff will phone the Shelter Coordinator. Police may be called, and the person may be charged for their actions. Blooming House may ban a guest who has committed property damage. The board of Blooming House will be informed as soon as possible.

Sexualized Behavior

Any sexualized behavior by guests in the shelter needs to be directly addressed in the moment and stopped. If a guest masturbates, exposes their genitals or makes sexualized comments to other guests or staff, please approach them and ask them to stop immediately. If this behavior repeats, the guest may be asked to leave. These behaviors may seem hard to address but it is really important that they are consistently and directly addressed to avoid continued behavior.

If the Guidelines are Violated

If someone violates any of the shelter guidelines, staff needs to:

- Talk to the person to resolve the situation and communicate that those actions are unacceptable (if possible).
- Ask the person to leave if the behavior continues or if the original violation is serious (“serious” will be determined by the staff team).
- Call the police if the person refuses to leave.

All staff and volunteers will be trained to be able to consistently evaluate acceptable behaviours.

Discharging Guests

If someone is asked to leave the Shelter for violating the guidelines, the guest is “discharged” and cannot stay at the shelter for at least that night. On the shift that a guest is discharged, Blooming House staff can provide means to keep that person safe for the night. This could be blankets, food, a gift card, or transportation to get them to another safe space for the night (if arranging transportation, please follow the **Taxi policy**).

In most cases the guest may return the next night but if a guest’s behavior warrants an extended discharge (beyond the night of the incident) the Shelter Coordinator and the Blooming House board will review the situation and communicate the decision with staff. When a guest is discharged for multiple days, they cannot be on shelter property or receive food, blankets or transportation means from the Shelter. Guests who are discharged for more than one night are recorded in the communication log.

In the case of serious incidents, or at the request of the Shelter property owner, a guest may be discharged for the remainder of the season and logged in the communication log.

Belongings of Guests

Guests must take **all** of their belongings (including brown bags) with them in the morning or whenever they leave the shelter. Any items remaining in the space will be considered abandoned and will be disposed of. Please note that any items not permitted to be on your person at the Shelter must be stored in a brown bag. Guests should be reminded that Blooming House is not responsible for their belongings.

Brown Bag Policy & Safety

Brown Bag Intake

To be read with each intake – printed on intake form

- If we find, or have strong reason to believe that you have any **drugs (with the exception of prescription cannabis-license required to bring on site and access), prescription (excluding epi-pens, inhalers, birth control) and over the counter medication, needles, alcohol, inhalants, or weapons** on your person while you are at the shelter, you will be asked to leave for the night.
- During intake you are given a brown bag where you can place anything that is important to you or that you do not want to have on your person while you are at the shelter.
- We value your privacy, therefore we won't look at what you put in that bag, nor do we want you to tell us what you have put into your bag.
- Whatever you put into the bag you will not have access until you leave the shelter space, with the exception of medications that you require for your health.
- You must take your brown bag with you when you leave the shelter space. Bags left behind are considered abandoned. Abandoned bags are disposed of daily.
- Staff will label the bag with guest's name and the date, staple the bag shut, and put it in the locked cabinet.

Brown Bag Policy

Blooming House respects the privacy of all its guests. We recognize that guests may have items with them, which they do not want guests and/or staff to see. In order to provide all guests with a safe, secure and private way of storing these types of items all guests are provided with a brown bag during intake. The contents of this bag are known only to the guest and should not be made known to staff or other guests.

While in the shelter, guests are not allowed to have the following items on their person:

- Needles (clean or dirty, packaged or not, naloxone kit, etc.)
- Drugs, Medications both prescriptions and over-the counter (excluding birth control, inhalers, and epi-pens)
- Alcohol or any liquid containing alcohol (mouthwash, sanitizer, nail polish remover, vanilla extract, etc.)
- Weapons
- Inhalants

If staff finds or has reason to believe a guest has any of these items on their person while they're at the shelter, or that a guest has consumed drugs or alcohol on the property, there is a risk they will lose access to the shelter. This information is on the intake forms and house rules. Please note:

- Individuals will not be searched
- Any items submitted will not be confiscated and police will not be contacted for any item (if someone has a gun, call the police if there is immediate danger)

Whatever is placed into the bag is not accessible until a guest leaves the shelter, with the exception of medications that are required. If a guest has an inhaler/puffer for asthma or an Epi Pen, those can remain with the guest.

