



Covenant House Toronto

Rights of Passage

Participant Handbook

WELCOME TO RIGHTS OF PASSAGE!

We are glad you have chosen to participate in Rights of Passage. Entering a new program can be difficult and, at times, overwhelming. We wrote this handbook to assist you. This handbook outlines what you can expect from Rights of Passage and what Rights of Passage expects of you. This is an agreement between you and Covenant House Toronto through the ROP staff. Our goal is to provide a supportive environment that encourages and promotes development of the skills necessary for you to succeed with stable housing. If this handbook does not address all your questions, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Staff are here to assist, mentor and coach you. Please keep this handbook for your reference.

Rights of Passage (ROP) is not an independent living program. Rather it is a Life Skills based Transitional Housing program designed to provide you with the opportunity to pursue your goals in a safe and healthy environment. It is our hope that when the time comes for you to leave the program, you will have learned the skills that are necessary to achieve and maintain successful stable housing.

Welcome to the Rights of Passage community!

NEW PARTICIPANT STATUS: ORIENTATION

During the Orientation period, we support new participants with adjusting to living in the ROP community. You are expected to abide by a curfew of 10:00p.m. weekdays and 11:00p.m. on weekends. In addition, you will also have a midnight room curfew. Any special needs should be discussed with a staff member.

During orientation you are expected to participate in the following:

- Review the Participant Handbook
- Obtain any missing legal documents (release forms, social insurance card, ID, etc.)
- Meet with both the ROP Team Leaders
- Meet with the Life Skills Coordinator and participate in a Life Skills Assessment.
- Meet with the Mentor Coordinator and participate in a mentor assessment
- Develop a budget
- Submit your Security Deposit
- Complete at least 2 stages of the Kitchen Passport

If you are unable to attend to the above items within a specific period of time, you may be asked to return to shelter.

A case plan will be developed by you and your Consistent Worker (CW), and presented in our Case Management Team meeting (CMT) for approval. Your case plan is an **individualized and unique** plan specifically designed to develop skills. Your case plan will define your goals and the necessary requirements to achieve those goals.

Once your Orientation is reviewed in CMT, your curfew will change to 11:00 p.m. Sunday –Thursday, and 1:00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. Your bedroom curfew may also be removed unless you are a FT student, on FT job search or struggling to manage healthy sleep routines.

By attending life skills workshops, your curfew can be extended even further. The maximum curfew is 3:00 a.m.

EXPECTATIONS OF YOU

As a participant of ROP, you are granted privileges and entrusted with responsibilities. As a demonstration of your engagement to the program, you will be expected to maintain the following responsibilities:

CASE MANAGEMENT MEETING (CMT)

These meetings are held in the Lounge each Thursday from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m; this space is unavailable at these times. The purpose of this meeting is to review each youth's progress in the program. Please make it your practice to see staff after CMT to discuss outcomes. If you wish to attend your CMT, please inform your CW.

CASE PLANS

Your Case Plan may consist of school, work, job searching, volunteering or other alternative day plans. Plans are reviewed in our CMT meetings and are approved by the team. Your plan and progress is then reviewed bi-weekly.

If at any point your plan becomes FT Job Search, we require that your efforts are structured from 9am to 5pm. We may also require that you work with Vocational Support Services.

Pay stubs, and bank balance statements are to be submitted bi-weekly and as requested. This will assist us with providing you with support regarding money management, your budgeting, savings and debt repayment skills. CMT will request itemized bank statements to support financial literacy.

CHORES

In this community, you are expected to share responsibilities in keeping the household clean and comfortable. Participants are required to complete at least 2 chores per week. Upon completion of your chore, please have staff check your area, and initial the Chore List. Your participation in this area directly affects your requests for curfew extensions and Overnight passes. You are only permitted to do 1 chore per day and are not permitted to complete a chore on the day of your CMT. It is important to manage your time so that you are able to complete your household responsibilities. Lack of participation in this area may result in curfew reduction. Chore completion is reviewed at CMT.

