

The

**S**treet and vulnerable youth  
service standards that  
provide:

**T**rust

**A**ccountability

**R**esponsiveness

**T**o ensure consistent support for youth

**Guide**

**Revised 2009**

Minimum Standards for Street and Vulnerable Youth Service Providers  
London, Ontario

Updated & Released: November 2009



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The START Guide for street and vulnerable youth is the product of a ground-breaking community partnership between service providers, young people, funders and stakeholders. While the Guide remains an ongoing project in terms of community reviews, updates and implementation, it is important to recognize its origins. The Guide originated in 1995 through the work of the Coordinating Council for Children and Youth. While this group eventually lost funding and disbanded, our community carries on the work today.

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## **2009 START GUIDE MINIMUM STANDARDS REVISION PROCESS**

The START Guide Monitoring Body reviews the Minimum Standards biannually; ensuring standards are applicable, current and encourage equity for all START Guide agencies.

Over the last 24 months the START Guide Monitoring Body has recorded the issues, challenges, changes and recommendations from START Guide agencies, Board members, the community at large, funders and Monitoring Body members.

Recommendations are the result of changing community needs and demands, legislative and legal requirements, cross-sectoral conditions ie: volunteer sector, health and safety protocol, as well as feedback from participating START Guide agencies.

In November 2007, all START Guide Agencies and Monitoring Body members participated in an open community discussion reviewing Minimum Standards, definitions and recommendations. The results of this process have been incorporated into the START Guide Minimum Standards to compile the revised, 2009 START Guide Minimum Standards.

The 2009 revised START Guide Minimum Standards have been reviewed and agreed upon by the Monitoring Body and existing START Guide agencies.

The 2009 START Guide Minimum Standards will be implemented with existing START Guide agencies during the 2010 on-site review process.

**START Guide Member Agencies and Monitoring Body members** involved in the 2009 revision process included;

- AIDS Committee of London
- Anago (Non) Residential Resources Inc.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of London and Area
- Boys' & Girls' Club of London
- City of London
- Craigwood Youth Services
- Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre
- Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre
- London Police Services
- LUSO Community Services
- Middlesex London Health Unit
- Northwest London Resource Centre
- South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre
- Street Connection
- St. Leonard's Community Services London and Region
- Unity Project for the Relief of Homelessness in London
- United Way of London and Middlesex
- Western Area Youth Services
- Youth Opportunities Unlimited

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Why the need for guidelines?**

This guide represents a community commitment to set a minimum standard of practice for agencies providing services to street and vulnerable youth in London.

Often, agencies that provide street level or neighbourhood based services to street and vulnerable youth receive their funding from various sources and the funding received may not be dependent on the licensing or accrediting of the agency and the application of consistent standards. The development of minimum standards ensures that agencies which provide services to youth are consistently providing service at the same minimum level and with the same degree of safety and accountability.

It must be noted that the standards contained in this document are **minimum standards**. Agencies are encouraged to exceed the minimum standards by adopting best practices serving youth.

### **What is a youth for START Guide?**

For the purpose of the START Guide Minimum Standards, “youth” are those individuals between 13 and 24 years of age, inclusive. Street and vulnerable youth may be characterized by a broad range of social, economic and demographic factors. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- high school non-completion
- disability
- residence in a rural or remote location
- racial/sexual/gender, etc. discrimination
- lone (single) parent
- financial/poverty conditions
- poor self-management and/or behaviour management abilities
- health, drug- and/or alcohol-related problems
- low levels of literacy and numeracy
- language barriers
- street involvement
- contact with justice, child welfare or social assistance systems
- homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless
- lack of social supports: family, friends or community supports
- additional reasons (as determined by the service provider)

## **How does our community use this document?**

The START Guide represents our community's commitment to ensure a minimum standard of practice for services to young people in London.

### **If you are a service provider this means:**

- Agencies must adopt the minimum standards to be approved by the START Guide Monitoring Body.
- Agencies must ensure that the services to which they are referring youth meet the minimum standards outlined in the START Guide or Provincial, National or Ministry Accreditation.
- Agency staff and volunteers must be trained in START Guide Minimum Standards.

### **If you are a member of our community we suggest:**

- Adopting the START Guide process as part of the criteria you use to assess funding proposals.
- As a funder, using the START Guide process to assist in decision making to financially support an agency.
- Using the START Guide process as guidelines to determine which agency you will donate money, volunteer your time, utilize services, programs, refer others to, etc.

## **What is the START Guide Monitoring Body?**

The START Guide Monitoring Body is comprised of representatives from the City of London, other funders, and community agencies with expertise and interest in the area of youth services in London.

