



THE

REFUGE

*To be a cooperative community that provides safe and supportive living space
for shelter, social skill development, personal and spiritual growth*

Transitional Housing Handbook

*Each one will be like a shelter from the wind
and a refuge from the storm,
like streams of water in the desert
and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. (Isa. 32:2)*

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WHAT IS “THE REFUGE”?

The Refuge is more than a place to stay...more than a warm bed. It is also more than 10 people living inside the walls of 437 Main St. The Refuge is a community intent on removing barriers to healthy relationships between people.

The Refuge is a transitional housing community for men who are at risk of homelessness: and who have the interest and ability, with support, to make positive change in their lives. These men want to get from where they are to something better and are *willing to work* at improving their situation. Since the Refuge housing is for a transitional time (typically 3 months to 3 years in length), it helps individuals make a start towards something better. Members are **self-directed** in that, with the support of others, they take charge of their lives and pursue a direction that enables them to reach their full potential. We encourage each to “discover their real self and live a full life”. The following aims are part of what gives our residents fresh direction:

- *Being healthy - Enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle.*
- *Being free from things that control - addictions, dysfunctional relationships, and negative choices.*
- *Staying safe - being protected from harm and taking care of oneself.*
- *Having healthy relationships - family, friends, and new members of the community*
- *Making a positive contribution - developing the skills and attitudes to contribute to the community in which they live and be a positive change in the world*
- *Enjoying and achieving - getting the most out of life and having hope for life*
- *Having freedom - to think and express oneself in everyday life*
- *Access to supports - family, friends, and community agencies*



Everyone who is part of the Refuge community will contribute to its overall functioning, as well as receive some of the benefits of being part of a community like this. This handbook is intended to introduce you to our vision, values, and how to join The Refuge. It also describes some of the guidelines that we live by and how people leave.

To be a part of our community each person purposefully chooses to live with and offer themselves to each other.

This means that we work at loving and respecting each other (this doesn’t always come naturally or easily!) We listen to each other, learn from each other and challenge each other. We want to build healthy relationships together and to contribute to the

community, where we live. Of course there are many barriers to building healthy relationships. Part of our community life is recognizing and removing these barriers so we can grow together and as individuals.

... and each person contributes to overall functioning of community.

There are benefits from being part of a community like this and all these benefits hinge on how each member contributes. Everyone is unique and created to live in community with others. There are abilities or qualities in each person that are meant to be shared with others. ***For the successes***



that we have witnessed, the key ingredients of honesty, humility and openness have been present. This helps to maintain a safe and healthy community, which is a high priority for us.

So... we invite those needing a positive and supportive living environment to join the Refuge, so that they can get their feet back under them.

Our Mission is...

“To establish and maintain a cooperative community that provides safe and supportive living space for shelter, social skill development, and spiritual growth”.

OUR VALUES

Respect and Worth: We respect and believe in the worth and dignity of every person.

Cooperative Communities: We believe that through cooperative living, communities can be safe and self-sustaining.

Christian Faith in Action: Working together with people of all faiths and beliefs, we serve others in a spirit of justice and compassion.

Partnerships: We believe that we can only achieve our mission through collaboration and teamwork in the community.

Shelter for All: We believe that shelter must be available for the vulnerable in our communities.

The Refuge is:

- A community of people, helping one another
- Transitional housing and therefore residents work on goals and gain support in moving forward
- Concerned with the whole person (physical, mental, emotional, social, economic spiritual)

The Refuge is not:

- An apartment building or a Boarding House
- A detox centre
- An emergency shelter
- A food bank



Where is the Refuge?

Our first community is located at #2- 437 Main St., Kentville, Nova Scotia.

Residents of The Refuge can gain support through partner agencies and also the Portal Youth Centre. We hope that this first community prototype will birth many more like itself.

WHY “THE REFUGE”?

There are many barriers to healthy living. Unstable home environments, little relational support, unhealthy ways of having fun, addiction, oppression, and abuse to name just a few. These things all play a role in preventing people from reaching their full potential. The Refuge is a safe place to be nurtured and begin to learn new patterns of behaviour.

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS?

Four groups of people are part of The Refuge. They are: Transitional Members, Resident Support Workers, Intern Members, and Refuge Volunteers.

