

## Service Provider Protocol

<b>Protocol Title</b>	PATHS Rent Assistance Eligibility and Administration
<b>Program Area</b>	Prioritized Access to Housing Support (PATHS)
<b>Program Code</b>	PA
<b>Protocol Number</b>	TBD
<b>Portal Pathway</b>	TBD
<b>Approval Date</b>	04/26/2019
<b>Revised Date</b>	2/28/2019
<b>Applies to</b>	PATHS Team, Portable Home-Based Support Team

### Protocol Statement

This protocol was developed to support the PATHS team with consistent decision-making and messaging related to the eligibility and administration of PATHS Rent Assistance. PATHS Rent Assistance is comprised of rent assistance and support. Through PATHS Rent Assistance, households are provided with rent assistance, enabling households to acquire rental market housing of their choosing. This rent assistance is paired with home-based support, the purpose of which is to support households in their recovery from homelessness.

### Operating Details

#### PATHS Rent Assistance Eligibility

To be eligible for PATHS Rent Assistance, households must meet the following criteria:

- Must be on the Prioritized Access to Housing Support (PATHS) waiting list;
- Must be on the Community Housing Access Centre (CHAC) waiting list; and
- Have a gross household income that falls below the most recently published Household Income Limits (HILs).

#### Longer-Term Housing Support Eligibility

To be eligible for longer-term housing support coordinated through the PATHS list, households must:

1. Be experiencing homelessness;
2. Have low income (unable to self-pay for similar services);
3. Have a high level of need (acuity) as defined in the PATHS Framework;
4. Have legal status in Canada (able to rent or hold a lease);
5. Have lived in Waterloo Region for at least one year (currently or in the past);
6. Have exhausted a market rent search within municipalities (e.g. Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, or across Waterloo Region) based on current budget;
7. Agree to the following terms, as recorded in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS):
  - Agree to in-home visits;
  - Agree to pay rent in full and on time;
  - Agree to not damage their unit; and
  - Consent to service.

## Affordable Housing Eligibility

To be eligible for affordable housing coordinated through the CHAC list, households must have:

- At least one household member who is 16 years of age, or older and able to live on their own with or without support services.
- Canadian citizenship, *or* have made a claim for permanent resident or refugee claimant status, under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada)*.
- No removal order under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada)* against any household member.
- No money owed for rent or damages to any federally, provincially, or municipally funded housing provider. If any member of your household does owe money for this, you must have an approved repayment agreement in place with the housing provider and all payments must be up to date.
- No convictions on any members of your household for 1) offences involved with rent-geared-to-income assistance, *or* 2) misrepresenting their income to get rent-geared-to-income assistance. These would be convictions proved by the *Landlord and Tenant Board* or a court of law.
- No home suitable for year-round living, which you own whether in Canada or another country. If you do own one, you must agree to sell it within six months of receiving Rent Assistance funding.

## Household Income Limits

Households must have a **gross household income** that falls below the most recently published HILs (see below).

### Annual Household Income Limits (January 2018)\* updated annually

Unit Type	For housing in Wellesley and Wilmot Township	For housing in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, North Dumfries and Woolwich Townships
Bachelor	\$24,500	\$27,000
1 Bedroom	\$31,000	\$34,000
2 Bedroom	\$38,000	\$41,500
3 Bedroom	\$43,500	\$51,000
4+ Bedroom	\$54,000	\$71,000

## Eligible Units and Funding

For the purpose of this Program, affordable housing is defined as rental housing under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) in which the rent for each unit, inclusive of all utilities (heat, water, hot water, stove and refrigerator), parking, and other related fees, is less than or equal to the most recently released Alternate Average Market Rent (AAMR) levels as approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. These amounts are as follows:

<b>Unit Size (# of Bedrooms)</b>	<b>Average Market Rent (January 2018)</b>	<b>Average Market Rent (Proposed)</b>
Bachelor	\$832 per month	\$939 per month
One-bedroom	\$1,036 per month	\$1,205 per month
Two-bedroom	\$1,235 per month	\$1,428 per month
Three-bedroom	\$1,459 per month	\$1,506 per month

In addition to not exceeding the AAMR amounts identified above, units must be modest, be in satisfactory state of repair, meet local property standards, have no compliance orders/issues related to local by-laws, Fire or Building Codes, meet local occupancy standards (in relation to the number of household members and number of bedrooms in the unit) and must be self-contained units that include a kitchen and bathroom. Note that a kitchen would require a separate fridge, stove or cooking surface, and sink (i.e. having only 1 sink located in the bathroom would not be sufficient).

