



Document Standards Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA) requires the City of Hamilton, as Service Manager, to establish and administer policies, local rules and procedures for social housing in Hamilton.

This includes establishing acceptable documentation for verifying eligibility for rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance including rent supplement, or housing allowance at the time of:

- Initial application;
- Review (quarterly or annual); and
- Any change in income, number of household members, contact information and/or information that may affect eligibility.

PURPOSE

To identify the documents required to verify eligibility criteria for rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance including rent supplement, or housing allowance, and a household's situation.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all City of Hamilton Housing Services Division staff, Access to Housing (ATH) staff, all co-operative housing and social Housing Provider staff who are responsible for applicant and/or tenant/ member eligibility. It applies to all RGI, rent supplement and housing allowance units administered by the City of Hamilton. Where applicable, each policy will have a Document Standards section which details documents required for that

DEFINITIONS

Glossary of Terms

particular policy.

Refer to this [Glossary of Terms](#) for many of the terms and acronyms commonly used in social housing and the Rent Supplement Program.

TERMS &

CONDITIONS

Access to Housing, Housing Providers and Housing Services Division staff

ATH staff must use these document standards when reviewing documentation to determine and verify applicant eligibility for the centralized waiting list.

Housing Provider and Housing Services Division Rent Supplement Program staff must use these document standards to:

- confirm that new and ongoing tenants or co-op members in receipt of RGI, rent supplement or housing allowance meet the eligibility requirements,
- document changes to income or household composition, and
- verify income and calculate or recalculate RGI

Access to Housing Application

Each household must, at minimum, have a signed and completed Access to Housing (ATH) application, required documents and



Identification and Citizenship Status

Verification of Age and Canadian Citizenship Status

Verification of Permanent Residency

building selection form in order to be eligible for the centralized wait list and to receive an offer of RGI housing or a rent supplement. Additional forms and other documentation may be required depending on the circumstances.

One acceptable personal identification document for each member of the household as proof of status in Canada must be attached to each Access to Housing (ATH) application.

Acceptable documents to verify **age and Canadian citizenship** include:

- Canadian Birth Certificate or documentation from Office of the Registrar General regarding application for replacement of a Canadian Birth Certificate;
- Canadian Notice of Birth Registration Card;
- Statement of Live Birth from the Office of the Registrar General in Ontario (or other provincial entity responsible for birth registration);
- A certified copy of Statement of Live Birth;
- Notice of Birth Registration from the Office of the Registrar General in Ontario (or other provincial entity responsible for birth registration);
- Registered Indian Band Status (Native);
- Canadian Passport;
- Canadian Citizenship Card or documentation from Citizenship and Immigration Canada regarding application for replacement of a Citizenship Card, or acknowledging application for Canadian Citizenship;
- Quebec and Newfoundland Baptismal Certificate;
- Canadian National Defense Card;
- Canadian Citizenship Certificate;
- A completed and signed form from a representative of a registered ID clinic or an affidavit Legal clinic confirming that the client applied for proof or replacement of the Record of Landing confirming that the client applied for proof or replacement of the following:
 - Record of Landing;
 - Birth Certificate;
 - Statement of Live Birth

Acceptable documents to verify **permanent residency** include:

- Permanent Resident Card;
- Documentation from Citizenship and Immigration Canada acknowledging application for permanent status in Canada



Verification of Status as Refugee Claimant

- e.g. on-line application confirms application being processed;
- Immigrant Visa and Record of Landing issued before June 28, 2002 (Landing papers) including date of landing;
- Confirmation of Permanent Residence:
 - Immigration documents indicating Convention Refugee, Protected Person Status or Refugee Claimants such as acknowledgement of Convention Refugee Claim, Eligibility Certificate, Notice to Appear, or Notice of Decision;
 - Written notice from the Immigration Appeal Division of the Immigration Refugee Board that it has received an appeal of a removal order and the removal order has been temporarily set aside or stayed;
- A support letter from a representative of an agency or legal clinic confirming that the client applied for permanent status in Canada must be accompanied by:
 - Copy of cheque or money order payable to Immigration Canada with proof of receipt by Immigration Canada (such as cancelled cheque);
 - Copy of on-line application/receipt - Immigration Canada

Acceptable documents to verify **refugee claimant** status include:

- Written notice from the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) of Canada that the refugee claim is under consideration or in pre-removal risk assessment;
- Written notice from Citizenship and Immigration Canada that the refugee claim is under consideration by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada or in pre-removal risk assessment (Letter of acknowledgement of the claim issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC));
- If the refugee claim was denied by (IRB), written notice from the Federal Court of Canada that the person has applied for leave from judicial review or that the decision is currently under review

NOTE: When a household **accepts** a subsidized housing unit or a rent supplement or housing allowance, the Housing Provider/Rent Supplement Clerk will request current verification of status in Canada for each member of the household.



