



The Role of Public Libraries as Partners in Serving Vulnerable Populations

Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference 2019 (#CAEH19)

Aly Velji, Manager, Adult Literacy Services, Toronto Public Library (TPL)  @alyvTO

Richard Thornley, Manager, Enterprise Square Branch, Edmonton Public Library (EPL)  @sit_walk

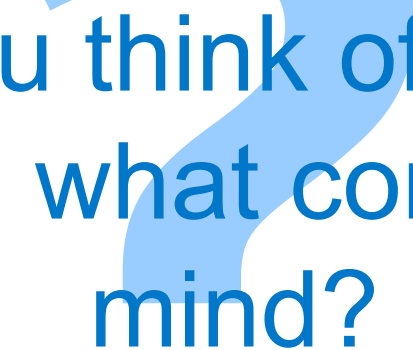
November 5, 2019



Session Overview

- Public Libraries 101
- How public libraries can (and do) support vulnerable populations (and people experiencing homelessness)
- A closer look at Edmonton Public Library (EPL)
- A closer look at Toronto Public Library (TPL)
- How we can work together?
- Q&A

Libraries...they're still around?



When you think of a public library, what comes to mind?

tpl:







ann·price
photography



But...public libraries are
not the same places we
grew up with...

We've evolved and offer so
much more than you can
imagine!



Calgary Central Library

Calgary Central Library



Albion Library (Toronto)

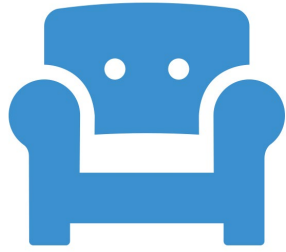




Albion Library (Toronto)

Stanley A. Milner Library (Edmonton)





spaces

open and accessible to all

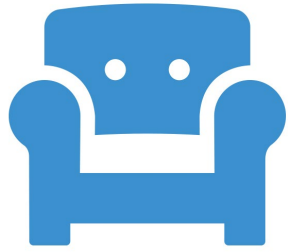
welcoming

no membership required

warming and cooling centres

connection and reducing social
isolation





spaces

in-branch and online

vibrant community hubs

neutral, convenient space to residents
of all ages and backgrounds

for study, work, collaboration, leisure,
and learning





technology

computer and internet access

Wi-Fi access

laptop (or device) lending services

Wi-Fi Hotspots lending services

digital literacy training to support digital literacy skills

innovation spaces

- 3D Printers
- Audio/Video Recording and Editing
- Fabrication Studios





staff expertise

information discovery and access; expert reading recommendations

connect residents to community resources and experts

connect communities to library resources through community outreach

support technology access, use and skills development





collections

access to resources in multiple formats
(print, electronic, audio/video and more)

collections in languages that reflect local
communities

for recreational, educational and information
needs of all ages, abilities and interests

current and popular to research, reference,
archival and special collections





programs, classes & events

Literacy, literary, cultural and recreational

promote library collections and resources

access to professional or community expertise

promote life long learning through instructional and educational programs





Better meeting the needs of our customers: Social Workers in the Library

- Social Workers in public libraries to help meet community needs
- Different Levels of Practice
 - Micro
 - Mezzo
 - Macro
- May include social services on site (partnership) or social work students/interns

Social Workers in the Library:

Across North America

42 Public Libraries employ full time social workers

4 with part time social workers

28 with social work student interns

56 host social services in their space





Public Libraries support in different ways...