Brown Bag Safety

When handling brown bags, staff are to use caution. To remove brown bags from brown bag drawer, wear sharps gloves and use tongs (hung on side of brown bag cabinet) when lifting the bags.

Brown Bag Privacy Guidelines

- Guests are to be given a private space (staff avert their eyes but do not leave room) to place items in their brown bag.
- Brown Bags will be placed in a locked, secure space and kept there until it is returned to its owner upon leaving the shelter space.
- Brown bags will not be opened by staff under any circumstances while the guest is in the shelter space.
- Guests will not be searched by staff or volunteers.

Medications

If someone needs to take medications while at OTC, they must indicate so at intake, they will be stored in a separate brown bag (per each guest), marked Rx. The guest must take their medication in front of staff person and then return it to their brown bag to be locked up. Puffers

for asthma as well as Epipens, and birth control should be kept on the person and do not need to be turned in to staff. Medicinal Cannabis must be accompanied by a licensed provider card to access. Staff does NOT assist with medications. If a guest is unsure of what medication to take or what amount of medication to take, please refer them to, 811 or a pharmacy.

Responsibilities of Guests

- Contents of brown bags are not to be discussed amongst guests.
- If guests will need access to their brown bag throughout the night for prescription medications they must make this clear to staff during intake. Medication will be stored in a separate brown bag (for each guest) marked Rx.
- With the exception of prescription medications, guests will not have access to their brown bag unless they leave the shelter space.
- Brown Bags will be returned to guests at the door AS they exit the shelter space, and only at that time (e.g. not while they eat breakfast).

Disposal Policy

- Brown bags are not meant for long-term storage.
- All guests MUST claim their bags before leaving the shelter.
- Staff will remind guests in the morning to pick up their brown bags.
- If guests refuse to take their brown bags upon leaving the shelter, the contents of the bag will be disposed of by morning consistent staff as soon as possible. See disposal policy.
- Bags left at the shelter will be considered abandoned by their owner.
- Morning consistent staff will dispose of abandoned brown bags twice weekly. Those disposing of brown bags must refer to disposal guidelines in log book.

Needle Policy

- During intake, guests are asked to dispose of any used needles they may have in their possession in the available sharps containers. Guests are asked to not place any used needles in brown bags. Guests are not permitted to have on their person used or unused needles.
- As with all brown bags (excluding those containing prescription medication), guests will not have access to brown bags containing needles until they exit the shelter space. Guests may choose to leave the shelter at any time, taking their belongings with them.

Smoking Policy

- Smoking is defined as inhaling, exhaling, burning or carrying of any lighted cigar, cigarette, pipe, other lighted smoking equipment, or vaporizers. All smoking must occur within designated areas.

- In regards to cannabis, if a guest presents a prescription for the legal use of cannabis, the guest may smoke in designated area only. If a guest does not present a prescription, staff may use their discretion to determine if a guest is permitted to smoke.

Washroom Policy

Regular bathroom checks (2-3 checks per hour) should be done over the course of the shift. All staff should consider this part of their responsibilities on site. The washroom check will be logged.

Taxi Policy

Blooming House has an agreement with Yellow Cab to provide transportation to and from the shelter. Women who are staying with Blooming House can request transportation to be arranged for them by the Shelter staff.

If a guest has called during the day to reserve a bed, arrangements can be made for transportation at a designated spot and time to take them to the house. This will be at the discretion of the staff member arranging the reservation and the guest. Guests will not be able to call Yellow Cab directly to arrange transportation to the shelter themselves, all taxi reservations must be made by Blooming House.

The following rules will apply:

- All cabs have to be within city limits
- Only women can be in the cabs (this includes transgender women)
- No stops allowed
- Can only be between 8pm-8am
- Guests can only be dropped off at Blooming House Women's Shelter. In expectation of their arrival, staff should observe when the taxi arrives to make certain guest is accessing the Shelter

When women are leaving the shelter, Blooming House will arrange to take them downtown, preferably sharing a cab (depending on personal history of guests). The following destinations are acceptable:

- The Salvation Army
- The Soup Kitchen
- A doctor's office (prior approval from staff is required)
- Pharmacy
- Downtown public area or business (Confed Centre, coffee shops, etc.)
- QEH
- Government Services

Special arrangements can be made at the discretion of shelter staff. No stops will be allowed on trips from the shelter to the pre-arranged destination.