LIFE SKILLS WORKSHOPS

Throughout your stay at ROP, you are invited and encouraged to attend Life Skills Workshops. The purpose of these workshops is to teach you the fundamentals of living with stability and success!

Please regularly refer to the Life Skills and Events Calendar posted in the lounge. All participants are required to attend at least 2 workshops per month. Women accepted into the ROP housing program will benefit from being enrolling in the "This Is Me" group.

You are encouraged to suggest Life Skills Group topics that are of interest, and of value to participants, and you may also work on Individual Life Skills with your Consistent Worker.

MONTHLY HOUSE MEETING

You are expected to attend the House Meeting which is held once a month. Here you will be updated on program information and activities. You may only be excused from a House Meeting if you are working or attending evening classes. If you are unable to attend the House Meeting, it is your responsibility to inform staff in advance.

POSITIVE SPACE

ROP is a welcoming community for people of all sexual orientations, gender identity, and racial diversity. Any homophobic, racist, or derogatory comments and/or actions intended to hurt another program participant will not be tolerated. Covenant House respects the integrity and individuality of all of our youth. The structure of the program aims to strike a balance between individual needs and the challenges posed by a large communal living situation.

REGULAR MEETINGS WITH YOUR CONSISTENT WORKER

You are expected to make and keep appointments with your Consistent Worker (CW) and other members of the staff team. The purpose of these meetings is to maintain open communication around your goals and progress at ROP. At these meetings, you will review and update your Case Plan, outlining your current goals and priorities, and may also include anything of interest to you.

RESIDENTS' COUNCIL

You are encouraged to participate in the Residents' Council while living at Rights of Passage. This is a group of participants who meet to discuss program and community concerns and to plan special events and outings. The group then meets with management to seek and problem solve for solutions. This is an exceptional opportunity to develop your skills of negotiation, leadership and public speaking; it is a great addition to any resume. The program recognizes those individuals who participate in this activity by providing pizza at each meeting.

TEAM LEADER MEETINGS

During your stay at ROP, you will have periodic meetings with a Team Leader to discuss your Case Plan progress. This is a time to reflect on your successes and set goals moving forward.

TRUST FUND SAVINGS

Participants do not pay rent at ROP instead; you are expected to save in a Trust Fund account while you are living at ROP. This is to support you in developing and establishing effective habits for managing your monthly living expenses.

Based on your plans for housing, (rent, transportation, food, etc), you and your Consistent Worker will develop a realistic Savings Agreement/Budget within the first 2 weeks of your arrival at ROP. Staff may also assist you with establishing a relationship with your financial institute or bank.

As you progress through the program you will stop depositing into the ROP Trust Fund and instead deposit directly into your personal account. Staff will monitor your savings closely.

If your ROP Trust Fund account exceeds \$5,000.00, you will meet with a financial advisor at your bank and make plans for moving this money into a secured investment where it may earn an even higher interest and really give you a great savings start to your future.

EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF

Staffing at ROP includes Volunteers, Day, Evening and Overnight Youth Workers, two Team Leaders, the Mentor Coordinator, Life Skills Coordinator and the Transitional Housing Manager.

The role of the staff is to support the program goals of ROP by mentoring, coaching and counselling program participants as necessary. Our program philosophy demands that each staff member develop with the ROP participants a relationship built on mutual trust and respect; and within that relationship, assist and support the participants in making positive changes. At the same time, staff must maintain a professional distance.

Every interaction between a staff member and a participant is an opportunity for positive learning. Staff will help in identifying alternative ways of thinking, responding to frustration and achieving your goals.

Staff will encourage each other in delivering the best quality of service to you; celebrating your growth and progress; challenging you when you seem to be losing sight of your goals; and welcoming you as a member of the ROP Community.

RIGHTS OF PASSAGE COMMUNITY LIVING

ACCESS TO ROP BETWEEN 10:30 P.M. - 8:00 A.M.