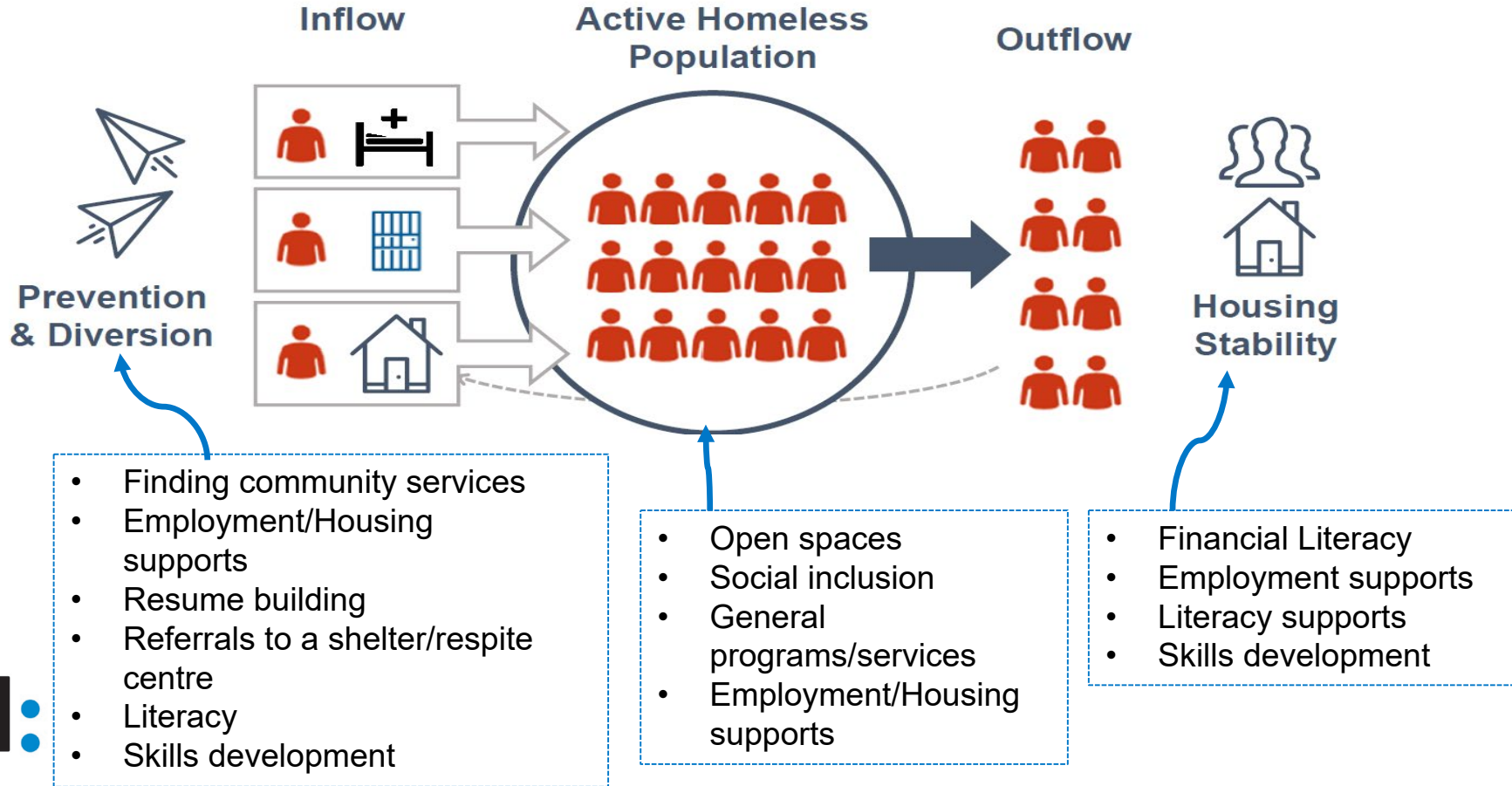
Canadian Definition of Homelessness

II. TYPOLOGY

1) Unsheltered	<p>1.1 People living in public or private spaces without consent or contract</p> <p>1.2 People living in places not intended for permanent human habitation</p>
2) Emergency Sheltered	<p>2.1 Emergency overnight shelters for people who are homeless</p> <p>2.2 Shelters for individuals/families impacted by family violence</p> <p>2.3 Emergency shelter for people fleeing a natural disaster or destruction of accommodation due to fires, floods etc.</p>
3) Provisionally Accommodated	<p>3.1 Interim Housing for people who are homeless</p> <p>3.2 People living temporarily with others, but without guarantee of residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing</p> <p>3.3 People accessing short term, temporary rental accommodations without security of tenure</p> <p>3.4 People in institutional care who lack permanent housing arrangements</p> <p>3.5 Accommodation / reception centers for recently arrived immigrants and refugees</p>
4) At-Risk of Homelessness	<p>4.1 People at imminent risk of homelessness</p> <p>4.2. Individuals and families who are Precariously Housed</p>

- 
- 
- Open spaces
 - Access to computers
 - Assistance in finding community services
 - Programs to promote inclusion and reduce social isolation
 - Connecting with others
 - Skills development

 - Advocacy
 - Awareness
 - Partnerships





Toronto Public Library



A little bit about us...

tpl:

TPL at a glance: ranking and satisfaction

1

Worldwide *

- circulation per capita
 - electronic visits
 - electronic visits per capita
- (#2 visits per capita and total circ)

** Serving a population over 1.5 million (2016)*

1

North America *

- total and per capita circulation
- total and per capita visits
- total and per capita electronic visits

** Serving a population over 2 million (2017)*

1

Canada *

- total circulation
- total visits
- electronic visits

(#2 electronic visits per capita)

** Serving a population over 500,000 (2016)*

TPL at a glance: demand for services

In 2018, Torontonians visited the library and used services in large numbers:



17.6 million
visits to branches



29.4 million
visits to tpl.ca



30.5 million
items borrowed

18.3 million
email and social media activity

7.0 million were
electronic items



1.02 million people attended
46,533 programs



24.1% increase
in the use of eCollections



5.0 million wireless sessions
4.3 million computer uses

TPL at a glance: satisfaction

Well-Used

Torontonians use their libraries in large numbers.