### **Monitoring Body Responsibilities include:**

- Ensuring on an annual basis that approved agencies follow the minimum standards contained in this document.
- Follow-up on any allegations regarding approved agencies who are not applying or who are breaching the minimum standards contained in this document.
- Bi-annually review the minimum standards, in partnership with the London START Guide community (agencies, Monitoring Body members and funders) to ensure this document reflects the current standards of practice.
- Considering applications for review on the minimum standards contained in this document.
- Assist new, grassroots, or existing agencies in applying the START Guide Minimum Standards.

### **Monitoring Body Committee representatives (2007/2008) incoming 2009;**

- Anago (Non) Residential Resources Inc.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of London and Area
- City of London
- Community volunteer at large
- Craigwood Youth Services
- London Police Services
- Middlesex London Health Unit
- St. Leonard's Community Services London and Region
- United Way of London & Middlesex
- Western Area Youth Services

If you have any questions about this document, please contact:

City of London,  
Department of Community Services,  
Neighbourhood & Children's Services  
519-661-5336  
partnershipsandfunding@london.ca

# **ADMINISTRATION**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

### **Board Composition**

A Board of Directors shall ideally be composed of a broad community representation (i.e.: various professionals, community and client representatives).

### **Number of Directors**

Agency By-laws will identify a minimum number of Board members.

### **Quorum**

Quorum at Board meetings is 50% of the directors plus one.

### **Meetings of the Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors shall meet a minimum of 6 times per year. The Annual General Meeting may be included in these meetings.

Minutes must be recorded at each meeting and retained.

### **Financial statements**

Audited financial statements must be presented annually, at the agency's Annual General Meeting.

### **Volunteer role**

Board member roles are voluntary and as such individuals are required to comply with the requirements of Reference and Police Checks.

See **Appendix B** for Agency Role Definitions

See **Appendix D** for Reference & Police Checks

### **Orientation**

All Board members will receive an orientation to the organization, financial status and Board of Directors' roles and responsibilities.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

At a minimum, the following areas must be covered in an agency's Policy and Procedure Manual as it applies to the function of each agency:

- Administration of Medications;
- AWOL (Absent Without Leave) and Warrants;
- Child Abuse reporting protocol;
- Client files;
- Confidentiality;
- Criminal Offence Discretion;
- Crisis/incident Reporting;
- Definition of Abuse (physical, verbal, sexual and emotional);
- Harassment and Discrimination;
- Health and Safety:
  - Fire Systems
  - Safe Food Handling
  - First Aid/CPR
  - WHMIS
  - Safe Sharps and Waste Handling;
- Mission Statement/Program description;
- Orientation;
- Partner Agencies;
- Performance Appraisals;
- Personnel Files;
- Personnel Supervision;
- Professional Boundaries and Relationships;
- Protocol regarding Homeless Youth;
- Reference checks (professional/personal and police checks);
- Safety measures:
  - Smoking
  - Weapons
  - Drugs and Alcohol
  - Acts or threats of violence;
- START Guide Minimum Standards and,
- Under 16's.

## **PERSONNEL FILES: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Personnel files must be maintained for all staff and volunteers. These files must include the following information:

All documentation contained in the files must be dated and signed.

At all times, the personnel files must be kept in a secure, locked file with restricted access.

- Current job description;
- Documentation of orientation and training;
- Performance evaluations;
- Police Check and/or Attestation Form (subsequent years);
- Reference Checks reports/results;
- Resume and/or Job Application;
- Signed employment contract;
- Signed statement of confidentiality and,
- Signed START Guide Waiver.

## **CLIENT FILES: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

### **If the Agency Maintains Client Files**

Client files must include the following information:

- Confidentiality Forms, as required;
- Incident Reports, if applicable;
- Release of Information forms; and,
- Relevant statistical data (i.e.: sex, age, reason for assistance, referrals, etc.).

Any documentation in the file must be dated, signed, factual, and written in an objective manner.

The client files must be kept in a secure, locked file with access restricted to staff only.

### **If the Agency Does Not Maintain Client Files**

If the agency does not maintain client files, it is expected that the following information is maintained:

- Incident reports, if applicable and,
- Relevant statistical data (i.e.: sex, age, reason for assistance, referrals, etc).

## **PARTNER AGENCIES: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

If the START Guide agency works with partner agencies who **supply staff**, the START Guide agency must ensure that the “in-kind” staff adheres to the minimum standards regarding Police Records and Vulnerable Positions Screening and Confidentiality while working on behalf of/with the START Guide agency.

Please ensure that the supervisor of the “in-kind” staff person signs a statement verifying this compliance.