Verification of Income

All households are required to submit the following documentation of gross income for all of the following sources of income the household receives:

Income Source	Required Documentation
Employment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full-time, part-time, casual, seasonal • overtime, shift premiums and vacation • pay • commissions, tips, bonuses • illness and disability pay • Employment Insurance (EI) payments • Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) short-term payments • strike pay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for the start of assistance, start of employment, or annual reviews, pay stubs for the most recent 4 weeks, provided the person has worked the previous 4 weeks; or a letter from the employer or agency which details gross income received in the last 4 weeks (unless the applicant/tenant/member is already reporting this income • for quarterly reviews, pay stubs for the most recent 12 weeks; or a letter from the employer or agency which details gross income received in the last 12 weeks. This letter must be signed and on business letterhead. It must include the name and phone number of a person to contact for verification. Letters are not recommended unless pay stubs are not available. • for tips or gratuities, a statutory declaration stating the amount received during the period • for EI, benefit statement printout from household member's EI web account showing the gross weekly amount • for WSIB, letter or statement or pay stubs • for fluctuating income, after the first year, Notice of Assessment



from Canada Revenue Agency

- **for strike pay**, a cheque stub or letter from the union
- **for the end of employment**, Record of Employment or Letter of Termination

NOTE: Copies of bank passbooks or bank statements are not acceptable as proof of income.

Self Employment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • freelance workers/ independent contractors • sole proprietor of a business • a partner in a business • tutoring • babysitting / child care • taxi • business • other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business license holders must report whether or not they have received business income. • If self-employed less than one year, a financial statement every 3 months. This statement does not have to be audited. • If self-employed over one year, a working copy of their Canada Revenue Agency personal income tax return, including the Statement of Business or Professional Activities and a Notice of Assessment. • If self-employed over one year and incorporated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a T4 and T5, if any, for employment income and/or dividend income received from the business, or ○ a copy of personal income tax return and a Notice of Assessment
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Social Assistance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Works (OW) • Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of benefit unit size on a statement of assistance (income) and drug card from OW or ODSP Note: as of December, 2016 drug cards will no longer be issued – a form or letter from the OW or ODSP case manager to verify household composition is acceptable • Proof of ineligibility for OW or ODSP
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Pensions or Support

- Old Age Security (OAS)
- Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
- Guaranteed Income Support (GIS) or Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS)
- WSIB long-term disability
- Other pensions (i.e. other country)
- War Veteran's Allowance (included)
- Veteran's Independence Program benefit (excluded)
- Special Allowance under the Veteran's Disability Pension Program (excluded)

- T4 or letter/statement from Service Canada stating gross income from OAS/GIS and CPP, or
- for seniors on fixed incomes, the Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency, or
- most recent cheque stub or
- letter from the pension manager stating the amount of the payment, or
- letter or most recent statement from (foreign) government agency issuing pension, or
- letter or most recent statement from Veterans Affairs Canada

NOTE: Copies of bank passbooks or bank statements are not acceptable as proof of income.

Sponsorship Agreement

- statement from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and statement of support from sponsor
- proof of sponsorship breakdown

Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)

- statement, assessment form, or letter from OSAP confirming receipt of funding and confirmation of other earnings (if applicable), **and**
- proof of school registration (see below)

Child and/or spousal support payments received or paid, or proof of change in support amount

for **receipt** of child or spousal support:

- a copy of the separation agreement or court order, a letter from a lawyer or the Family Responsibility Office, and evidence of funds received (Void cheques or bank statement if it is



		<p>direct deposit.), or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a statutory declaration stating how much the person receives and how often they receive it • for support in default, proof of filing with the Family Responsibility Office <p>for payment of child or spousal support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a copy of the separation agreement or court order, and evidence of funds paid <p>for default (support not in pay):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proof of filing with the Family Responsibility Office <p>for a change in the amount of child or spousal support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a copy of the new separation agreement or court order, a letter from a lawyer or the Family Responsibility Office, and evidence of funds received, or • a statutory declaration stating how much the person receives/pays and how often they receive/pay it <p>for the end of child or spousal support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the end date is not otherwise shown in existing documentation, a copy of the updated separation agreement or court order, a letter from a lawyer or the Family Responsibility Office, and evidence of funds received, or • a statutory declaration stating that support is no longer received/paid <p>Insurance Benefits</p> <p>Insurance Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most recent payment stub; or • letter from the insurance company indicating the monthly payment amount • letter confirming payment ending
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Income Tax Statements