70%

of Torontonians used the library in 2015



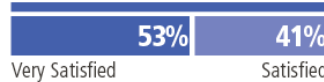
1 in 5

Torontonians visit a library branch at least once a week



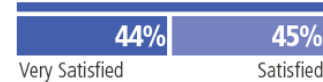
Responsive : 95%

Library customers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the Toronto Public Library.



Helpful : 94%

Customers are pleased with the level of assistance from library staff.



Welcoming : 89%

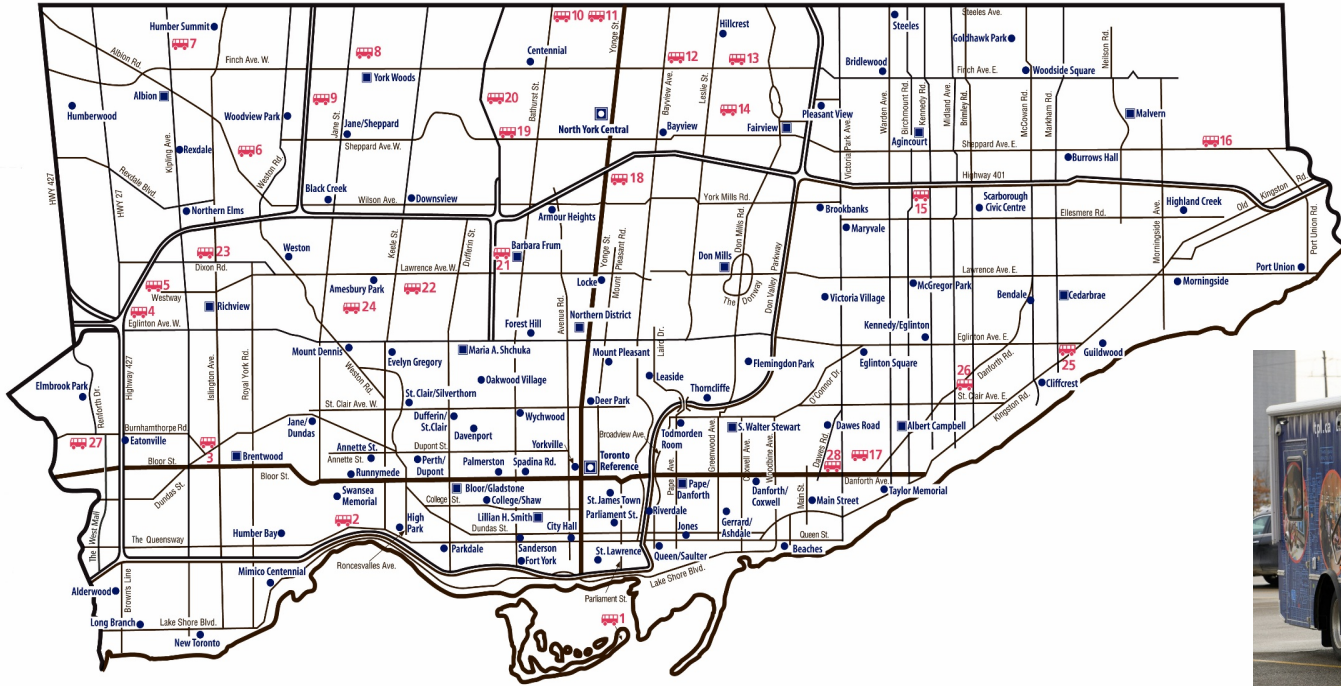
Library customers overwhelmingly agree that libraries offer an attractive environment.



Valued : 92%

Public libraries are an important resource for Toronto's communities.

