



# Safeguarding Ontario's retirement home residents

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# ABOUT US

## Committed to protecting seniors in Ontario

The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, or the RHRA, is responsible for the protection of seniors living in licensed retirement homes across Ontario. All the work we do at the RHRA is driven by a vision that seniors living in retirement homes will have choice and the protection they need to live in dignity and safety and make informed choices about their care.

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. Working closely with community partners and other agencies, the RHRA provides an umbrella of protection to more than 60,000 seniors living in licensed retirement homes across the province.

The RHRA is responsible for protecting and ensuring the safety of senior citizens living in Ontario retirement homes. We do this by:

- Licensing and inspecting retirement homes across Ontario;
- Issuing orders to ensure compliance with the Act;
- Imposing Administrative Monetary Penalties (fines) as required;
- Ordering operators to stop operating as retirement homes if required;
- Informing the public and educating the retirement home sector and residents about the Act, regulations and role of the RHRA; and
- Providing the public with detailed information about licensed retirement homes through its online public register.

# RHRA

## Get the full picture when choosing a retirement home

There are over 750 licensed retirement homes in Ontario. The RHRA's public register makes it easy to find out whether a home is licensed, what care services it offers, and other important information about the home, such as any conditions on the licence. Inspection reports for each home gives you a more complete picture of each home's track record of compliance with the Act to help you make informed decisions.

## Somewhere to turn if you need assistance

Residents can count on the RHRA to respond to complaints or concern relating to a licensed retirement home in Ontario, and to take appropriate action. Retirement homes must meet the requirements and standards set out in the Act. It's the RHRA's job to enforce those requirements and standards and follow up when they are not being met.

This may include one or more of these steps:

- informing residents and members of their family about their options;
- responding to reports of harm or risk of harm, such as abuse, neglect or misuse of a resident's money;
- responding to complaints made about a retirement home that may not be following the Act;
- inspecting homes and/or taking enforcement action; and
- liaising with other community partners to address concerns that go beyond the RHRA's jurisdiction.

For more information, or to report a complaint, please call **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)** or visit our website at **[www.rhra.ca](http://www.rhra.ca)**.

## Residents have rights

The Act sets out a Residents' Bill of Rights. This includes the right for residents 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 also required to respect and promote these rights by posting them in the home and educating staff. The Residents' Bill of Rights and the Act clearly explain what residents are entitled to and the responsibilities of retirement home operators to ensure residents' rights are met.

# FINDING A HOME

## Reliable information at your fingertips

The information on the RHRA's public register provides information on inspection, compliance, and care services about every licensed retirement home in the province.

The public register is easy to navigate and offers a variety of ways to search, including by the home's 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.

## Fees & rental arrangements

In addition to the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010*, retirement home operators are also required to 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)**.

## What services do you need?

The right care services to support living independently and with dignity is a top priority for many when looking for a retirement home.



The RHRA helps people learn about the care services each home 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 need now or may need in the future. This can include anything from help with bathing to meal preparation and medication administration.

**Consider.** Now is the time to think about what you would want in an ideal living environment. Be sure to think about the community, 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. Can the home accommodate independent living and what does it offer residents in the way of events and community activities in addition to care services?

**Research.** You can find out about the home's inspections reports, and services offered for the more than 750 retirement homes in Ontario through the RHRA's public register. Look up homes by name, license status, city or even postal code. Make note of any questions you would like to follow up on with your preferred residences.

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

### What's the difference between retirement and long-term care homes?

Retirement homes are different from long-term care homes in many ways. If you are considering a retirement home, here's what you need to know:

**Oversight.** The RHRA regulates retirement homes under the Retirement Homes Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) regulates long-term care homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act. Both afford residents protections.

**Eligibility.** There are no specific criteria to be eligible to live in a retirement home and you may look into as many retirement homes as you wish. With a long-term care home, there may be assessment criteria. All applications and admissions are arranged through the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs).

**Assistance.** People who live in retirement homes range from fully independent to those requiring more complex care needs. Retirement homes choose what care services to offer 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. In long-term care facilities, residents require care around the clock every day. They have their clinical care needs assessed and met through the home, but must pay for accommodation charges.

**Funding.** Retirement homes do not receive government funding and residents pay the full cost of their accommodation and any care services they choose to purchase from the home directly. They can also arrange to have services provided through the LHIN.

If you think a long-term care home may be more suited to your needs, detailed information is available on the **MOHLTC** 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.

