

# Safeguarding Ontario's retirement home residents



## ABOUT US

### Your safety and protection is our commitment

When it comes to how and where we want to live, we deserve to be safe and treated with respect.

We want to be well informed when choosing our home or making decisions about our care. And we need somewhere to turn if we have concerns about our care and security, or feel we are at risk of harm.

That's where the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority – or RHRA – comes in. You may not have heard of us, but the RHRA is looking out for you.



We are an independent, not-for-profit organization that makes sure Ontario's retirement homes are following the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010* (the Act) on behalf of the Government of Ontario. We do this for the protection and wellbeing of the approximately 55,000 seniors living in Ontario retirement homes, so they can live in dignity and safety and make informed choices about their care.

### What we do

The RHRA's work includes:

- licensing retirement homes;
- inspecting homes to ensure they are complying with the Act;
- responding to reports of harm or risk of harm to residents;
- responding to complaints;
- taking action when homes are not complying with the Act;
- providing information about the Act to residents, the public and retirement home operators; and
- providing the public with detailed information about licensed retirement homes.

### Get the full picture when choosing a retirement home

There are over 700 licensed retirement homes in Ontario. When you or a loved one are looking to move into a home, how do you know which one is right for you?

For most people, a key priority is safety. Since we were established in 2011, the RHRA has inspected every licensed retirement home in the province.

Through our public register we make it easy to find out whether a home is licensed, what care services they offer, and other important information about the home, such as any conditions on their licence. You can also access inspection reports for each home. This gives you a more complete picture of each home's track record of safety and compliance with the Act.

You can feel confident that you are seeing a comprehensive history of the RHRA's inspections in each home, helping you to make well-informed decisions.

## Somewhere to turn if you need assistance

Homes must meet the requirements and standards set out in the Act when they provide you with accommodation and care. It's the RHRA's job to enforce those requirements and standards, provide information to help you understand them, and follow-up if they are not being met.

When you have a complaint or concern relating to a licensed retirement home in Ontario, we take appropriate action to resolve the issue. This may include one or more of these steps:

- informing you and your loved ones about your options;
- responding to reports of harm or risk of harm to you, such as abuse, neglect or misuse of your money;
- responding to complaints made about a retirement home that may not be following the Act;

- inspecting homes and/or taking enforcement action; and
- involving other community partners to address your concerns.

More information about reports and complaints is available in this brochure.

## Giving you peace of mind

The Act sets out a Residents' Bill of Rights. This includes the right to live in a safe and clean environment, the right to know what care services are provided and how much they cost, the right to fully participate in care planning and decisions and much more.

Retirement homes are required to respect and promote these rights, by posting them in the home and educating staff. By making the rights of retirement home residents and responsibilities of retirement home operators clear and understandable, the Act makes Ontario's retirement homes a safer place in which to live.

Working closely with community partners and other agencies, the RHRA provides an umbrella of oversight to safeguard seniors like you to protect your safety, security and right to make informed choices about your home and care services, and to help you live in dignity, respect, privacy and comfort. You deserve no less.

## FINDING A HOME

### Choosing the home that's right for you

Through our public register, located on the RHRA's website at [www.rhra.ca](http://www.rhra.ca), the RHRA can help you find the retirement home that meets your unique needs and preferences.

With compliance, inspection and care services information about every licensed retirement home in the province, our website will give you the up-to-date and accurate facts that you need to make an informed decision about where you want to live.



### Reliable information at your fingertips

The register is easy to navigate and offers a variety of ways to search including by name, city or postal code. A few simple clicks will also give you more detail about:

- licence application refusals;
- homes licensed with conditions;

- revoked licences;
- enforcement measures or prosecutions; and
- homes operating without a licence.

### What services do you need?

Next to safety concerns, making sure a retirement home has the right care services to help you live independently and with dignity is always a top priority when looking for a home.

The RHRA helps people learn about the care services that each home currently provides, with a standardized checklist of what is and isn't offered, to make it easy to compare homes.