TPL Network: Branch and Bookmobile Locations

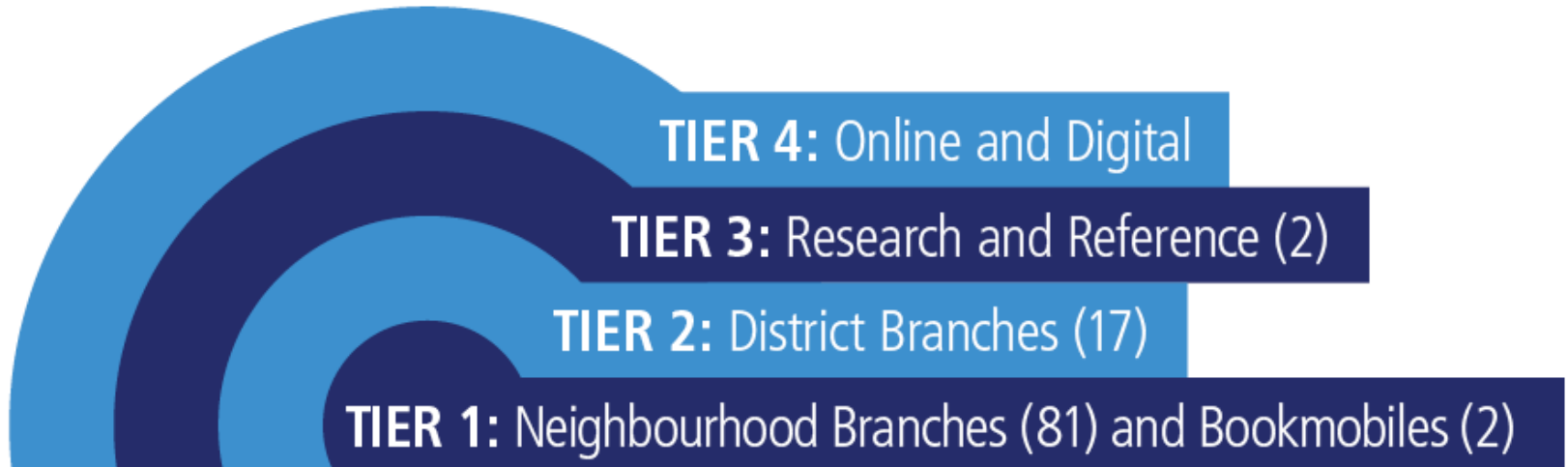


tpl:

100 branches | 2 bookmobiles

Service Delivery Model

A framework to envision the possibilities that result from an investment in library infrastructure and service delivery



Strategic Approach: Serving Vulnerable Populations



- Information sharing
- Service Coordination
- Strategic partnership development
- Service and program development
- Staff training and support

TPL Social Worker: System-wide perspective



Rahma Hashi, MSW, RSW

- Macro -level approach
- Bringing in social work concepts into the system
- Focus on:
 - Reducing barriers to accessing programs and services
 - Review of policies, processes and procedures
 - Program development
 - Partnership development
 - Staff Development

1y



In response to the rise in homeless people using its branches, the **Toronto Public Library** has hired Rahma Hashi, its **first full-time social worker** to deal with **homelessness**, a move that could be **copied** by big-city libraries across Canada. The social worker will help **raise awareness** among branch librarians on how to deal respectfully with **vulnerable people** who may suffer from mental health issues and addiction, as well as homelessness. Also, starting this fall, a librarian will serve **two city-run homeless shelters**.

STAR COLUMNISTS OPINION

How our libraries can help the homeless



By **Bob Hepburn** Star Columnist
Wed., Sept. 19, 2018 | 3 min. read



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY GIULIA SOUILLAGE / STOCKSY

Public libraries offer books, shelter and much more

Toronto Public Library's first full-time social worker highlights the much-needed resources they provide to the community

BY TARA MACINNIS

2018

46,533 programs

1,017,209 people attending

Programs: Basics

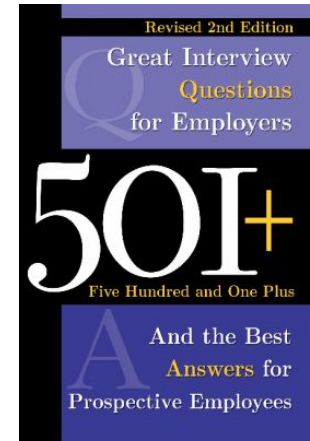
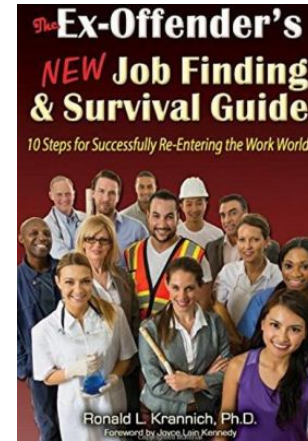
- Children's programming (Babytime, Storytime, Family Time)
- Book Clubs, Book Talks, Author Visits
- Career and Job Search (Employment Clinics, Road to Employment, Volunteering for Newcomers)
- Health and Wellness (Diabetes Risk Assessment, Healthy Eating, Exercising)
- Small Business
- Personal Finance

...and so
much more!

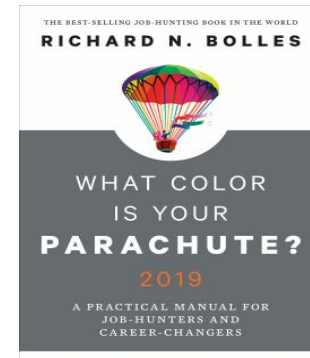


Programs and Services: Employment & Job Search

- Job Interview Skills
- Resume Makeover
- Employment Clinics
- Exploring careers
- Small Business
- “You Can't Fire Me! I Quit!:
What You Need to Know About
Employment Termination”



Career Cruising





Housing Assistance Program



1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. on recurring dates listed below
180 mins

Location

[Malvern](#)

Need assistance with finding affordable housing or avoiding eviction? An expert from The Housing Help Centre will meet with homeowners and tenants one on one and provide information on housing topics including Rent Bank, utilities assistance programs, and help finding housing.