Transitional Members:

Transitional Members are the residents who make up the core of our community. They are transitional in that they are considered “at risk of homelessness” and are using the Refuge as a temporary place to get their life together. It is our hope that joining The Refuge will help these members develop a wider network of support that remains with them when they move on after living at 437 Main Street. It is also the aim of The Refuge

to help Transitional Members acquire the skills and supports necessary to get and keep their own housing when they leave and to address the deeper issues that makes them at risk of homelessness. These members must agree to The Refuge Community Guidelines (see below). Transitional Members are invited to join The Refuge by the Support Staff. They need to apply, provide references, meet with a long-term member to develop goals and timelines, and agree to The Refuge community “Community Guidelines”. We’ve described below the complete process for how Transitional Members join in the section, “Joining The Refuge”.

Resident Support Workers:

Resident leaders are essential to the Refuge community. They are responsible for making sure the community is functioning well on a daily basis. They help to oversee the daily, weekly, and monthly tasks involved in community living. They also model the values and influence the tone and climate of the community. Resident leaders check in regularly with other residents to provide accountability and support. They are servants, not bosses, but often must serve through delegating various tasks and chores. They live by the Refuge community “Rule of Life” (see below).

Intern Members:

From time to time, there may be Intern members who join The Refuge community as learners and servants. They come for a period of time and are immersed in life at The Refuge. They must pay for their rent as part of their learning program. They help the staff in many ways and accompany residents on their journeys. They also meet with staff to do specific study and develop projects that they can do with other members. Intern members are invited by the staff. They must provide references and recommendations and need to understand the heart and values of The Refuge. These members need to be initiative takers and be able to function without close supervision.

Refuge Volunteers:

These people are the supportive community that surrounds The Refuge community. Some are connected to the Refuge through their churches and agencies which support the Refuge. Others are simply friends of The Refuge as individual volunteers or even as financial donors. These friends may participate in The Refuge community in a number of helping ways: by going out to movies, eating, worshipping, celebrating, and playing games together. Some provide specific services and skills in budgeting, crafts, anger management, conflict resolution, prayer ministry, worship circles, and counselling. The

Refuge Friends provide everyone with a larger circle from which to draw strength, encouragement, and reprieve from daily life at The Refuge.

CODE OF LIVING

The purpose of The Refuge Code of Living is to provide some boundaries that will help every member on their journey towards personal growth and health while maintaining a safe and supportive atmosphere for everyone. It is the minimum standard required of every member. It is a starting point from which to work towards personal goals and The Refuge “Community Guidelines”. Practically, the Community Guidelines breaks down the way we relate to each other and lay out the boundaries for our community.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

1. Willingness to embrace community life and personal growth.
2. Agree to a personal development plan during tenancy.
3. Agree to submit to the leadership structure of The Refuge.
4. Maintain cleanliness in personal and shared areas.
5. Attentiveness to responsibilities and chores.
6. The payment of appropriate fees on time is required.
7. Physical violence towards people or the building will not be tolerated.
8. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated.
9. No verbal aggression and threats.
10. There will be no calling people down based on race, sex, or other differences.
11. Smoking is only permitted outside and away from the building.
12. No using, possessing, or selling illegal drugs, or misusing prescription drugs or medication. (We highly discourage contact with people who do these activities.)
13. No drinking, drunkenness or inebriation (inside or outside the building).
14. Sex outside of marriage is not encouraged as part of life at the Refuge.
15. No prostitution or related activities.
16. No participation in gang related activity.
17. Not possess or store firearms or other weapons.
18. Use communications technology in appropriate and positive ways only.
19. Visitors that are on the visitors list can visit in the living room and kitchen.
20. Attend weekly house meetings.
21. Participate in weekly cleaning time – as a group.
22. Create and follow through with personal goals – and weekly check ins regarding goals with support staff.

Everyone who is living in The Refuge agrees to these standards. They are in place for the health and safety of each person, and to help foster a positive

living environment for all. Failure to adhere to any aspect of the “Community Guidelines” may be grounds for eviction or removal from the premises.

RULE OF LIFE

Rules of life began to be used about 1400 years ago by early Christians who lived in monastic communities. They were simple, practical documents that describe a way of life that those in a community lived by. They are not a set of laws that one can live up to or break. Rather, they are a way of measuring personal growth, setting goals, and a tool for self-reflection. They are not a heavy set of commandments or a contract. We understand our Rule of Life as a covenant that we are all journeying towards together.

Our Rule of Life describes some areas we value growth in and would like to see everyone who is part of the Refuge grow in. If our “Community Guidelines” is the bare minimum, then our “Rule of Life” comprises our goals... what we hope to someday achieve and are currently working towards. It can be summed up like this:

- **Respect God**
- **Respect Others**
- **Respect Yourself**
- **Respect Creation (includes Refuge space)**

All are working towards:

1. Developing positive anger management and conflict resolution skills.
2. Growing in life skills and capacity and self-motivation building.
3. Practicing sound financial management.
4. Growing in our spiritual journey.
5. Finding value and identity within our community and ourselves.
6. Discovering, developing, and using our gifts and talents.
7. Serving each other and our neighbourhood.
8. Learning healthy ways of having fun.
9. Being vulnerable and demonstrating this through openness.
10. Practicing honesty and humility.
11. Eating together regularly, where possible.