As a good neighbour, 21 McGill has agreed to conventional quiet hours. This means that access to ROP between 10:30p.m. – 8:00 a.m. is by way of Main Reception at 20

Gerrard Street East. The staff at Main Reception will notify ROP staff who will then come and accompany you to ROP

Please note that you may be required to wait. When waiting for pick up, we expect you to conduct yourself responsibly. You are not allowed to use the reception room phone, your cell phone or visit any other areas of 20 Gerrard at this time.

BEDROOMS

Covenant House gives you the use of a single bedroom during your stay at ROP.

You are allowed to decorate your room with posters, pictures, etc. You may use masking tape (not scotch tape) to attach posters to the walls. If you desire to hang pictures, you must let staff know. Only Covenant House Operations Department staff are permitted to install the hardware on which pictures are hung. All visible materials (posters, etc.) should be mindful of CH principals and are subject to approval by ROP staff.

Other ROP participants are not allowed to be in each other's room for any reason; your visitors are not allowed on any ROP floor.

You are not permitted to have food, large electronics or appliances in your rooms. Your room will be inspected on a daily basis.

BIRTHDAYS

Communal celebration of birthdays is one of ROP's social activities. ROP provides a cake that is shared by residents and staff on a participant's birthday. Where we have a number of participants with birthdays that are near to each other, we may celebrate them all on one day. However, if you prefer not to have us celebrate your birthday, we shall respect your wish.

CELL PHONES

You are allowed to answer calls in any area of the 3rd and 4th floors using the 5-second rule. This means that if you wish to take the call you will need to head to your room. You may also wish to inform the person you will call them right back and use the landline phone provided for you in the Lounge.

Cell phones should be turned off during House Meetings, Life Skills Workshops, and other ROP community gatherings like brunch and dinner.

COMMON AREAS (DINING ROOM, LOUNGE, KITCHEN)

ROP participants are responsible for keeping these areas clean. Eating is allowed in the Lounge and the Kitchen only. Food and drink are not allowed in the TV Lounge area. The stove is shut off at 12:00am daily..

Television, video games and movies (including Netflix) are generally limited to a rating of less than 18A and are always subject to staff approval for content. If you wish to watch a restricted movie, you may present it to the staff who can assist with evaluating

its appropriateness for the community. Netflix is available on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

It is important to be considerate of your peers and negotiate shows/times. If it appears that there is a conflict over the TV, staff will intervene and may decide it is necessary to turn it off. The television is to be shut off at 2:00 a.m. during the week and 3:00 a.m. on weekends.

To provide a safe and healthy environment, ROP is “scent-free.” This means that due to allergies and sensitives, we ask that you limit your use of fragrances/colognes/body sprays.

Again, in order to ensure a safe environment, inappropriate physical contact is prohibited. During daily routines, participants are encouraged to interact socially in an appropriate manner. Staff will uphold “no physical contact” policies.

COMPUTER/INTERNET USAGE

ROP provides computers in the kitchen for communal use by participants. As part of your orientation, you sign an ROP Computer/Internet Usage Policy that states clearly what you may or may not do when you use the computer. You are expected to respect this policy. Covenant House Toronto Information Systems staff perform periodic audits to ensure that residents are observing the policy. If you are found not adhering to the Computer/Internet Usage Policy, you may receive a Computer Suspension. Its duration will depend on the severity of the infraction.

Computers are to be shut off at 2:00 a.m. during the week and 3:00 a.m. on weekends.

CURFEW EXTENSION

A Curfew Extension affords you the opportunity to participate in appropriate recreation, socialization and employment related activities. You must make your request for a Curfew Extension to a staff member prior to the day for which it is required. Please do not make offsite telephone calls requesting a curfew extension.

Curfew Extensions should be approved by the Case Management Team (CMT) during CMT meetings (Thursdays). The CMT will review your program participation, for example, participation in chores, trust fund deposits or attending life skills to determine eligibility. Extensions may not be granted and you may be disappointed.

In an emergency, the TL or the Shift Coordinator may approve a Curfew Extension.

