



Community Advisory Council Terms of Reference

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1.1 About Sistering

Sistering is a trans-inclusive 24/7 Drop In supporting women from across Toronto who experience first hand the impact of poverty and marginalization. They may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They are a diverse group, aged 16 to 80-plus; women with mental health or substance use issues; women who have experienced or are experiencing trauma and violence; immigrant and refugee women; women with health issues and disabilities; and women without legal status.

Sistering has been supporting some of the City's most marginalized women for more than 35 years. In November 2015, Sistering opened its doors 24/7.

Sistering's goal: to create a safe, non-judgmental space for women who experience social isolation, homeless or precarious housing, trauma and violence, discrimination, substance use or need mental health support. Guided by principles of feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression, Sistering works in collaboration with others in the community to change the social conditions that endanger women's welfare.

The agency provides basic necessities we take for granted including three hot meals a day plus soup and sandwiches overnight; showers and laundry facilities; clothing; and Internet access plus support services such as crisis intervention and trauma-informed counselling; housing support; and onsite access to primary health care with general practitioners, psychiatrists and a nurse.

1.2 About Bloorcourt Neighbourhood

“Bloorcourt is still very much the heart and soul of the city for us. It has a vibrancy and intimacy that we haven’t found elsewhere, and the diversity of its small-business owners and residents is truly something special”- Filmmaker Marc Serpa Francoeur¹

Bloorcourt is a vibrant community in the west end of Toronto. Bloorcourt’s geographical boundaries extend ten blocks west along Bloor from Montrose to Dufferin, south to College and North to Dupont. The Bloorcourt BIA, established in 1979, boasts a membership of 300 diverse businesses- El Salvadorian, Portuguese, Nicaraguan, Greek, Eritrean owned and a host of services and entertainment venues.

Municipally Bloorcourt straddles Ward 19 to the east of Dovercourt and Ward 18 to the west of the street and is therefore represented by two councillors; Mike Layton (Ward 19) and Ana Bailao (Ward 18). Census figures from 2011 set the median age of these two wards at 37 years with a high volume of English, Portuguese, Spanish and Mandarin speakers making up the residential demographic². Provincially Bloorcourt is represented by Trinity-Spadina MP, Han Dong, and Davenport MP, Julie Dzerowicz. Federally the area is represented by Davenport and University-Rosedale MPPs Cristina Martins and Chrystia Freeland respectively. The mixed residential and commercial demographic serves to accentuate the diversity of the neighbourhood. High density residential buildings, affordable rental units and new and established homeowners make up the residential demographic which is served through the Dovercourt/College Owners and Residents Association and the Friends of Dufferin Grove Residents Association.

Bloorcourt

¹ Andrea Chui, “Neighbourhood watch: Why Bloorcourt is one of Toronto’s most diverse places to live”. The Globe and Mail September 18, 2015

² Toronto City Planning Strategic Initiatives and Policy Analysis, Statistics Canada 2011.
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/8fa8-City-Planning-Ward-19-Profile-2011.pdf>

2. About the Community Advisory Council- CHARLOTTE PLEASE READ

Since transitioning to the 24/7 model in 2015, Sistering has faced the ongoing challenge of co-existing in the neighbourhood in an inclusive way. Issues regarding use of public space and a lack of educational material about working and living among the mentally ill have taken precedence. Thus far the councillors' offices and the BIA have been fielding the majority of community complaints. In the fall of 2017 Sistering received city funding to create an outreach team to establish a framework within which the complaints could be settled and prevented.

On November 2nd, 2017, Sistering hosted a Town Hall Meeting with the Bloorcourt community in order to gauge community response to the organization's transition to the 24/7 model in 2015. Many individuals expressed their support for Sistering, its staff and the importance of its work. However, the community also raised concerns about the need for advocacy, affordable housing and shelter space, about the use of public space outside of Sistering's doors, and how to deal with discarded drug related materials as well as how to deal with women in crisis if they witness episodic behaviour.

Modeling the Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre's 2016 Community Council, Sistering's Advisory Council aims to create a problem solving, harm reduction and knowledge sharing framework in order to integrate the agency's participants more cohesively with residents and shopkeepers.

3. Purpose

The Sistering Community Advisory Council (SCAC) has been established to promote inclusiveness between Sistering participants and community members (both residents and shopkeepers) and to develop a Community Response Plan that can ensure this goal is met.