12. Working together regularly.

13. Becoming part of a wider social support network.

COMMUNITY LIFE

There are many aspects of community life at The Refuge. These will vary over time, however, there are some events that will be a weekly routine. All community members would attend these events unless they are at work, school, or an appointment. These gatherings will facilitate connection and community building, as well as help with specific issues, tasks, and goals.

Each member will add to the community schedule, based upon his or her own goals and needs.

Children

Families with children may be regular visitors to The Refuge. Adults are not to be left alone with unrelated children in the building.

Respect in Relationships

In our society there is a huge lack of respect, especially in relationships between men and women. We want to create a place that is the exact opposite from this disrespect that we see around us. No women are able to visit at The Refuge without staff present. We also wish to raise the bar for how our resident view and treat women. We want women to feel safe both inside and outside the building. This means being careful how we present ourselves to each other (e.g. flirting behaviour, suggestive comments, inappropriate humour, etc.), and generally watching out for each other. In one sense we should see our community as a family and in healthy families brothers and sisters treat each other with respect (most of the time at least!).

Leadership

Every community needs leadership. The Refuge is based on the model of team leadership. While there is a clear authority structure with the Director and the Resident Support Workers, decisions made include the input from the resident leaders. All residents have to live by the same rules. No one in The Refuge community is above or beyond the “Code of Living” and the “Rule of Life.”

Financial

Expectations will be discussed and arrangements will be made prior to moving in. Applicants will complete a rental form, meet all conditions of IA to qualify or supply confirmation of their income from their employer. Rent is \$400 per month and is

payable on the first of the month. Out of the rent contributed above, each person gives a \$10 deposit towards monthly cleaning [usually paid to the resident that does a larger share of that work] and \$40 towards food for the evening meal.

Meals

Each person is responsible for their own food for breakfast or lunch. From the rent amounts above and contributions from Common Threads, food for a daily evening meal is overseen and organized by the residents. Evening meals are a community event. Some cook and prepare the meal while some volunteer to clean up.

Alcohol and Drugs

The Refuge being a safe place means a place where alcohol and drugs will not be used or the use encouraged. While we have an understanding that people depend on the use of substances for a variety of reasons, we need to keep safety as a high priority. The abuse of substances, alcohol and using, possessing, or selling illegal drugs, or misusing prescription drugs or medication cannot be tolerated within or around the building. We want to be mindful of other members and neighbours who are vulnerable in this area when we are at outside social events together. Please use caution and discretion, being mindful of who you are with and others who are at the gathering. If a resident possesses or uses alcohol or drugs on the premises, they will be removed from the premises immediately.



Records

A personal file is kept for each resident. Medical information, records of prescription medication, doctor's name, MSI number, and emergency contacts are contained in this file, as are admissions forms and statements of personal goals. This information is considered confidential and will be kept in a secure location by the Refuge team.



LEAVING THE REFUGE

People will move on from The Refuge for a variety of reasons. All our residents will have specific goals that are tailored to the individual's needs, as well as a timeline for achieving these goals. Once these goals are met or the time is up, the person will move out of 437 Main Street. It is our hope that each individual will remain connected with the positive, supportive relationships developed during his stay at The Refuge.

The basis for moving on and being successful are:

1. Achieving goals set at beginning of stay.
2. Change in life situation in which you no longer require the support of The Refuge.
3. Situations listed below that make living unsafe for oneself or others.

THE GROUNDS FOR EVICTION ARE:

With the key ingredients of honesty, humility and openness for success at The Refuge, residents who struggle with being able to maintain this will have difficulty staying long enough to achieve their goals. We will attempt together with you work on this area. Also unresolved issues and actions that demonstrate a lack of an honest attempt to live by The Refuge "Community Guidelines" will result in someone "moving on". Since our desire is to maintain a safe and healthy community, the following could result in an immediate removal from the premises:

1. Physical violence towards people or the residence.
2. Sexual harassment.
3. Verbal aggression and/or threats.
4. Using, possessing, or selling illegal drugs, or misusing prescription drugs or medication at the Refuge.
5. Drinking, drunkenness or inebriation (inside or outside the building) at the Refuge.
6. Unauthorized guests overnight.
7. Prostitution or related activities.
8. Possession of firearms or other weapons.
9. Viewing of Child pornography or other communications technology that demean any member of society.