All taxi arrangements should be noted in the taxi log.

If a guest takes a taxi to Blooming House without adhering to policy it must be paid for by the guest.

If a guest is traveling from outside Charlottetown, Blooming House will make their best effort to provide service on T3 Transit or the County Line.

Confidentiality

If someone calls the shelter or comes to the door looking for someone, do not release any information about whether the person is there or not – simply say ***“I’m sorry but I cannot confirm or deny who has stayed at the Shelter, would you like me to take a message and I can pass it along should I happen to see them”***. This applies to everyone: friends, parents, other shelters, police (*see policy outlining police), etc.

All names and information provided by individuals accessing the shelter are normally confidential. Any exceptions to this policy will be made according to the decision of staff and the Shelter Coordinator. Staff cannot share this information with anyone other than other staff (when information is relevant for up-coming shifts) and the Shelter Coordinator. Staff can share information for the purposes of shift changes at the shelter and updating the Shelter Coordinator through the morning report written by the morning staff person. This kind of information sharing is considered the “day to day” running of the shelter and will not require consent to release information forms from the individuals accessing the shelter.

With written permission from the guest, staff can refer people to organizations or people that can help during the day. Staff may inform the Shelter Coordinator of the referral without giving detailed information about the person or their situation. Volunteers should not do advocacy work with people accessing the shelter, but instead to refer the person to Shelter Coordinator or staff who will coordinate with local appropriate services (e.g. Victim Services, Family Violence Prevention, Legal Aid).

Inclusion & Reduced Barriers

Blooming House Women’s Shelter strives to be a low barrier shelter for all guests. Some of the ways the Shelter tries to achieve this are:

- Guests are not asked for identification unless there is a question re: age (ex// under 18)
- Mental health issues are not an impediment for access so long as the guest does not pose a risk to themselves or others

- Intoxication is not an impediment for access so long as the guest does not pose a risk to themselves or others

Trans-Inclusion

Blooming House aims to be a low-barrier, inclusive, and safe space for women. It is our priority to keep all women safe. All guests will partake in the same intake procedure and will be asked their name and if they identify as female. If someone says they identify as female, but exhibit aggressive or predatory behaviour, the staff is alert to this, and has the ability to ensure the policies of the shelter are not being taken advantage of. If someone is resistant or insistent, a letter of reference from a known LGBTQ+ group to confirm their identity will be requested.

Staff and volunteers are aware that we are a trans-inclusive space. Two-spirited First Nations people are accepted per the policy above.

Blooming House Women's Shelter strives to be an inclusive space. Some of the ways the Shelter tries to achieve this are:

- A more private intake can be arranged (rather than two simultaneous intakes in the same room)
- Transphobic, homophobic, or sexist language is not tolerated in the shelter
- Our guidelines state that the Shelter is a trans-inclusive shelter
- Ongoing education for staff and volunteers and policy/practices re-evaluation

Minimum Staff

There is always a minimum of two staff people at the shelter at all times. Experienced and less experienced volunteers are scheduled together as often as possible. This ensures confident and capable staffing as well as creates an opportunity to mentor and share skills with new volunteers. Blooming House also ensures that at least one person staffing the shelter has First Aid training. Additional staff (Shelter Coordinator) or volunteers may be present at the shelter for the first few hours of the evening shift in order to provide guidance and stability.

Phones & Musical Devices

Cell Phones

All cell phones are to be on silent or vibrate in the bedrooms. Respectful use of cell phones is allowed in other areas of the shelter (guests can have quiet/appropriate phone conversations elsewhere). If you overhear a phone conversation that is inappropriate for the shelter, please inform the guest they need to stop.

Landline Phone

The landline phone will be kept in the office. If a guest requests the use of the phone, staff can set it up in the common area. When they are finished with it, the phone is returned to the office. Please ensure guests conversations are appropriate and not breaking the guidelines of the space. Long distance phone calls are allowed at staff's discretion.

Musical Devices

Guests are permitted to use musical devices (including cell phones) but they must use earbuds or headphones to listen to personal music, as long as it is not audible to other guests. Guests who play their music in the space should be asked to turn their music off or use ear buds/phones.