See **Appendix A** for sample Partner Agency Compliance and Confidentiality Acknowledgment.

# **PERSONNEL**

## **DEFINITIONS**

Roles within an agency may include the following:

1. Staff
2. Student
3. Volunteer
4. Client

See **Appendix B** for Agency Role Definitions.

See **Appendix C** for Guidelines to Identify Risk Factors for student and volunteer roles.

## **REFERENCE CHECKS: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Police Records and Vulnerable Positions Screening, personal and professional reference checks are required for all staff, students and volunteers.

Personal and professional reference checks must be completed **prior** to the first day of employment or volunteering.

For candidates with a 'current' Police Records and Vulnerable Positions Screening check, the completion date must be **within the last 6 months** of the date of employment or volunteer position commencing.

For candidates without a 'current' Police Records and Vulnerable Positions Screening, a new check must be dated **within 3 months** of the offer of employment, or volunteering.

See **Appendix D** for standards regarding reference and police checks.

### Attestation:

Annually, during the performance appraisal meeting, staff and volunteers must sign an Attestation statement confirming they have not been charged or convicted of a criminal offence since the original police check or previous attestation.

## **CRIMINAL OFFENCE DISCRETION: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Where criminal offences and/or charges involving a staff, student or volunteer, exist or occur, agency policy and procedures will outline:

- Non-negotiable offences/charges for staff or volunteer to assume or remain in a position;
- Suitability criteria for staff or volunteer to remain or assume a position;
- Decision making process and,
- Performance management procedures.

Documentation of decisions must be noted in the staff or volunteer file.

See **Appendix E** for standards regarding Criminal Offence Discretion.

## **JOB DESCRIPTIONS: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

The following areas shall be covered in job descriptions for staff, students and volunteers:

1. General Reporting Procedures (Who I'm Responsible to);
2. Specific Duties (What I'm Responsible for) and,
3. Qualifications (Required Skills and Attributes).

## **ORIENTATION: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

All staff, students and volunteers require agency orientation that will include:

- Crisis training;
- Emergency First Aid and CPR;
- Emergency Protocol;
- Facility operations;
- Job descriptions;
- Organizational information;
- Policies and procedures;
- Supportive counseling techniques;
- Workplace Diversity;
- Workplace Health and Safety, including Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHMIS) training and,
- START Guide Minimum Standards.

Orientation information regarding emergency procedures must be completed within 24 hours of a new hire.

Completion of all orientation items will be documented, signed and dated in personnel file of staff, student or volunteer.

The material outlined in the Orientation package will be discussed and clarified at a follow-up meeting with the Executive Director or designate. This meeting shall be scheduled within one week of reading the orientation package. After this review meeting, staff, student or volunteer and the Executive Director or designate will sign off verifying that the staff, student or volunteer has read and understands the orientation material.

## **PERSONNEL SUPERVISION: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

### **Definition of Supervision:**

For the purpose of these standards, supervision is defined as:

- Staff or volunteer having **regular** access to supervisor and,
- Supervisor is to directly monitor staff or volunteer.

Formal, private supervision meetings are encouraged on a regular basis as an opportunity to discuss confidential matters, provide feedback, job performance issues, concerns etc. Student Placements will follow the appraisal schedule appropriate to that particular post-secondary institution.

## **PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

### **Evaluation Components**

The following general areas shall be evaluated during a performance appraisal (for staff, students and volunteers):

1. Job performance (based on specific job descriptions);
2. Supervision and Consultation (ability to accept and utilize supervision feedback);
3. Professional Conduct (i.e.: confidentiality, reliability, punctuality, attendance, etc.);
4. Professional Development/Goal Setting;
5. Team Participation;
6. Crisis Management;
7. Emergency Protocols and,
8. General (communication skills, organizational skills, time management, commitment to service, knowledge of community resources, realistic expectations of self and the system, problem solving, stress management).

### **Appraisal Frequency:**

At a minimum, performance appraisals shall be carried out in the following manner:

<b>Minimum Standards</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Duration of probationary period	Minimum of 20 hours of observed, frontline service. Peer-Volunteer: Minimum of 3 months	Minimum of 3 months
Performance appraisal at end of probationary period	Yes	Yes
Persons involved in performance appraisal	Supervisor and Volunteer	Supervisor and Staff
Frequency of performance appraisals	Minimum of once every 12 months	Minimum of once every 12 months

## **PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES & RELATIONSHIPS: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

### **Professional Relationships**

Staff must appreciate their position of authority or at least the perception of their position of authority to ensure that this is not used to exploit the client, peer-volunteer or student in any way. The purpose of the relationship is to address the needs of the client or peer-volunteer and not the staff.