JOINING THE REFUGE

Because we want to make sure that everyone who joins The Refuge is a good fit, this process can take some time. We feel it is better to take a little extra time and make sure The Refuge is right for you and you are right for The Refuge than to rush the process only to find out it isn't working for either party. This process can often take a few weeks. If we do not have space or sufficient resources available, you will be put on a waiting list, which can take months.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Step 1 – **Apply** - Complete application and receive Community Handbook

- Review of community handbook and discussion of values to give a more in-depth picture of life at the Refuge.
- Starting to envision the mutual relationship between existing members of the Refuge and the potential community member (What do we have to offer each other?)

Step 2 – **Visit** with people who live and work in community at The Refuge.

Step 3 – **Demonstrate Commitment** - Keep visiting with the community

- Applicant's initiative and ongoing desire to live at the Refuge is important.
- Build the plan for change and identify the team within and outside of the Refuge.

Step 4 – **Intake Interview** - Meet with Staff for in depth medical and personality evaluation.

- Discussion about goals, anticipated length of stay, and personal needs
- Discussion about the Refuge schedule, expectations, and financial commitment.

Step 5 – **Discernment** - Community discussions

- There is normally 1-2 weeks between community discussion and decision.

Step 6 – **Decision**

The process will take a minimum of 2-3 weeks. Visits with the community should be arranged through an application team member. When you're an applicant, this might seem like a challenging process. When you're a community member, it's comforting to know that you will have a chance to get to know your potential housemates. You'll be able to speak up and be heard if you have thoughts or concerns. The Refuge's core values guide the application process.

In evaluating whether it is a good fit, the potential resident will consider the following circumstances:

1. Current living situation and current life circumstances
2. Ability of The Refuge Community to support the individual
3. Length of stay
4. Willingness to live by The Refuge “Community Guidelines”
5. Commitment to personal growth and developing personal goals
6. Willingness to serve in practical ways (eg. Cleaning toilets)
7. Willingness to build a new structure (schedule) for healthy change
8. Medical/physical condition
9. Personal hygiene- ability to look after oneself
10. Financial situation- is there financial means to contribute
11. Being connected to a team to deal with one’s barriers

The following pages contains valuable information after someone joins the Refuge

RESOLVING CONFLICT

When people live together there will be conflict. Our hope is to work at resolving things in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

1. A person who has a conflict with another resident or staff or volunteer is called to address the matter with the other person personally. When matters are handled privately, misunderstanding can be addressed, and there is great potential for the other person to respond positively. In addition, a private meeting helps to avoid the problem of gossip that can occur when a matter is taken to others instead of the person involved.
2. If a private discussion does not solve the issue, the person is to take one or two other individuals and meet with the person with whom they have conflict. In the case of personal conflict, this principle allows for additional witnesses to observe the matter firsthand and help determine the proper course of action.
3. If there is no resolution after steps one and two, the matter is to be taken before the Refuge Team.

Finally, if the person in the center of the conflict refuses to respond positively or move towards a solution, then that person is to be considered as “unwilling and non-cooperative”. That simply means that the team and the resident may have to look at alternative living arrangements. This means removing the negative influence from the community and this is only considered as a last resort.

In heated conflict, it is helpful to have a “cool-down” period. Conflict is not usually resolved in situations where two people are very heated. Also, we always try to seek first to understand then be understood. When others sense you listening to them in a real way, they are more often able to also hear your perspective. When you understand the other person’s side of the story, it may shed valuable light on your interpretation of the events that led to the conflict. Should a conflict escalate and physical or verbal aggression results, the parties will be removed from the Refuge.



As it states in the community guidelines, “Physical violence towards people or the building will not be tolerated and Sexual harassment will not be tolerated.” Safety for all members of the community is one of our highest concerns and therefore emphasis will be placed on this.

EMERGENCY PLAN

- FIRE
- VIOLENCE
- LIFE THREATENING

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY

1. **Evaluate the situation.** Are there things that might put you at risk of harm? Are you or the victim threatened by fire, toxic smoke or gasses, an unstable building, live electrical wires or other dangerous scenario? Do not rush into a situation where you could end up as a victim yourself. If approaching the victim will endanger your life, seek professional help immediately; they have higher levels of training and know how to handle these situations.
2. **Remember your A,B,Cs.** The A,B,Cs of first aid refer to the three critical things you need to look for.^[1]
 - Airway – Does the person have an unobstructed airway?
 - Breathing – Is the person breathing?
 - Circulation – Does the person show a pulse at major pulse points (wrist, carotid artery, groin)?
3. **Avoid moving the victim.** Avoid moving the victim unless they are in immediate danger. Moving a victim will often make injuries worse, especially in the case of spinal cord injuries.
4. **Call Emergency Service** Call 9-1-1 or tell someone else (a specific person, if possible) to call for help as soon as possible. If you are the only person on the scene, try to establish breathing before calling for help, and do not leave the victim alone for an extensive amount of time.