In **addition** to the above, **all households in receipt of RGI, including rent supplement**, are required to submit annual income tax statements as follows:

Income Tax Notice of Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most recent Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for each adult member of the household required to file; • Proof of reassessment; or • Proof from CRA that each adult member of the household has not filed income taxes
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Verification of Assets

In addition to above, **all households** are required to submit proof of all of their assets as follows:

Proof of Assets	Required Documentation
Bank accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a current passbook or a monthly bank statement (showing the account number, the name and address of the bank or credit union, total interest earned in the past year or the average monthly interest earned in the past year)
Guaranteed Income Certificates (GIC's), RRIF's, RRSP, RESP and RDSP, term deposits, bonds, annuities, debentures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T3, T4RIF, or T5 slips issued by a bank or credit union, or • most recent account statements, or • a letter from the brokerage or financial institution with the interest earned in the past year
Shares, stocks, equities, mutual funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T3 or T5 slips issued by the brokerage or financial institution, or • most recent account statements or cheque stubs,



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> or a letter from the brokerage or financial institution describing the interest earned in the past year
Life insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a copy of the policy; or a letter from insurance company clearly indicating the policy number and the cash surrender value of the policy
Real estate (house, land, cottage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a written appraisal of the property done by a qualified appraiser signed Declaration of Intent to Sell Property form prior to placement on the ATH waiting list; when the property has been sold, a copy of the Purchase and Sale Agreement and legal documents verifying the equity received is required

Verification of Business Assets

If any members of the household own and operate a business, proof of business income and assets must be submitted as follows:

Proof of Business Assets	Required Documentation
Proof of business assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> audited annual statement of revenue and expenses households may also be required to provide proof of business assets and expenses

Verification of Child Custody

 A copy of court order for child custody, or a notarized statement or letter from a lawyer regarding any custody arrangements or a domestic contract that is valid under the *Family Law Act* and that is in writing and signed by both parties and witnessed, custody documents is required if both parents of all children are not part of the household.

Verification of School Attendance

All children in Ontario are legally required under the *Education Act* to stay in school until they graduate or turn 18, whichever comes first.



If the household includes a dependent aged 18 or over who is attending school, the household must submit proof of school attendance as follows:

Proof of School Attendance	Required Documentation
Proof of school attendance for all dependents aged 18 and over that are registered in school full time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • copy of the most recent report card (grades and teacher comments may be blacked out); or • registration form; or • letter from school confirming full time attendance at a recognized educational institution which is a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school • university • college of applied arts and technology • private career college • private school Full-time attendance means taking at least 60 per cent of a full course load according to the course calendar. A student with a permanent disability must be taking at least 40 per cent of a full course load. <p>Note: a school, other than a post-secondary institution, must be within the Province of Ontario.</p> If relevant, documentation is required to support exceptions to school attendance (e.g. doctor's note)

Annually, after occupancy, Housing Providers and Rent Supplement Clerks should:

- verify student status of household members (if they have income)
- confirm that the school they are attending qualifies as a recognized educational institution
- make sure that they meet the definition of full-time student



Additional Bedroom Verification

For specific additional bedroom criteria see the [Occupancy Standards Policy](#).

Additional Bedroom

Documentation verifying the circumstances that require an additional bedroom must be kept on the applicant or tenant/member's file, including:

- Nature of disability or serious condition – written verification from a doctor describing the nature of the disability or serious medical condition, and clearly specifying why an extra room is needed is required;
- Required medical equipment – written verification required – e.g. a doctor's note describing the equipment required by the applicant and clearly specifying why an extra room is needed, and;
- Verification of child custody - e.g. Court Order or a domestic contract that is valid under the *Family Law Act* and that is in writing and signed by both parties and witnessed, custody documents, or other applicable documentation
- Verification of caregiver situation – documentation which details the care giver needs required along with the additional bedroom request and verification of the caregiver's accommodations
- e.g. Court Order or a domestic contract that is valid under the *Family Law Act* and that is in writing and signed by both parties and witnessed, custody documents, or other applicable documentation

Verification of a Disability or Serious Medical Condition

Disability or Serious Medical Condition

Legislation allows requests to substantiate medical situations to verify eligibility for:

- an additional bedroom (e.g. pregnancy)
- Urgent Priority Status
- Special Needs
- Modified or Accessible Unit

Access to Medical Records

Providers, ATH and City staff **will not** request access to or review applicants' or tenants' medical records, beyond information required to verify the situation under consideration. Information



Verification of Priority Status

submitted by the applicant or tenant doctor is sufficient. Where staff feels that clarification and/or more medical information is warranted, staff will review it with their Program Manager. The Program Manager reviews the situation before approving the request for more medical information.