The Community Advisory Council should include interested residents, shopkeepers, relevant city staff, participants and staff from the service provider agency, and representatives from the local Councillors', MPs and MPPs offices. This council should meet regularly and be publicly accessible.

The SCAC will be co-chaired by a shopkeeper, a resident and Sistering's community liaison worker. The SCAC will meet once a month for a period of 12 months.

4. Deliverables

- Provide a vehicle for addressing the concerns and issues of local residents about the organization's operations
- Develop a proactive plan and strategy for addressing issues brought up through the community response plan, that may affect the program or the neighbours
- Develop a communication mechanism to the community about the work of the Sistering Community Advisory Council

- The Council may form subcommittees to organize community events and other activities that help to promote inclusiveness among all Bloorcourt community members
- Minutes of Council Meetings, Terms of Reference and any other documentation will be sent and posted to the Sistering and BIA websites to ensure transparency between all parties.

5. Performance Measures- PLEASE THINK ABOUT?

- Evaluate community impact and recommend changes regarding the role of the Sistering Community Advisory Council
- Ensure issues raised by the SCAC are managed in a timely manner
- Evaluate community involvement in this collaborative relationship with Sistering
- Impact will be assessed by volume of complaints issued before and after the establishment of the council

6. Membership

- Facilitators: Community liaison worker (Sistering), resident and shopkeeper
- Members: Final membership list will be included as Appendix B once confirmed
- Observers: Community agency representatives and interested parties as invited by established SCAC members. Please let Claire know in advance so that she can include them on the agenda.

7. Meeting Administration

- The Facilitators shall be responsible for co-chairing SCAC meetings
- Meetings will be held monthly or as decided by group consensus
- Agenda items may be added by any community member or SCAC member at least eight days in advance of a meeting
- Material for each meeting will be sent one (1) week in advance
- The agenda, minutes of each meeting and action items will be public
- The minutes of each meeting and action items will be forwarded to the Executive Director of Sistering; Board of Directors and Executive Director, Bloorcourt Business Improvement Area Board; and the offices of City Councillors, Provincial Member of Parliament for Davenport

8. Accountability

- The Facilitators are accountable to Sistering and the community for the scope and performance of their duties
- Identified individual SCAC parties are responsible for implementing designated actions agreed to by the SCAC

9. Roles and Responsibilities of Members

- To understand, accept and agree to abide by these Terms of Reference
- Attend meetings to provide comments, suggestions, expertise and feedback
- Where required, to respect the confidentiality of materials presented and discussed

- To attend every meeting, or provide reasons as to why they cannot attend. However, failure to attend for more than 3 meetings in a row may result in the revocation of membership upon consensus from the SCAC

Operating Principles

- Foster a community of respect
- Seek decisions through consensus of a majority of members
- Promote collaboration
- Be inclusive
- Satisfy mutually-held principles of responsibility and accountability

Initial Term of Council

Unless amended by a majority vote these Terms of Reference will remain in force for the life of the Council.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

The personal information provided through the Community Advisory Council process will form part of the public record, as per the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and will not be protected from disclosure.

I, _____ [please print], agree to all terms and conditions of becoming a member of the Sistering Community Advisory Council at the request of Sistering in relation to a need for increased community and organizational integration.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Signature of Witness, over 18 years of age)

(Date)

APPENDIX A

Sistering Facts

Our Vision

A world where all women, in all our diversity, are safe, respected, valued and treated with dignity. All women have equitable opportunities to thrive and participate in inclusive communities.

Our Mission

We create a safe, welcoming and non-judgmental space for women. We are guided by principles of feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression. We offer practical and emotional support to women who experience social isolation, homelessness or precarious housing, trauma and violence, discrimination, substance use or need mental health support. Our equitable programs and services enable women to take greater control over their lives. We work in collaboration with others in the community to change the social conditions that endanger women’s welfare.

Our Values

Our model is trauma informed, guided by feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression principles, and the following core values:

- Dignity:** Each woman has dignity, is equal and is treated with respect.
- Equity:** All women are provided access to equal opportunities depending on their individual needs.
- Inclusiveness:** Sistering's program and advocacy work is directed by participants' needs, interests and creativity, and we value the participation and contribution of each woman.
- Aspirational:** Programs, advocacy and administration are proactive, innovative and committed to supporting women in achieving their goals.
- Solidarity:** Women help each other with the unique friendship, caring and respect that they give to each other. The unfair treatment of any woman affects the lives of all women.