KITCHEN ACCESS

Kitchen access will be facilitated by your CW within the first week of your stay; this is part of Orientation. You are expected to attend and participate in food handling assessments. If you choose not to participate, you will not have access to the kitchen.

Kitchen Access Protocol involves two sections: a verbal assessment and a physical demonstration.. Upon completing your Kitchen Access Protocol, you will have access to the kitchen to prepare meals and snacks.

Be mindful: When you are interested in accessing the kitchen, you must inform staff and request staff supervision. Staff must be present at all times when using the stove and oven. When you have finished cooking, all dishes and utensils are to be hand washed, or rinsed and placed in the dishwasher.

Not minding safe food handling practices and/or inappropriate kitchen use, such as, leaving dirty dishes out, may result in curfew reduction.

LAUNDRY

ROP has several coin-operated washers and dryers available for your use. You are responsible for doing your own laundry, including making sure you have the necessary coins/change on hand to run the machines. Staff are available to provide instruction, direction and guidance in proper washing, drying, ironing and steaming skills.

LENGTH OF STAY

As part of your orientation to ROP, you will sign a Residency Agreement. This document is an agreement between you and the program stating that ROP can offer housing for up to a year (365 days). During your stay, you may have opportunity to advocate to extend your length of stay. This decision will be reviewed at CMT and must pass approval by the Transitional Housing Manager.

LISTENING TO MUSIC

ROP requires the use of headphones at all times; the program does not provide these.

MCGILL PARKETTE & 20 GERRARD COURTYARD

Out of concern for your safety and our ongoing public relations with the residents of McGill/Granby, we ask that you do not hang out in the McGill Parkette that is located next to the driveway on the west side of the building.

As you are not a resident of 20 Gerrard, you are no longer permitted to hang out in the courtyard at 20 Gerrard. Security and the Shift Supervisor will be given an up-to-date list of all ROP participants. If you need to wait there for a CH service such as Health Care or Community Support, we ask that you conduct yourself in a manner that is respectful and appropriate.

MEALS

Items such as cereal, milk, bread, juice, and soup are always available in the ROP kitchen. If you bring food into the building, you may eat it in the Lounge at the table or in the Kitchen. You will have access to a food bin to refrigerate any fresh foods you purchase. Storage of food items is available in the kitchen refrigerator; the fridge in the Lounge area is not available. You can also request a locker to store dry food items. Removing food that is not yours is considered theft in program.

We go over as a group to the cafeteria at 20 Gerrard at 12:10pm for lunch. If you are not in program at lunch time, meals are made available for you to take if you are attending school off site, at work or attending an approved appointment.

We go over as a group for Dinner at 4:55pm. If you are working, at school or attending an approved appointment, you may sign up for a Saved Dinner. These are stored in the fridge in the Lounge. If they are not eaten by 5pm the following day, they are transferred to the kitchen fridge for general consumption.

On weekends and holidays, the program provides food items you can prepare for brunch.

You are always expected to clean up after yourself.

MEDICATION

You may be responsible for taking, storing, and refilling any prescribed medications. It is necessary to inform staff of any medications you are taking. In case of an emergency, this information will be passed on to medical personnel. In some circumstances, ROP may support a participant with medication by storing it in a secured cabinet.

MENTOR PROGRAM

As an ROP participant, you have the opportunity to be paired with a mentor. A mentor is someone in the community you can rely on if you want/need support. Matches are based on your needs and you decide how often you connect. At a minimum, matches are encouraged to connect weekly via phone, text or email and twice a month in person in the community. The Mentor Coordinator is available to discuss the benefits of a mentor match.

OVERNIGHT PASS

An Overnight Pass allows an ROP participant to spend an evening away from ROP and return by curfew the following day. An Overnight Pass is granted based on your performance in the program, and it can be revoked if your performance changes between the time that your request was approved and the event for which it was approved.