Funding payments are fully portable and not tied to a specific unit, and units occupied by applicant households (in-situ) are also eligible.

The units may be in private buildings or in Community Housing (non-profit and co-operative or projects developed under the Region's Affordable Housing Strategy). However, only market rent units in Community Housing developments are eligible, as program funding cannot be combined with rent-geared-to-income (RGI) or Community Housing assistance programs.

The maximum housing assistance per household is \$496 for people with incomes at or above ODSP levels (up to maximum Household Income Limit identified above) and \$601 for those with incomes below ODSP levels (e.g., OW). Additional housing assistance may be available for certain situations (i.e. accessible apartment unit, excessive utility costs, etc.), subject to prior review and written approval by the Manager, Client Services for the Region of Waterloo.

The monthly PATHS Rent Assistance amount may be lower for recipients of OW or ODSP as the PATHS Rent Assistance amount will be limited to the difference between the rental rate for the unit and the household's maximum shelter entitlement.

PATHS Rent Assistance funding can be made available for first and last months rent.

If a household who had been in receipt of PATHS Rent Assistance loses their housing, the assignment will be held for that household for a maximum of six months. The focus in that time is on rapid re-housing with continued conversations about the housing plan, review of timelines and the loss of PATHS Rent Assistance if homelessness continues beyond six months. Situations in which PATHS Rent Assistance may be reassigned to another household sooner than six months include:

- The person moves to Community Housing or Supportive Housing
- The person is incarcerated long-term (determined by the inability to continue to use agency flex funds to cover costs)
- The person is no longer interested in pursuing housing
- The person is no longer interested in receiving housing support.

### **Eligibility and Living Arrangements**

Individuals with shared living arrangements are eligible to receive PATHS Rent Assistance not to exceed the amount for that type of unit. The amount can be split between roommates.

If one person moves out, each person, if they were both eligible for PATHS Rent Assistance, would be eligible for the full single amount of PATHS Rent Assistance once they find separate units. However, depending on unit size, the person remaining in the unit may be considered to be living over-housed, requiring them to move to a more affordable unit or find a new roommate. The PATHS Rent Assistance will be maintained during this transition for up to three months while a more appropriate size unit is secured with the expectation that proper notice is given to the landlord. This transition period may be extended at the discretion of the Region.

Individuals with congregate living arrangements are not eligible to receive a PATHS Rent Assistance because only self-contained units, that is, units with their own kitchen and bathroom facilities, are eligible for funding. Note that hostel units, group home, nursing and retirement homes are not eligible.

When a household with a PATHS Rent Assistance experiences a family breakdown and/or the loss of a child and a person's status is changed from a family to an individual that is now living over-housed in their unit, the individual will need move to a more affordable unit. The PATHS Rent Assistance will be maintained during this transition for up to three months while a more appropriate size unit is secured with the expectation that proper notice is given to the landlord. This transition period may be extended at the discretion of the Region.

## **Housing Support**

A key component of eligibility for PATHS Rent Assistance is eligibility for longer-term portable home-based support coordinated through PATHS. This means that households must have a high level of need (acuity) and agree to continued in-home visits through the Portable Home-Based Support (HBS) Program. This Program is delivered through Lutherwood.

The intensity of support provided through HBS is dependent on the stage of recovery as identified in the Housing Support Coordination Standards. Regardless of the stage of recovery however, the minimum level of support is at least one contact per week (e.g. telephone conversation, visit with participant in their unit, off-site meeting). Following this period of intensive support, the PATHS team performs a monthly call to check-in with both the participant and their landlord.