We use an inclusive definition of "woman" and we welcome trans women, genderqueer women, and non-binary and gender expansive people. We recognize that gender is an evolving concept and we will work to be inclusive of the full gender spectrum.

Sistering Statistics

	Overnight visits: 52 (full)/night 18,980/year
Age of women who come to Sistering: 16 – 80-plus	Meals served 24/7 and Parkdale Drop Ins: 155,000
Women who visited the 24/7 Drop In: 3,200	Housing referrals: 685
Visits to 24/7 and Parkdale Drop Ins: 77,000	Shelter/hostel referrals: 1,652

Accompaniments: 3,850

January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017

Income support assistance: 1,542

Definitions

Low barrier

Low barrier means accepting women as they are, offering a safe and welcoming space regardless of whether a participant arrives using substances.

Harm reduction

Harm reduction is a program offering substance users and sex workers the information they need to use safely and stay healthy.

Trauma informed counselling

The vast majority of women who are in substance use treatment report a history of trauma. Trauma can become an organizing principle that is ever-present in a woman's life. It can shape the way a woman sees herself, others, and the world; it can have a serious effect on how she functions, forms relationships, and establishes safety and security in her life. (*Jean Tweed Centre*)

The Genesis of the 24/7 Drop In

September 22, 2013. It was a chilly night in Toronto, typical fall weather. A homeless woman was sleeping on the steps of a building at Sherbourne and Dundas Streets.

Between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. she was sexually assaulted. Twice. By two different men.

The attack galvanized the community: how, in a city that prides itself as livable, could she – and too many other vulnerable women – not find a welcoming low barrier space to stay safe and warm?

On Tuesday, November 26, a group of female activists and supporters, including Sistering's senior team, held a rally just meters from where the woman was assaulted, accusing all three levels of government of failing to protect women and girls.

According to a story in the Toronto Star, Norma Jean Neal, a Regent Park community health worker, asked, "Why was she out there sleeping on the stairs at four in the morning? It's because there's no shelters. We need something down here immediately – a 24-hour, low threshold safe place - no matter what condition you're in, you can get into ... that's what we need to demand of our politicians."

Together with our friends at Fred Victor Mission and a passionate group of Torontonians, we advocated for improved access to safe spaces for homeless women and trans people, day and night. The City stepped up with funding and in November 2015 we opened our Drop In 24/7, 365 days a year.

This is Sistering in Action: identifying and understanding the needs of marginalized women, advocating for change and seeing the impact our effective model has on the women we serve.

24/7 Staffing

24/7 start up: small working groups developed policy and procedures, working with a City consultant.

We started by opening until 11:00 pm and hired 4 evening staff. Several months later, we opened 24/7.

We have 4 full time evening staff and 4 full time overnight staff to cover the shifts

We have a roster of about 30 - 35 relief staff available to call as required

We have added 6 peers who work 3 shifts in the Drop In during the evening

In partnership with Inner City Health Associates (ICHA) we added more doctor and psychiatrist hours, including support during the evening.

In partnership with Jean Tweed Centre we added more counselling hours during the day and the evening shifts

In the past 18 months, we have added 4 more staff members to support the increased demand on programming such as Harm Reduction, and to provide increased support to find housing

Discussion Guidelines/Group Agreements
Art/Equity Resource Binder 2017

It will be important to have communication parameter that will allow for an honest and respectful environment that encourages the sharing of differing perspectives and opinions.

The following guidelines may be helpful:

- Try to listen for understanding, not in order to debate
- Ask clarifying questions if something is not clear
- Agree to disagree, but please do not disengage
- Maintain confidentiality- discuss and share broader themes when appropriate, but do not discuss specific stories or attribute conversations and decisions to specific individuals. When in doubt about what can be shared- ask
- Allow every one to speak for themselves, not on behalf of an entire group
- Acknowledge that communication differences may be cultural (or may not be) so your discomfort with a communication style is not an excuse to disengage
- Challenge yourself- step out of your comfort zone
- Address conflict directly if it arises- see it as a learning opportunity
- Take issues/concerns to the source-involve those closest to an issue without venting to others that are not involved
- Recognize natural or imposed power dynamics and imbalances
- Acknowledge if you may have said something that was hurtful or insensitive to someone else
- Please limit side conversations
- No talking on cell phones, texting, or working on computers or tablets during the session

Speak up if you feel a guideline is not being honoured.