### Tips for finding a home

**PLAN** – make a list of the care services you may need now or in future: anything from help with bathing to meals, medication administration and medical care.

**CONSIDER** – be sure to think about the community in which you would like to live, the size and type of building you want to live in, the accommodations you would prefer, and how far family or friends would be able to travel to visit you.

**RESEARCH** – find out about the safety record, services offered and more, for Ontario's more than 700 licensed retirement homes through the RHRA's informative and easy-to-use public register. Look up homes by name, city or even postal code. Make note of any questions you would like to follow-up on with your preferred retirement homes.

**TOUR** – visit your top retirement home options in person. Many offer tours, meetings with staff, or an opportunity to enjoy an activity or a meal. This will give you a better idea of whether the home is the right fit for you. Be sure to bring along your list of questions to make the most of your time.



## Fees & Rental Arrangements

In addition to the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010*, retirement home operators must also comply with the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* (RTA). The RTA governs the relationship between landlords and tenants, including rent and some matters relating to care services and privacy. If you have questions about your rent or other tenant matters, you can contact the provincial Landlord and Tenant Board at 1-888-332-3234 or [www.sjto.gov.on.ca](http://www.sjto.gov.on.ca).

## The difference between retirement and long-term care homes

If you've never lived in a retirement home or needed long-term care, you may not be aware of how different the two really are. If you are considering a retirement home, here's what you need to know:

- people who live in retirement homes generally need less medical care than long-term care home residents;
- retirement homes are not funded by the government and residents pay the full cost of their accommodation and any care services they purchase;
- retirement homes decide what care services they will offer to their residents;
- residents may purchase any of the care services offered by the retirement home, or arrange for external care providers, including private-pay or publicly-funded; and
- there is no specific criteria to be eligible to live in a retirement home and you may look into as many retirement homes as you wish.

If you think a long-term care home may be more suited to your needs, detailed information is available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website at [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca), or the Ontario Long-Term Care Association website at [www.oltca.com](http://www.oltca.com).

## REPORTING HARM

### A shared duty to protect residents

One of the ways the law protects retirement home residents is by requiring people to immediately report to the RHRA harm, or risk of harm, to a resident. These are called mandatory reports.

Certain situations, involving harm or risk of harm to a resident must be reported by any person with reasonable grounds to believe that any of the following has occurred or may occur:

- abuse or neglect of a resident;
- improper or incompetent treatment or care of a resident; or
- unlawful conduct.

Misuse or misappropriation of a resident's money must also be reported to the RHRA.



Other than retirement home residents themselves, under the Act, anyone who sees or suspects a situation that harms or puts a resident at risk of harm must report it. This means family members, substitute decision makers, and retirement home staff and operators all have the same obligation to help protect the resident. Regulated health professionals such as doctors, nurses and social workers must also report these types of situations, even if the information is confidential.

If you see or suspect a retirement home resident is being harmed, or is at risk, and want to make a report, you may call **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)**. You will never have to give your name when making a report.

### What happens when the RHRA receives a report of harm?

The RHRA conducts an unannounced inspection.

RHRA inspectors have various powers, including the power to:

- inspect the home and its operations;
- review, copy and remove records and other documents;
- interview residents and others; and
- call on other experts for assistance.

The inspector may also involve other agencies or authorities such as the police, fire officials, public health, and regulated health profession colleges as appropriate.

## What happens after an inspection?

Once an inspector has completed his or her inspection, a copy of the draft report is provided to the retirement home, and the operator may provide a response. A final inspection report (which does not contain confidential information) is posted on the RHRA's public register, and in the retirement home.

If an operator is not in compliance with the Act, the RHRA may take further action, such as issuing a warning letter, a fine or an order to comply. The RHRA may later carry out a follow-up inspection, to see if the home has come into compliance.

## Did you know?

If you report harm, or provide information about a report to the RHRA, you are protected from retaliation under the Act. You can also make a report anonymously.