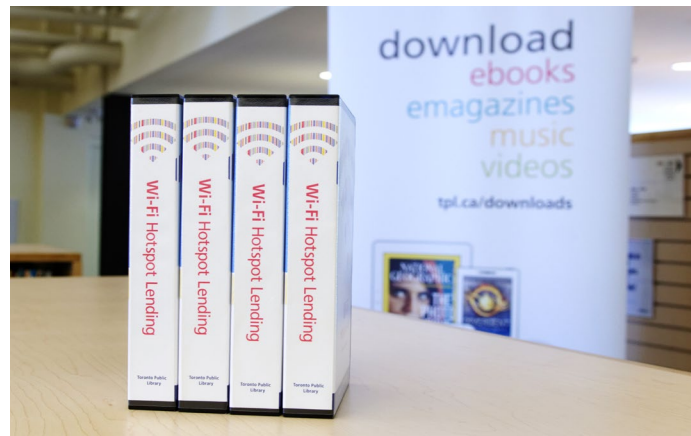
Drop in. No registration required. Call 416-396-8970 for more information.

Tech Training: Classes and Workshops

- Classes offered on a variety of topics:
 - **Basic Computer Skills** (Computer Basics, Move that Mouse)
 - **Internet and Research** (Web Basics, Basic Research Help)
 - **Microsoft Office products** (Word, Excel, etc)
 - **Email and Social Networking** (Gmail, Twitter basics, Facebook)
 - **Digital Design** (3D Printing, Adobe Photoshop, etc)
 - **Downloads and eBooks** (One on One Tech Training, etc)
- User Guides
- Book a Librarian (1 -on-1 support)

Technology: Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending program

- Low income families
- Unlimited internet for 6 months
- Available in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs; 29 branches)
- Work with local community partners
- Circulate over **1000** units/year
- Reducing barriers to accessing internet services and reducing the digital divide













Community Connections: Community Librarians

- **“Embedding”** librarians within social service agencies
 - Toronto Employment & Social Services, Prisons, Shelters and Community Health agencies
 - Reducing barriers to accessing services
 - Meeting the customer at their point of need



FORT YORK TRAINING & EVENTS








February 2019

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
11 Employability Drop in 8:00-10:00 am Meet & Greet 11:30-1:00pm 	12 Resume Writing Skills Workshop 6:00-8:00pm 	13 Facebook for Business 9:30-12:00pm 	14 Valentine's Day :00-3:30 pm 	15 E-learning for Employability Drop in 8:00-10:00 am 	16
18 Employability Drop in 8:00-10:00 am Celebrate Black History Month 11:30-1:00pm 	19 Interview Skills Workshop 6:00-8:00pm 	20 Excel Basics 1 9:30-12:00pm 	21 Wordpress 2:00-5:30 pm 	22 E-learning for Employability Drop in 8:00-10:00 am 	23
25 Employability	26	27 Excel Basics 2 9:30-12:00pm	28 Keyboarding 9:00-11:00 am	29	30

Community Connections: Community Librarian (Shelters)

WOMEN RESIDENCE TRAINING & EVENTS

February 2019

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
11	12 Book Club 3:00-4:00 pm 	13 Crocheting 2:30-4:00 pm 	14 Keyboarding & Computer Basics 9:30-11:00 am Valentine's Day 11:00-12:00 pm 	15	16
18 Celebrate Black History Month 11:30-1:00pm 	19 Crocheting 2:30-4:00 pm 	20 Word Basics Part 1 9:30-11:00 am 	21	22	23
25 3D Printing 11:30-1:00pm 	26	27 Crocheting 2:30-4:00 pm	28 Paint with me 9:30-11:00 am	29	30

- Programs and services include:
 - On-site card registration and renewal
 - Information (reference) services
 - User Education
 - Programming (customized to the organization)

Community Events: Homeless Connect Toronto Event



Partnerships: Homeless Connect Toronto

Screening of documentary “Us and Them ”



TORONTO
ALLIANCE
to END
HOMELESSNESS



Partnerships: World Homeless Day (Oct 10)



tpl:

Partnerships: MyToronto Program

111
CAMERAS

93
PARTICIPANTS

2,600
PRINTS

40
EXHIBIT PHOTOS

13
CALENDAR PHOTOS

1
CITY

Hosted By:


mytorontocalendar.com
@mytorontophotos @mytorontocal

 | **MYTORONTO**

200 Bridgeland Avenue, Unit D, Toronto, ON M6A 1Z4 | 416.964.7898 | 416.964.6582
toll-free 1.877.582.5472 | Charitable Registration # BN888042499 RR0001



tpl:



Ve'ahavta
A Jewish Humanitarian Response to Poverty

MYTORONTO

Partnerships: MyToronto Program Workshops (2019)



tpl:



Ve'ahavta
A Jewish Humanitarian Response to Poverty

MYTORONTO



Literacy:
Learning for Life.