You must complete an O/N Pass Request Form and submit it to the staff directly before CMT. Please ensure that your room is clean and your chores are completed. The request is discussed in CMT and a decision is made. Check to ensure your O/N request is approved before leaving. Staff may request that you complete a task such as cleaning your room, submitting T/F, or completing a chore, prior to leaving. Failure to attend to these requests is considered taking an "unauthorized overnight" and can result in suspension upon return. In order to prevent this, ensure your request is approved, follow up on any necessary tasks and check in with staff before leaving.

By attending the life skills workshops you can obtain up to a maximum of 4 O/N's per month. The use of these O/N's will again, be informed by your engagement in the program.

If you are absent from ROP for two nights without prior approval or contact with staff, we will ask Toronto Police Services to issue a Missing Persons Report.

If you are absent from ROP for seven nights without any contact with staff, you could be automatically discharged from the program.

BASIC NEEDS ALLOWANCE (BNA)

You may receive BNA while living at ROP. Token support for plan-related activities may be approved by CMT.

PHONES/MESSAGES

There is one phone available for use by ROP participants to make outgoing calls. Please keep in mind that this is a shared resource and that you may be asked to end a call if another participant needs to use the phone. There are also payphones located on the main floor, 3rd and 4th floors. If you would like to contact ROP staff from outside the building, or have someone leave a message for you, the number to call is **(416) 646-4970**. In order to ensure your confidentiality, staff will not confirm nor deny that you are a resident of ROP. They will simply make note of the caller's information and post the message on the message board in the lounge. You are responsible for checking the board for messages and mail.

QUIET HOURS

You are asked to respect your housemates at all times. Quiet hours are in effect daily from 10:00pm – 8:00am. During these hours, you are asked not to play loud music or have loud conversations in your bedroom hallways. This ensures that you and your housemates will have the opportunity to sleep, study or reflect peacefully.

SMOKING

ROP is a smoke-free environment. ROP participants and staff are not allowed to smoke in front of 21 McGill, on the stairs, or on the sidewalk.

Smoking inside the building is considered a threat to sanctuary. If staff suspect or find someone in violation of this, they will be suspended and may be discharged.

VACATIONS / EXPENSES

ROP does not support participants in pursuing non-essential expenses. Participants are not allowed to take vacations or make luxury purchases while in the program. If you choose to "afford" these things, you are conveying that you are already capable of supporting yourself, and that you do not need ROP.

VISITORS

Your visitors are welcome to ask for you at the McGill reception desk between the hours of 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. They are restricted to the seating area in the main lobby of 21 McGill next to the elevator. The maximum time that a visitor may wait for you in the lobby is 5 minutes. After 5 minutes they will be asked to leave the building. Please ensure that your visitors are aware of this policy. All other floors and locations are off limits to guests.

It is not always possible for a staff member to look around for you to inform you of your visitor's arrival. It is best if you organize your visits with others and make yourself available for their arrival.

As with phone messages, our commitment to your confidentiality restricts us from being able to confirm if you are in or out of the building. To get around this, we may use words like, "they are unavailable".

WAKE-UPS

You are responsible for waking yourself up to get to work, appointments, etc. on time, so you will need an alarm clock.

As a rule, ROP staff do not wake up participants. However, if a participant is having difficulty in this area and needs support, CMT may approve staff providing wake-up support for a limited period of time while the participant overcomes the challenge.

SUPPORTING POSITIVE CHANGE

ROP staff and participants will discuss issues and potential consequences prior to consequences being implemented. If, however, there are immediate safety concerns, consequences may be imposed without discussion.

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD

As a program of Covenant House Toronto, the Rights of Passage program practices value communication, respects choice, maintaining sanctuary and personal responsibility.

If you are unable to meet the expectations of your case plan or of the expectations of the program, the following three-tiered approach will be implemented by all staff.

1. VERBAL COUNSELLING

If a youth is not meeting the responsibilities of their case plan or the expectations of the program, they will immediately engage in an active discussion about this behaviour with staff. The process to support positive change will be clearly explained at this time. This is not a threatening conversation, rather an open explanation of your role in the choices of your life.