ACTIVATING THE REFUGE PLAN

In the event of a MAJOR EMERGENCY*, the following will be notified:

- Refuge Director (Rik Berry) at 902-690-7091
- Refuge Support Worker (Patrick Bezanson) @ 902-691-2160

One of these people will be reachable by phone at any time. Notice of absence will be posted in advance.

- 1) One person will then be identified at the point person.

- 2) Based on the information available the Team Leader or other appropriate person will have the responsibility if activating or de-activating the emergency plan to the appropriate level.
- 3) Appropriate community agencies will be notified by a Residential Support Worker or the Refuge Director.

In the event of a **NON- EMERGENCY****, the assigned personnel that is acting in the role of “residential support” for the said member can be contacted.

Call Back System

The Residential Support Worker or the Refuge Director will then arrive at the facilities according to the requirements of the programs.

In the event of an emergency, on site staff must first contact the appropriate community agencies and the Residential Support Worker or the Refuge Director will then interact with the Community Agency Response (Fire, Ambulance, RCMP, Kentville Police, call 911

If the phones in the Refuge or Portal are not in operation, the caller can use a personal cell phone or use phone AT THE FIRE HALL.

The Call Back list above must be posted in the Refuge and the Portal.

* MAJOR EMERGENCY IS DEFINED AS:

- Any nature or man-made situation that could put someone in danger or great stress: fire, snow storm, high winds, electrical power failure, environmental concerns, sickness, epidemic, chemical spill, or a medical emergency.
- A personal emergency that is life threatening to the member on site or offsite or someone else onsite
- Physical or sexual assault of any kind either outside or inside the Refuge

**** A NON-EMERGENCY SITUATION** that is of great concern to member that is not life threatening would be defined as:

- A conflict that is overwhelming or greatly upsetting
- Depression or anxiety that is affecting eating, sleeping or relating to others
- Loss of a family member or a close friend

- Loss of employment or termination of education
- Clear infraction of the code of living, i.e. drunkenness or use, possession, or selling illegal drugs, or misusing prescription drugs or medication.

EVACUATION

1. **Purpose: To remove persons from a place of danger to a place of safety and could involve either a partial or complete evacuation.**
2. **Order to Evacuate: An order to evacuate may be given by a Residential Support Worker, the Refuge Director, or by key volunteers on the premises.**
3. **Meeting Area: All evacuees are to meet in the parking lot in front of Independent Groceries. From there other steps can be taken to shelter if necessary any of the Refuge residents and to send program participants and volunteers home. At the meeting area, every effort shall be made to account for each Refuge resident as well as for all staff and program participants at the Refuge and the Portal.**

The sign in list and the visitor list must be maintained for a head count in the event of an emergency like a FIRE.



SECURITY DEPOSIT POLICY

Moving in

At the Refuge, a resident must pay a [security deposit](#) or damage deposit of \$160 before moving in. A security deposit is a one-time only payment and is equal to half of the monthly rent. The damage deposit and the rent is payable to Valley Gate Vineyard Church. The damage deposit will be held in a trust account. The money stays in the trust account until the resident moves out.

Moving Out

The Landlord can use the security deposit when the resident moves out, if the landlord has a valid reason for deducting money from it. Some common reasons that a landlord can keep money from a security deposit include:

- the resident owes money for rent;
- the resident has damaged the property and the landlord completed the inspection reports;
- the resident has not cleaned the property and the landlord completed the inspection reports;
- the resident has not returned the keys; or
- the resident owes money for fees.

Requirements for Returning the Security Deposit

1. When the resident gives up their room (which is usually when the resident gives the keys back to the landlord), they will receive in that week an assessment of the room condition. If repairs are needed, the resident will be advised of how much, if any, they might receive back from their deposit.
2. Sometimes the landlord will not know the cost of repairs or cleaning right away. In that case, the landlord will provide a final statement of account within 30 days of the resident giving up possession.
3. If the security deposit was paid on their behalf by DCS, any remaining amount will be paid back to DCS and not to the resident.
4. If the resident does not agree with the deductions that have been made from the security deposit, he or she should write to or speak with the landlord requesting the return of the security deposit, and the reasons why the deductions are inappropriate or unreasonable.