L'alphabétisation,
Une leçon pour la vie.

Partnerships: Literacy in Shelters Conference

Supporting shelter staff in
developing skills to
provide early literacy
support to clients



Literacy:
Learning for Life.
L'alphabétisation,
Une leçon pour la vie.

Frontier College and Toronto Public Library
present:



Literacy in Shelters Conference 2019
Tuesday, November 5th - 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, Toronto
Directions to North York Central Library are on the back page.

This free conference is for staff and volunteers of shelters and community agencies who work to support learning and change in the presence and aftermath of violence, neglect and other traumatic experiences. This conference will be most useful to shelters and agencies that support children, teens and their families. All welcome!

AGENDA

9:00 am - 9:30 am
9:30 am - 9:45 am
9:45 am - 12:30 pm

Registration and a light breakfast*
Welcome and introductions
Morning workshop
Supporting learning and change
Facilitated by Dr. Jenny Horsman

12:30 pm - 1:15 pm
1:15 pm - 3:00 pm

Networking lunch*
Afternoon workshops – Your choice of:
1. Ready for Reading and Learning
(Preschool and kindergarten children)
2. Resources and activities to support reading, writing and math
(Grades 1 to 12)
3. Tools for Emotional Intelligence
(Grades 9 to 12)

Partnerships: Toronto Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA)

- Community Librarian program
- Community events related to new shelter/respite centre openings
- Information tables in branches

Language and Literacy:

- FREE one-on-one support to improve basic reading/writing and math skills (2 hours/week)
- Personalized training plan and materials
- Financial supports available (TTC tokens or childcare)

Adult Literacy Program





Language and Literacy: Adult Literacy Program Outreach/Collections

- Adult Literacy materials available in **55** branches to support the community
- **21** Deposit collections with community partners



- Compilation of learner writing from learners across literacy programs in Toronto
- Providing a **voice** to learners and an opportunity to be published

Resource: <https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/files/line-by-line-sharing-ourselves-and-our-stories-2019-web-2.pdf>



Innovative Programming: Coffee and Conversation

- Monthly informal drop - in sessions (**led by TPL Social Worker**)
- (Light) refreshments
- Community partners and social Services present at each session
- Open to all (advertised with local shelters and respite centres)



Coffee and Conversation

Sanderson Library
Wednesdays, 1-3 pm
March 20 & April 3

Join us for some informal discussion about the services in our community. Get to know your local librarians while enjoying some light refreshments. All are welcome.

Sanderson Branch
327 Bathurst St. Toronto, ON M5T 1J1
416-393-7653

www.torontopubliclibrary.ca



INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICES
MEET LIBRARY STAFF
INFORMAL DISCUSSION
FREE LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
ALL ARE WELCOME!

COFFEE & CONVERSATION

Fridays
2 to 4 PM

TORONTO REFERENCE LIBRARY
789 Yonge street,
Toronto, ON
M4W 3G8
416 395-5571

torontopubliclibrary.ca



Innovative Programming: Coffee and Conversation

“Now I know my options, I had no
idea **you were here to
help** .”

“**I didn't know** the
library had this.”

“I showed up early because I'm **looking
forward to the conversation** .”

tpl:

“**Thank you** for listening.”



Language and Literacy: ESL Program & Conversation Circles



- Co-sponsored program with community partners to offer ESL classes & Conversation Circles

- Learning materials and online resources to support learning



Newcomers: Library Settlement Partnership (LSP) program

- Partnership with Newcomer and Settlement Agencies
- Settlement workers placed in library branches to help:
 - Job-related search and support
 - Language learning
 - Government -related services (getting a driver's licence)
- Available in **15** library locations (with more in the summer)
- Available to all newcomers, **regardless of status**

Incarcerated & Recently Released Populations: Storybook Parents



- **Recording** incarcerated (and recently released) clients reading **storybooks** for their **children**
- **Goals:**
 - Maintain or develop bonds
 - Serve as a reading role model for their children
 - Breaking the cycle of low literacy
 - Introduce them to library services available to them (and their families)



Incarcerated & Recently Released Populations: Storybook Parents Program Feedback



Cause I wanna be a better father and show my baby I love her.

The CD has had a positive impact on my daughter. She comes home from school & listens to it immediately each day. She's so happy to hear her dad's voice & tries to read along.