Agency policy and procedures will define the boundaries, context and performance management (or progressive discipline) process for the following potential relationships:

- Staff and Client/Peer Volunteer/Student
- Volunteer/Student and Client or Peer Volunteer
- Peer Volunteer and Client

### **Professional Conduct:**

As a role model, staff, students or volunteers will not engage in the following while in the company of clients or peer-volunteers:

- Purchase or use alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Engage in, support or promote illegal activities;
- Develop inappropriate relationships with clients or peer-volunteers,(ie: dating, becoming physically/sexually involved);
- Abuse (sexually, physically, verbally or emotionally) anybody;
- Exploit clients or peer-volunteers and,
- Any other conduct which the agency deems inappropriate.

If any of the above occur, the staff, student, volunteer will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination, upon review of the circumstances. Police may be contacted where appropriate.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Under no circumstances is personal information about clients to be discussed with anyone outside the agency, or in public unless it is in the process of fulfilling a legal obligation such as reporting child abuse, or other criminal activity.

Agency policy and procedures will reflect the conditions in which staff, students, volunteers can:

- Communicate with other agencies for the purpose of referral, advocacy or obtaining resources;
- Discuss agency business, including any internal or external conflict and,
- Speak to the media.

Agency policy and procedures will define the progressive discipline process for failure to comply with policies and/or breach of confidentiality.

Documentation of breach of confidentiality must be noted in the staff or volunteer file.

All staff, students and volunteers must sign a Statement of Confidentiality **prior** to the first day of employment or volunteering.

See **Appendix F** for sample Statement of Confidentiality.

## **HARASSMENT / DISCRIMINATION: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Agency policy and procedures will:

- Define harassment;
- Define discrimination;
- State the Agency's commitment to provide an environment free of harassment and discrimination;
- Specify internal reporting procedures for incidents/allegations of harassment and/or discrimination;
- Ensure staff, students and volunteers are aware of their right to report incidents of harassment and/or discrimination to the Human Rights Commission;
- Document all incidents of reported harassment or discrimination and,
- Outline performance management (or progressive discipline) process to address concerns and/or allegations of harassment and/or discrimination.

See **Appendix G** for standards regarding Harassment / Discrimination.

**CLIENT**

## **CRISIS/INCIDENT REPORTING: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Documentation and/or an incident report will be completed when any of the following are involved:

- Police
- Children's Aid Society (CAS)
- Hospital
- Any other "emergency" service
- Weapons
- Alcohol/Drugs
- Personal Injury (client, staff, student, volunteers etc.)

Incident reports must document all relative information (cite full names, specific times, details, witnesses, etc.) to the situation including the agency staff's response.

The Executive Director or designate must be notified immediately of any of the above listed incidents.

The Executive Director or designate must read and sign off on each incident report **within 24 hours**, or the next business day of the incident taking place.

All incident reports will be maintained in a safe and secure location.

## **UNDER 16s: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

### **Child Protection Issues**

As a community, especially as social service providers, our primary responsibility must be the safety of children and youth under 16.

START Guide agencies must have policies and procedures that reflect our responsibility to protect children including reporting procedures and accountabilities.

If a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information about which it is based to a Children's Aid Society London and Middlesex.

Refer to Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex for Child Abuse protocol and reporting details, [www.caslondon.on.ca](http://www.caslondon.on.ca)

### **Absenteeism from School**

As a minimum standard, youth under the age of 16 who are absent from school without parental/guardian permission will not be allowed to remain at the agency's physical location during school hours. Should truancy be a concern this needs to be addressed in an appropriate manner with the youth, parent/guardian and school.

## **BEHAVIOUR: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

In an effort to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for youth, behavioural expectations are to be defined and posted for all to adhere to. Policies and procedures will outline progressive consequences and/or behaviour management in addressing the following:

### Respect

“Respect is a two-way street”.

Agencies must respect and recognize each person’s individual qualities, diversity, challenges and struggles to resolve life’s difficulties. Youth should be encouraged to be responsible and accountable to and for their life choices.

In turn, it is expected that youth will act respectfully to agency staff, volunteers, property and other youth in the agency.

### Horseplay

Horseplay is not safe behaviour in the agency and efforts to reduce incidents are expected.

### Language

Profanity and abusive language towards others is not acceptable in the agency and efforts to reduce incidents are expected.

### Other

To include any other behaviour(s) deemed inappropriate by the agency.