## **Matching and Prioritization**

Following notice of a housing support vacancy, the list of people who are eligible and offer-ready is used to identify those that are a good match for the housing (e.g., those who have identified they would be willing to move into this type or location of housing). Only households that are a good match for each vacancy are prioritized for an offer of housing support and PATHS Rent Assistance where all eligibility criteria are met. Prioritization is based on a number of factors as identified in the PATHS Prioritization Protocol, and described in brief below:

- Household must be experiencing chronic homelessness (6+ months or more homeless in the past year);
- Depth of need;
- Trimorbidity, or co-occurring physical health, mental health and substance use issues;
- Elevated Risk, or involvement in abusive, higher-risk and/or exploitative situations; and
- Household has exhausted most of their sheltering options and have nowhere else to go that is safe or appropriate, as signalled by a documented Critical Safety Plan.

It is the role of the PATHS team to review and process landlord applications, support viewings and completion of paperwork, and to ensure anyone receiving PATHS Rent Assistance maintains an active Community Housing application (e.g. to facilitate a move-on option). The PATHS team also processes any participant updates related to PATHS Rent Assistance (e.g. moving into unit, eviction notice, last month rent deposit, landlord issues, moving to another unit).

## Steps to Accessing PATHS Rent Assistance

STEP	DETAILS
Establish eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PATHS team should establish proof of legal residency status and eligibility to be on Community Housing Access Centre (CHAC) Waitlist (confirmed through submitting a CHAC application)</li> <li>• If a household does not have a CHAC application sitting in eligible status, a review of participant eligibility is completed by the PATHS Lead at Region of Waterloo Housing Services. This includes a process of ensuring the participant does not have arrears. The PATHS Lead must confirm eligibility before the PATHS Rent Assistance process proceeds.</li> <li>• If there is any issue with eligibility, the PATHS Lead will follow up with the appropriate worker directly.</li> </ul>
Complete income verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate income verification can include eight consecutive weeks of pay stubs, OW/ODSP stub and drug card or records of other sources of income. If necessary, Housing Access Coordinators (CHAC) can obtain proof of income for social assistance using the Social Assistance Management Software.</li> </ul>
Access PATHS Rent Assistance Funds and Last Month's Rent Deposit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PATHS team administers PATHS Rent Assistance funding to the landlord and arranges for access to the Last Month's Rent Deposit, where appropriate. They also coordinate the relevant processes with respect to changes in address or monthly amount of PATHS Rent Assistance.</li> </ul>
Participant Service Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PATHS team supports participants to complete the PATHS Rent Assistance Participant Service Agreement and retains a copy on file.</li> </ul>
Letter to Landlord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PATHS team supports participants with completing the PATHS Rent Assistance Letter to Landlord and retains a copy on file.</li> </ul>
Maintain Participant File	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the following will be kept on file:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Record of participant ID</li> <li>○ Minimum Requirements Pre-Screen Unit Checklist</li> <li>○ Income verification</li> <li>○ PATHS Rent Assistance Participant Service Agreement</li> <li>○ PATHS Rent Assistance Letter to Landlord</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Complete Annual Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residency Status: If legal residency status is refugee claimant or permanent residency applicant, an update will be required in 12 months to verify status.</li> <li>• Income Verification and Participant Agreement: Income verification and the participant agreement form need to be updated yearly and placed on file for PATHS Rent Assistance recipients.</li> </ul>

## Steps for Making a Transition from One Unit to Another

STEP	DETAILS
Give notice to landlord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a participant identifies that the current housing unit is no longer meeting their needs or they have identified as needing to move for whatever reason, the participant can give 60 days' written notice to the current landlord. The PATHS team should be notified so arrangements around the administration of PATHS Rent Assistance can be completed.</li> <li>• With OW/ODSP rent direct, the caseworker should be informed of when the rent direct should end.</li> </ul>
Housing Search Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The participant, with support from the PATHS team, should initiate a housing search.</li> </ul>
Securing Funds for new Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once new housing is secured, the PATHS team will complete the PATHS Rent Assistance administration, including – where proper notice was given to previous landlord – administration of a last month's rent deposit for the new rental unit.</li> <li>• If the participant is receiving OW/ODSP, a change of address and rent direct will need to be changed.</li> </ul>

### Relationship with Landlords

As partners in the delivery of PATHS Rent Assistance, landlords are supported throughout the tenancy to prevent, mediate and/or mitigate any tenancy related concerns. This support may include some or all of the following:

- Financial support toward vacancy loss, damages, harm reduction/hoarding clean-up and/or junk removal;
- Ensuring proper 60-day notice is given prior to vacating a unit; and
- Resourcing and support to maintain and/or end a tenancy.