Statistics: 2018 & 2019 (YTD)

145 participants

236 children reached

263 recordings made

Incarcerated & Recently Released Populations: Programming

Onsite Programs (Toronto South & East Detention Centres):

- Book Clubs (discussion groups)
- Financial Literacy program
- Creative Writing program

Recently Released Programming or Services:

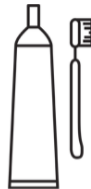
- Information Sessions
- Computer (and tech) training
- Finding a job or housing

TPL Care Kits

- Exploring the opportunity to provide “care kits” through structured access points
 - Adult Literacy Program
 - Youth Hubs
 - Programs led by the Social Worker
 - Branches
- Kits will include “basic need” items



Winter Warmth Kit



Hygiene Kit



RECAP: Strategic Approach: Serving Vulnerable Populations



- Information sharing
- Service Coordination
- Strategic partnership development
- Service and program development
- Staff training and support

Supporting Staff: Information Sharing

The screenshot shows the Toronto Public Library intranet. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Why We Matter, Collections, Human Resources, Public Service, Support Services, and Working Together. Below this is a search bar and a list of site home options. The main content area is titled "People Experiencing Homelessness" and includes a list of sections such as "Crisis numbers", "Printable Resources.pdf", and "Spectrum of homelessness". A purple arrow points from the "Crisis numbers" section to the list of bullet points on the right.

Public Service > Services to Vulnerable Persons

People Experiencing Homelessness

In this page, you'll find information on various resources specific to people experiencing homelessness. Click Overview-Homelessness Page on ShareTPLmp4 for a tour of this page.

Sections include:

1. **Crisis numbers:** list of phone numbers for crisis services and supports.
2. **Quick referrals:** quick links of resources covering basic needs (shelter, clothing, meals).
3. **Documents:** list of documents with detailed guides to services.
4. **Glossary of key terminology:** definition of common terms related to various vulnerable populations.
5. **Additional resources:** list of resources on health, legal and mapping tools to help you navigate information needs.

[Printable Resources.pdf](#)

People experiencing homelessness are one of the most vulnerable population in the City of Toronto. Experiencing homelessness can result in health inequities, social isolation, and victimization. Homelessness is defined by the [Canadian Observatory on Homelessness](#) as: "the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability to acquire it." This may be due to a combination of circumstances, including personal or family crisis, financial hardship, mental health or substance abuse, lack of affordable housing and lived experiences of discrimination, violence, and oppression.

Toronto Public Library plays a number of key roles in serving the needs of our communities. Toronto Public Library provides access to its services in a number of ways, including in-person and online access. TPL is open to everyone and provides access to:

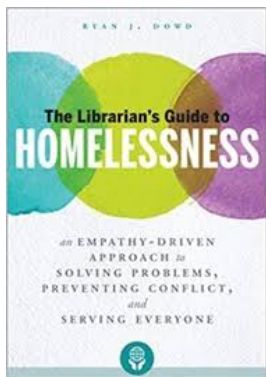
- safe and welcoming spaces that also serve as warming and cooling centers
- programs and services
- community resources and serve as a community hub
- information and expert staff
- collection and resources
- technology and related supports (computers, Internet, Wi-Fi)

Spectrum of homelessness

- Intranet site to support staff
 - Information, resources
 - Referral information
 - Articles and support documents
- Staff guide on resources and referrals



Supporting Staff: Training and Staff Development

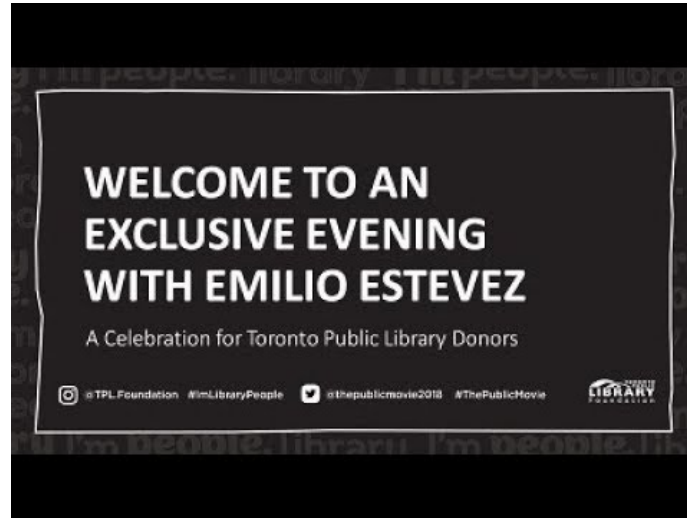


- Staff Training:
 - Librarian's Guide to Homelessness
 - Trauma Informed Service
 - Self Care
 - Mental Health First Aid



- Increasing knowledge of Social Work concepts
 - Defining vulnerability
 - Intersectionality
 - Strengths -based approach
 - “Whole person”

Events: Film Screening of “The Public”



Sometimes we get to do some cool stuff!