This behaviour could be failure to complete chores, low efforts during job search, inability to rise for school/employment expectations, inability to keep room clean, etc.

2. WRITTEN COUNSELLING

If you continue to exhibit an inability to follow your case plan or meet program expectations, you will again have an active conversation with staff about this. At this time you will be issued a Written Counselling. Together you will explore possible reasons for the continued behaviour and will look specifically for any barriers or concerns that may be blocking your success. CMT may also decide to add supports to your plan such as a room curfew or computer suspension.

3. SUSPENSION

If you still continue to be unable to follow your case plan or meet program expectations you will again have an active conversation with staff about this. At this time you may be suspended from the program. Upon your return, the TL or CW will review your behaviour and seek solutions to prevent repeats of the behaviour.

A participant suspended from ROP will be offered a referral to another shelter. Participants on suspension may enter the building for appointments only. Types of behaviour meriting a suspension from ROP may include but are not limited to:

- Failing to comply with a program expectation
- Threatening behaviour
- Being in an unauthorized area

CURFEW REDUCTION

CMT may remove a privilege, such as reducing one's curfew, for non-engagement in program expectations such as, lack of chore completion, not managing the cleanliness of your room, inappropriately use the kitchen (unsafe food handling/storage practices, not cleaning up after yourself) or if your day plan changes to job searching, for example.

DISCHARGE AND/OR MOVE TO MORE APPROPRIATE HOUSING

If you continue to exhibit an inability to follow your case plan or meet program expectations, CMT will review the concerns and barriers, noting any possible challenges that would block your success.

Discharge plans may be immediate which require you to leave the building. Other possibilities can include a referral to our Crisis Shelter, an Accelerated move date or a referral to a more appropriate housing program.

Demonstrating a chronic pattern of non-compliance with the program structure, or committing dangerous acts, will result in a Discharge. Types of behaviour meriting discharge include but are not limited to:

- Possession of drugs or alcohol
- Possession of a weapon
- Fighting and / or physically attacking another resident or ROP staff member
- Chronic, on-going failure to follow Case Plan,
- Tampering with security

A discussion between ROP staff and the participant involved will always precede any suspension or discharge from program.

MOVING OUT OF ROP

If you decide to leave ROP before your planned graduation, you are asked to notify staff as soon as possible. This provides you and your Consistent Worker (CW) the opportunity to ensure that you are connected to any supports that you may need to access after ROP.

Prior to leaving ROP, you are expected to pack your belongings and thoroughly clean your room. Please turn in your room key and access card and provide us with information as to how you may be contacted. Your room will be inspected and

approved by staff. If all is satisfactory, your Security Deposit is returned. If you leave items behind you will have 30 days in which to return and pick up your belongings. CH is not responsible for belongings left longer than 30 days.

You are required to make your own arrangements for your move. This will require hiring movers, or having friends and family assist if possible. The ROP staff will assist you with creating lists and guiding your efforts to prepare for your move. However, they will encourage your independence in this area. This is an excellent way to gain and practice your life skills.

Youth who move on from ROP often keep in touch, via the “Youth Connect” program; and this is encouraged. ROP also offers support via the “Youth in Transition” program where you can receive 1-1 support in transitioning to your new community. Further, the Community Support Services department is available to all participants where you can continue to have a Consistent Worker and access to other supports.

Covenant House has an open intake policy which means that youth may return to our Crisis Shelter if/when needed, so long as they do not hold a service restriction due to a serious discharge.

CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME TO RIGHTS OF PASSAGE!!!

This is a time to learn, practice, and acquire skills and resources.

Remember you are a role model. You worked hard to get to ROP. You deserve the privileges and responsibilities; however, please take care to monitor yourself and take responsibility for your actions.

A Rights of Passage staff member has reviewed The Participant Handbook with me. I understand that I am responsible for following the program structure and guidelines. I understand that staff will notify me of all program policy changes as they occur.

Participant Signature

Date

Staff Signature

Date