Where a landlord is not following their obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act (e.g. failing to maintain unit or building standards, charging extra fees or illegal rent), the focus of the PATHS team will be to work with the landlord to address any unmet needs and maintain the tenancy. In rare circumstances where this is not possible or successful, the focus will be to re-house the participant as quickly as possible. Additionally, a case may be built against the landlord and legal action pursued through the Landlord Tenant Board.

### Complaints

Every effort is made to work collaboratively with landlords and the participant to mediate concerns and to maintain the tenancy and delivery of PATHS Rent Assistance. However, there are situations in which complaints may be made by landlords and participants related to the eligibility and administration of PATHS Rent Assistance.

Where complaints are received, Lutherwood will follow their internal Participant Complaint Procedure. A majority of complaints should be resolved internally by Lutherwood to ensure that excellent service provision and minimize the involvement of Region Housing Services wherever possible.

If an external review is required by Region Housing Services because the landlord or participant is unsatisfied with the resolution of their complaint by Lutherwood, the Lutherwood PATHS2Home Program Manager should direct the landlord or participant to contact the Manager, Housing Programs and Development at Region Housing Services. The PATHS2Home Program Manager should contact the Manager, Housing Programs and Development at Region Housing Services, to outline the nature of the complaint, the various steps taken to address the complaint, and the final outcome.

### Related Documents

Document Name	DOCS Number	Document Link
<a href="#">PATHS Framework</a>	2437944	<a href="#">PATHS Framework</a>
<a href="#">PATHS Standards</a>	2677774	<a href="#">PATHS Standards</a>
<a href="#">PATHS Prioritization Protocol</a>	2610436	<a href="#">PATHS Prioritization Protocol</a>
<a href="#">Flex Fund Protocol</a>	2926744	<a href="#">Flex Fund Protocol</a>



## **Appendix I: Application in HIFIS 4**

Under exploration/development

## Appendix II: Standard Protocol Practices

### Monitoring

The Region will monitor the implementation of and adherence to this protocol through regularly scheduled informal and formal reviews. This is intended to engage Service Providers in open conversations about what is working well and to create opportunities to improve outcomes for participants.

### Revisions and Review

This protocol may be revised by the Region, as needed. Revisions will be made in consultation with applicable Service Providers. A revised version of the protocol will be uploaded to the Housing Stability System Portal and communicated via e-mail to applicable Service Providers for distribution to appropriate staff.

If the provisions of this protocol conflict with reasonable and best practice and/or the terms and conditions of your service agreement or applicable legislation, please contact the Region through the [Housing email](mailto:housing@regionofwaterloo.ca) (housing@regionofwaterloo.ca) to request that the Region review the protocol.

### General Roles and Responsibilities

Protocol Partner	Roles and Responsibilities
Region of Waterloo, Housing Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop, maintain, and update this protocol to best reflect effective practices in service delivery, legislative requirements, and applicable service agreements and policy directions;</li><li>2. Respond to requests for review of this protocol, by Service Providers;</li><li>3. Monitor adherence to this protocol by applicable Service Providers;</li><li>4. Respond to identified or alleged lack of adherence to this protocol by applicable Service Providers (e.g., by other Providers or clients).</li></ol>
Applicable Service Providers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Implement and adhere to this protocol;</li><li>6. Request a review of this protocol, if necessary (see Appendix I, Revisions and Review);</li><li>7. Report lack of adherence to this protocol, where necessary.</li></ol>

### Accessibility

This document is accessible. To request an alternate format of this document, call 519-575-4400 or TTY: 519-575-4608.

For more information, please contact the Region of Waterloo, Housing Services through the [Housing Services email](mailto:housing@regionofwaterloo.ca) (housing@regionofwaterloo.ca).