Under the Act, anyone other than the resident, who sees or suspects a situation that harms or puts a resident at risk of harm must report it to the RHRA. This includes family members, substitute decision makers, and retirement home staff and operators they 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 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.

Certain situations, involving harm or risk of harm to a resident such as:

- 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.

If you see or suspect a retirement home resident is being harmed, or is at risk, and want to make a report, please call **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)**.

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

When a mandatory report is received, 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 the RHRA 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.

# COMPLAINTS: KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

## 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).

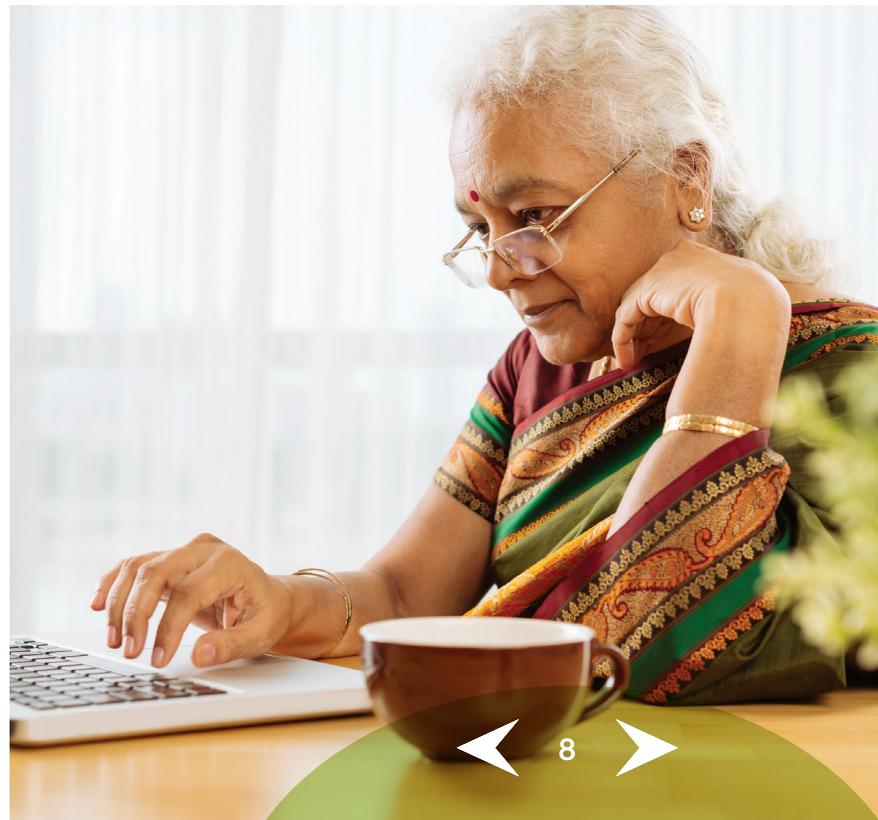
Even if your concerns do not relate specifically to the Act, RHRA staff may be able to provide you with information about other possible sources of help.

## How to file a complaint

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

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

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



To learn more about the complaint process, or 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](http://www.rhra.ca), or you may call us at **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)**.

### 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.

### You can make a complaint anonymously

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

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.

### What you can expect after you file a complaint

The RHRA staff takes all complaints seriously and aims to address complaints that are in violation of the Act or its regulations, as quickly as possible. For complaints that do not relate to the Act or its regulations, whenever possible, our staff will provide information about other sources that may be helpful in addressing the problem or concern.

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

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

A written response about any decisions made or actions taken in connection with the complaint will be sent.

### If you don't agree with the RHRA's 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](http://www.rhra.ca).



## EMERGENCY FUND

The RHRA Emergency Fund was established for the benefit of residents (or former residents) of retirement homes. An individual may submit a claim to the RHRA for compensation from the Fund when:

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

Other criteria set out in the regulation may affect an individual's eligibility to submit a claim. For more information, contact the RHRA at **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)**.

### RHRA resources at-a-glance

The RHRA offers helpful resources that are available to download and print at **[www.rhra.ca](http://www.rhra.ca)**.

- The RHRA brochure
- Residents' Bill of Rights poster
- The RHRA's Plain Language Guide for the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010*
- A How-to Guide for Starting a Residents' Council

If you would prefer to receive these materials by mail, please call **1-855-ASK-RHRA (1-855-275-7472)** to request copies from our staff.





## Contact Us

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*The Retirement Homes Act, 2010*  
is available at **www.e-laws.gov.on.ca**