Police Policies & Blooming House Women's Shelter

The population we serve can have a complicated relationship with police. The Shelter policies recognize that police presence in the shelter can be a necessary reality but should be limited to situations of necessity. Only staff (not volunteers) should deal with the police.

Calling the Police

Staff may choose to call the police where necessary to remove a guest, to respond to violence, or in other emergency situations. The safety of the space, staff, and guests is our first concern.

When Police Can Enter the Space

If police have not been called by staff, there are very limited situations where they have the right to enter the shelter.

Some examples include:

- If police are called, they have the right to enter and assess the situation to ensure it's safe. That includes a call from staff, but may also include a response to an alarm, panic button, an accidental 911 call, or even a call from a guest that staff might not know about. If you know that it was an accidental call and everything is safe, explain this to the police, but do not impede them if they want to enter.
- If they are accompanying paramedics who wish to have the police with them.
- If they are literally chasing a guest who enters the shelter to escape from them ("hot pursuit"). This is a very rare situation.
- If they have a search warrant saying they can search the Blooming House Women's Shelter. This is a very rare situation. Staff should follow up with the Shelter Coordinator.

- They are entering the under The Mental Health Act. See below excerpt from the act:

“A peace officer may take a person into custody and take him or her forthwith to a place for involuntary psychiatric examination if the peace officer has reasonable grounds to believe that **(a)** the person is suffering from mental disorder of a nature or degree so as to require hospitalization in the interests of the person’s own safety or the safety of others; **(b)** the person is refusing or unable to consent to undergo psychiatric examination; and **(c)** the urgency of the situation does not allow for a judicial order for psychiatric examination.

Reasonable measures (2) A peace officer or other person who is proceeding under subsection (1) or subsection 6(3) or 7(5) **may take any reasonable measures including the entering of any premises and the use of physical restraint or force to take the person into custody.** 1994, c.39, s.8.”

In any situation where the police may be entering the shelter, make an effort to inform guests (without waking anyone up).

Police do not Have the Right to:

- Obtain any information about guests staying in the shelter, including confirming whether a guest is or is not in the shelter unless they have a valid warrant
- Enter the space except in the circumstances above
- Enter the space based on an arrest warrant (a warrant which says they can arrest a person but does not say they have a right to search the shelter.)
- **An exception will be made when police contact Blooming House (by phone or in person) looking for a woman who is at a known risk for self harm.** Staff will acknowledge that the said person is safe and under observation. Police will not disclose the location of the person along to any interested parties, only that they are in a safe place.

Always check with the shelter coordinator if you are unsure how to deal with a specific police situation.

Sleeping

Guests are not allowed to lie down and sleep anywhere in the house other than in a bed.

Youth Under 18 Years Old

Any person under eighteen years old cannot be permitted in the space.

If someone comes to Blooming House Women’s Shelter and self-identifies as being younger than 18 years old, the Shelter has an obligation to report the youth to Child Protection Services because of the broad definition of ‘Neglect’ in the Child Protection Act. These discussions will be

navigated with transparency, open-ended questions, to be done with staff. Please contact 1-(800) 341-6868 to make a report to child protection.

Youth - 18 Years Old

Youth who are eighteen years old are permitted in the space; however, if someone comes to the Shelter and self-identifies as being younger than eighteen years old, the Shelter has an obligation to report the youth to the Child Protection Services because of the broad definition of 'Neglect' in the Child Protection Act. These discussions will be navigated with transparency, open-ended questions, to be done with staff. Please contact 1 (800) 341-6868 to make a report to child protection.

Calls are to be made only once, and if the youth has been accessing other shelters this can be navigated with staff at Blooming House and other shelter.

If we are unsure, we will ask the youth their birthdate. If the youth tells us they are eighteen or over we will believe them and proceed with the typical intake procedure. The youth will not be asked to produce ID if not available.

Shelter Procedures

Communication Log

There is a communication log in the Staff Google Drive where staff must record all notable activities or incidents (e.g. accessing outside help, verbal altercations between guests, concerning behaviour). Please be clear and concise using factual observations with minimal opinions. For example, *do not* write "John was acting weird," but explain the actual situation if you think it is necessary for other staff to know that information. Try to use a few identifying features and make sure to use non-judgmental language and be specific about concerns.