For specific criteria for each priority status on the centralized waiting list see [RGI Eligibility – Priority Status Policy](#)

Special Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed, completed Special Priority Verification form
Urgent Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed, completed Urgent Status Verification Declaration form OR • Signed, completed Verification of Urgent Status, Terminally Ill form
Homeless Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed and completed Request for Homeless Status form
Newcomer Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation which confirms immigration status meets basic eligibility requirements and housing application is within one year of entry into Canada • Refugees with government sponsorship are excluded.

Verification for Special Needs Housing

A [Special Needs/Modified Unit Form](#) must be completed by all households requesting housing and one or more of its members require accessibility modifications or provincially-funded support services in order to live independently. Additionally, applicants must provide:

- Medical documentation to support requests for modified units; or
- Medical or support service agency documentation, where supports are needed in order for a household to live independently

Annual Eligibility Reviews for Access to Housing

Each active applicant household on the centralized wait list is required to complete an annual review to maintain eligibility. At minimum each household must complete the [Update: Application for Housing](#) form once every 12 months. Additional forms and information may be required depending on the household's circumstances.

Annual Eligibility Reviews for Rent Supplement Program


Each household receiving a rent supplement is required to undergo an annual review. Each household must complete the [Annual Review Package](#) once every 12 months. This package includes



Annual RGI Reviews	<p>forms for income and asset information, consent for disclosure of information, and a declaration of the accuracy of the information provided. Additional forms and information may be required depending on the household's circumstances.</p> <p>RGI tenants and co-operative housing members are required to complete an Annual Review as per each Housing Provider's procedures and complete an updated Consent and Information form at least once every 12 months.</p>
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RESPONSIBILITIES	<p>The Rent Supplement Clerks, Housing Provider and Access to Housing staff are responsible to ensure households submit all of the verification documentation required for the program and that copies of the documents are in the physical file and/or scanned on the electronic file.</p> <p>Due to the confidential nature of the information collected about households through the application process, all reasonable caution must be taken to ensure the privacy of applicants and tenants/members. Only information required to verify an applicant's initial and ongoing eligibility, unit size required, rent amount, and eligibility for Special Priority, Urgent Status, Homeless Status or Special Needs housing is collected.</p> <p>The Manager, Investment in Affordable Housing and Manager of Social Housing are responsible to ensure this policy is followed, as it may be applicable to their respective program areas.</p>
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COMPLIANCE	<p>Staff with Access to Housing, Rent Supplement Clerks, and Housing Providers must ensure appropriate and required documentation is used to determine initial and ongoing eligibility for RGI assistance, rent supplement or housing allowance, and the correct rent amount. All required documents must be on the applicant file, tenant/co-op member's file or on the rent supplement/ housing allowance tenant's file, whichever the case.</p> <p>All applicant and tenant/member households are expected to provide required documentation. If a household is unable to provide the required documentation due to an exceptional circumstance, serious medication condition, and/or a disability, staff may accept a reasonable alternative to the required documentation, such as a sworn affidavit.</p> <p>An affidavit is not required in the following exceptional circumstances:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A special priority household believes that they may be at risk if they attempt to obtain information or documents. • Staff determine that those who are homeless, hard to house, or experiencing other barriers to obtaining documents cannot comply with the provision of documents. <p>All exceptional circumstances, serious medication conditions, or disabilities must be discussed with the manager and recorded on the applicant or tenant/member file. See RGI Eligibility – Priority Status Policy and the Record Keeping Policy (Rent Supplement Program).</p> <p><i>Housing Services Act, 2011, Sections 47 – 52, O. Reg. 367/11, Section 57</i></p>	
HISTORY	The Documents Standards Policy was developed in consultation with City staff and Access to Housing staff.	
Approval	Authors: Tammy Morasse, Senior Policy Analyst Kirstin Maxwell, Program and Policy Specialist Manager: Adam Sweedland, Manager of Social Housing David Brodati, Manager, Investment in Affordable Housing Director: Julie Western Set, Director – Housing Services Date: 2016-11-07	