## **AWOL and WARRANTS: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Agency policy and procedures will define the boundaries and expectations of supporting and directing youth who are AWOL (Absent Without Leave) or wanted by the police. At a minimum these procedures will address:

- Reporting the whereabouts of a youth to Police, parent/guardian, Children’s Aid Society of London & Middlesex
- Harboring a youth

See **Appendix H** for standards regarding AWOL and Warrants.

## **PROTOCOL REGARDING HOMELESS YOUTH: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

If a young person is under the age of 16, and suspected to be homeless, the Children’s Aid Society **must** be notified.

Refer to Children’s Aid Society of London & Middlesex for Child Abuse protocol and reporting details, [www.caslondon.on.ca](http://www.caslondon.on.ca)

For youth 16 years and older who do not have a place to stay overnight staff will provide as a minimum standard:

- Supports to reconcile with the family home
- Supports to connect and stay with a relative/friend
- Community resources and referrals to youth service emergency shelters

See **Appendix I** for Community resources and referral source

# **HEALTH & SAFETY**

## **SAFETY MEASURES: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

In an effort to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for youth, respect and key safety features and policies are to be implemented.

Minimum standards will include:

Statements prominently displayed in the agency and policy and procedures restricting;

- Smoking;
- Weapons;
- Drugs and Alcohol and,
- Acts or threats of violence.

### **Smoking**

Staff, students, or volunteers, are not to purchase, provide or distribute cigarettes to youth under 19 years of age.

Staff, students or volunteers, of the agency must ensure that youth 19 years of age and older are aware of permitted smoking areas outside of agency building. Agencies must adhere to the [Smoke Free Public Places By-law](http://www.london.ca/By-laws/PDFs/smokefreepublic.pdf) ([www.london.ca/By-laws/PDFs/smokefreepublic.pdf](http://www.london.ca/By-laws/PDFs/smokefreepublic.pdf))

### **Weapons**

Minimum standards and policy and procedures will include:

- Definition of a weapon;
- Procedures for dealing with weapons;
- Procedures for reporting, storing and disposing of weapons and,
- Documentation of incidents involving a weapon.

See **Appendix J** for standards regarding Weapons.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Minimum standards and policy and procedures will include:

- Procedures for addressing:
  - youth suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
  - found illegal drugs/alcohol
  - suspected trafficking or conspiring to purchase drugs or alcohol;
- Procedures for reporting, storing and disposing of illegal drugs/alcohol and,
- Documentation of incidents involving illegal drugs/alcohol.

See **Appendix K** for standards regarding Drugs or Alcohol.

## Acts or threats of violence

Minimum standards and policy and procedures will include;

- Definition of acts or threats of violence
- Procedures for dealing with acts or threats of violence
- Procedures for reporting acts or threats of violence
- Documentation of incidents of acts or threats of violence

## **MEDICATIONS: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Minimum standards and policy and procedures will include:

- Individuals authorized to administer medication;
- Documentation for administering medication and,
- Storage and access of medication.

See **Appendix L** for standards regarding Medications.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES: MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Each agency must have and use a basic health and safety checklist. This checklist must be completed by designated agency staff during a monthly inspection of the agencies premises.

This checklist must include, at minimum, the following items:

- Clearly posted emergency procedures;
- Clearly posted emergency phone numbers;
- First aid kit on-site, stocked and visible;
- Transportable first aid kit for any off-site agency activities;
- Fire extinguisher(s) on-site and in working condition;
- Smoke detector(s) on-site and in working condition; and,
- Medications and cleaning supplies labeled and maintained in a locked location.

Completed checklists and documentation of the following will be maintained:

### Insurance

Each agency must carry appropriate fire, automobile and liability insurance. Proof of insurance to be provided upon request.

### Fire Systems Check

On an annual basis, each agency must pass a professional fire systems check, including; sprinklers, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, fire alarms. On an annual basis, agencies must complete a facility fire drill, recording response time and outcomes.

### Health Inspections

On an annual basis, any agency preparing food must pass a health inspection conducted by a public health inspector. Any issues that arise from these inspections must be addressed immediately.

### Safe Food Handling

Agencies providing food as part of service delivery are expected to have one full time staff trained in Safe Food Handling by public health, with the agency practicing and adhering to safe food handling procedures.

### First Aid/CPR

All full time agency staff working directly with youth must maintain current First Aid/CPR certification and [WSIB First Aid Requirements](http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/FAP)

### WHMIS

All staff must receive WHMIS training. Each agency must adhere to the policies and regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act [WHMIS](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/whmis-simdut/) ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/whmis-simdut/](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/whmis-simdut/))

### Safe Sharps and Waste Handling

All staff must receive information/training on Universal Precautions and Safe Sharps and Waste Handling.

See **Appendix M** for standards regarding Health and Safety.