Environmental Sensitivities

The shelter is a scent-free space.

Kitchen / Food

Please use common sense; keep hygiene and sanitation in mind when serving food – many guests have compromised immune systems and may be more sensitive to contaminated food. Please follow food distribution guidelines (also posted in the kitchen).

Guests are permitted to bring small amounts of their own food or drinks. For example, a guest may clearly label with their first name and store yogurt cups or juice in the fridge until they reach their expiration date. Blooming House is not responsible for guest's food.

Food Distribution Guidelines:

- Date all food that has come in during the day and during your shift.
- Keep sandwiches, muffins, and other fresh foods in the kitchen. Put out a limited number of sandwiches/muffins/etc. at a time (ex: 6). This is not meant to limit the amount of sandwiches offered to guests, but to limit how long food sits outside of the fridge. Do not let fresh food, especially those including eggs, tuna, etc. sit outside of the fridge for more than an hour.

Quiet Time

Quiet time will begin at 11pm. If you are sharing a room, the main, overhead light in the room must be turned off at 11pm.

Movies

Please do not let guests play any inappropriate movies at the shelter. Sometimes the content listed below is not anticipated but please do your best to avoid having these scenarios on screen.

- Repeated or explicit nudity
- Drug or heavy alcohol use
- Severe violence
- Racist, homophobic, sexist or other hateful language

The movie rule is intended to keep the space as respectful and safe for guests and volunteers. If a movie is not appropriate, stop it and remove the video from the common area (put it in the office with a note). You can preface this by announcing that the movie is making you uncomfortable/is not appropriate and you will have to turn it off.

Needle Stick Injury

A needle stick injury is when someone's skin is accidentally punctured by a needle. Because of the presence of needles in the shelter's sharps containers, the occasional inappropriate disposal of needles outside on the shelter's property, and the potential for encountering needles in other areas of the shelter, the potential for needle stick injuries exists.

To prevent these types of injuries from occurring please wear gloves and be careful and aware when removing linens from the beds in the morning, when disposing of clothing or other items, such as backpacks, that have been left in the shelter and when cleaning the shelter. Do not

reach anywhere that you cannot see (e.g., in pockets or under mattresses). If you come across a needle or if a guest informs you of a needle on the property, please wear gloves and use tongs to pick up the needle then dispose of the needle in one of the sharps containers (located in the office and in each washroom).

A number of serious infectious illnesses can be transmitted through needle stick injuries so it is important to seek treatment quickly if this type of injury happens. If a needle stick injury does occur:

- Encourage the wound to bleed and wash it with soap and water
- Go to the Emergency Room and inform staff there of what happened
- You are welcome to contact 811 for advice as well and inform the Shelter Coordinator and Blooming House Board of the incident.

Spill Kit

If there is ever blood, vomit or other bodily fluids that need to be cleaned up in the shelter, it should be cleaned up using a spill kit located in the filing cabinet in the shelter office. Put on the gloves and goggles in the kit and pour the powder over the fluid until the fluid is saturated. Then scoop up the material using one of the scoops in the kit and put it in a garbage bag. Once all visible matter has been scooped up, disinfect the surface. Double bag the material and take it immediately to the designated disposal area.

Disposal Policy

For staff and Shelter Coordinator only - to be carried out during the day, not during shelter hours.

Brown Bags

All brown bags will be treated as hazardous waste and will be disposed of following IWMC guidelines.

Alcohol

Pour it down the drain and recycle the bottle.

Government issued documents or cards

Keep them and return them to their owner, if they return to the shelter. Any documents or cards remaining at the shelter when we close at the end of the season will be shredded and disposed of.

Weapons

Lock in a locker and inform Shelter Coordinator to drop these items off at the police station (10 Kirkwood Dr, Charlottetown). The person dropping them off simply needs to say that they came across these items in the community and wanted to turn them in to police.

Illegal Substances/Medications

Take found medications/illegal substances to the pharmacy. They will be disposed of safely there.

Personal documents

Do not read through any personal documents. Look at documents briefly to determine whether they are government issued and if they are not, shred them. If the documents are government issued, keep them and return them to their owner, if they return to the shelter. Any documents or cards remaining at the shelter when we close at the end of the season will be shredded.

Sharps

Put these in the sharps container even if they're still packaged.