WOW! I've got a lot of great information... now what?

- Learn more about the public library system in your area
- Look at opportunities to:
 - Develop partnerships
 - Support for your clients
 - Support for your organization
 - Inform them about what you are doing
 - Advocate and raise awareness

REMEMBER:



Public Libraries support in different ways...



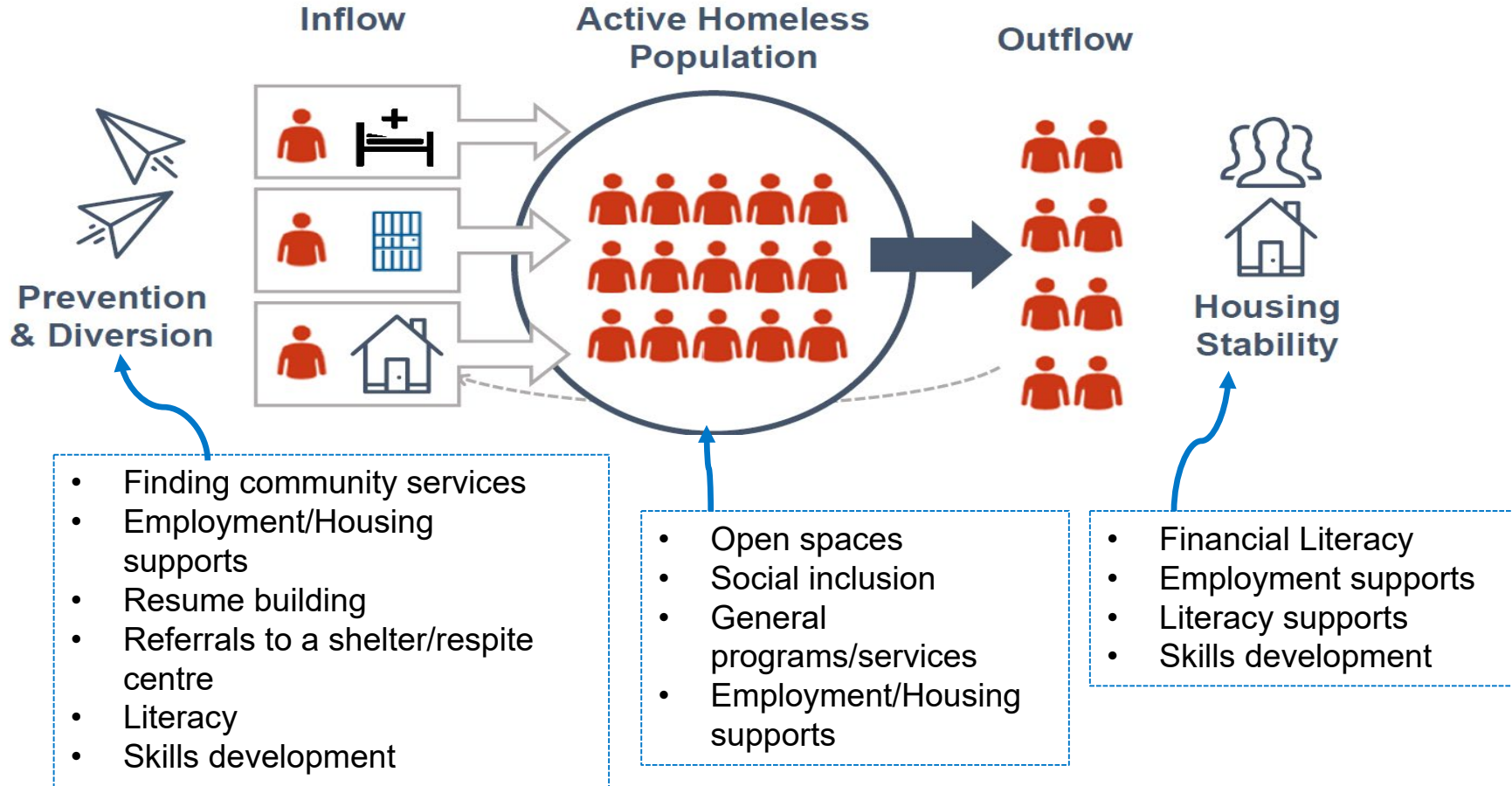
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- Open spaces
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 - Assistance in finding community services
 - Programs to promote inclusion and reduce social isolation
 - Connecting with others
 - Skills development

 - Advocacy
 - Awareness
 - Partnerships





and...

Keep the
conversation
going!

Thank you!

Questions?

Aly Velji, Manager, Adult Literacy Services, Toronto Public Library
avelji@tpl.ca  @alyvTO

Richard Thornley, Manager, Enterprise Square Branch
richard.thornley@epl.ca  @sit_walk