## EMERGENCY FUND

### One more way we can help

Emergency situations can happen to anyone, anytime. Another way the RHRA safeguards retirement home residents is through an Emergency Fund that is available to support them if these types of unfortunate situations occur.

Retirement home residents (or former residents) can apply for financial assistance through the Emergency Fund when:

- loss or damage to their retirement home has resulted in an emergency situation;
- due to the emergency, the operator of the retirement home has been unable to safely provide normal accommodation or care to the person in the retirement home; and
- they have incurred costs to find, move to or pay for alternate accommodation or to access alternate care providers.

The RHRA provides compensation for eligible claims, and, depending on the urgency of the situation, may even make an emergency payment from the Emergency Fund whether a formal claim has been made or not.

For more detail about eligibility or how to make a claim, call us at **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)**.



## COMPLAINTS: KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

### Your best first step

Regardless of the quality of care services, accommodations or staff, there may be a time when you have an issue with, or concern about the retirement home in which you live.

It may reassure you to know that all retirement homes are required to have a procedure in place to respond swiftly to complaints. This includes training staff and sharing information on the complaint process with residents.

If you have a concern, bringing it up directly with your home's staff or management team is your best first step. We understand that talking to your home's staff about your concerns may not be easy. RHRA staff can help with information and suggestions that may assist with those difficult conversations.

Call us at **1-855-ASK-RHRA**  
**(1-855-275-7472)** and **press "1"**.

Homes must investigate and respond within ten business days, or let you know when you can expect the issue to be resolved.

### When to involve the RHRA

If you believe a retirement home is not following the Act, or its own complaints process, you can file a formal complaint with the RHRA.

If you choose to file a complaint, the Act protects you, and anyone else providing information to the RHRA, from retaliation of any kind. In fact, the RHRA may take action against those who discourage complaints, threaten or retaliate against a person who makes a complaint – up to and including fines or even imprisonment.

### Types of complaints the RHRA can address

The RHRA handles complaints about violations of the Act or its regulations related to:

- care services;
- safety standards; and
- other safeguards (such as staff and volunteer training and trust account administration).

Even if your concerns do not relate specifically to the Act, RHRA staff may be able to provide you with information about other possible sources of help or assistance.

## How to file a complaint

To file a formal complaint with the RHRA about a retirement home, you may complete the RHRA Complaint Form, which is available on our website at **www.rhra.ca**. The form contains detailed instructions.

If you are unable to complete the Complaint Form, or have any questions about the process, call us at **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)** and our knowledgeable staff will be happy to help.

The completed Complaint Form and all other required information can then be sent to the RHRA, at the address listed at the end of the form.

## Next steps

The RHRA takes all complaints seriously, and aims to address complaints as quickly as possible. Staff first review all written complaints. If your complaint does not relate to the Act or its regulations, whenever

possible our staff will provide information about other sources of help for dealing with the problem or concern.

If the RHRA determines it can proceed with your complaint, we may:

- contact you to discuss the complaint in more detail;
- make inquiries about the complaint of the retirement home operator;
- conduct an inspection of the home;
- resolve or mediate the complaint;
- provide education to you and the operator;
- send a warning letter to the operator; and/or
- take other action.

You will receive a written response about any decisions made or actions taken in connection with your complaint. You can also call RHRA anytime to ask about the status of your file.

## If you don't agree with the RHRA decision

If the RHRA considers your complaint and decides to take no further action, you have the right to request a review by the Complaints Review Officer (CRO), who has an independent role. Details on how to make a written request for review, and what happens once the CRO is involved, is available at **www.rhra.ca**.







## Contact Us

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1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)

[info@rhra.ca](mailto:info@rhra.ca)

[\*\*www.rhra.ca\*\*](http://www.rhra.ca)

*The Retirement Homes Act, 2010*  
is available at [\*\*www.e-laws.gov.on.ca\*\*](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)