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# WELL-BEING INDICATORS FOR TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING

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## **DESIGN**

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# RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the current best practice indicators that large non-market housing providers use to compare buildings that are similar in programming and services, but dissimilar in tenant well-being outcomes?

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) is developing well-being indicators for its buildings and projects, to prioritize community and a healthy society beyond individual tenant health. Residents of public housing tend to be lower-income, more likely to be very young or old, have mental or physical disability or health concerns, and be racialized.

In this report, we give an overview, of current health and housing literature, to ascertain which readily available indicators are best suited to provide information on tenant needs. We have interviewed two researchers – one from an internationally recognized centre for research excellence on health and housing, and another from a low barrier supportive housing agency that primarily serves women – to find out how indicators can inform better services.

Based on a policy and literature review as well as two interviews with experts on housing and health, we recommend that TCHC:

1. Improve current health and well-being metrics and benchmark data: TCHC should develop comparable and replicable data. It should investigate, with the City of Toronto, common well-being data that can be used across all non-market housing providers. It can also work with the City of Toronto on international partnerships for health and well-being indicators like the UN-Habitat initiative described in this report. TCHC should consider this a short-term goal that can be integrated within the strategic plan objective of “supporting safe, healthy and inclusive communities.”
2. Develop two communities of practice, one with other public housing authorities in the province, and another with Toronto area non-market housing providers, to work toward common indicators and better collective ways to meet tenant needs. Shared key performance indicators would improve consistency and accountability in the quality-of-service delivery. It might also improve partnerships with service organizations, including emergency services, school boards, social service providers, cultural organizations, governments, and resident groups. TCHC should consider this a long-term goal, as it is a complex set of partnership processes.

3. Display transparency in health and well-being metrics: Housing providers achieve transparency and accountability through providing published and disaggregated data online and working collaboratively with residents on performance and service delivery improvements. TCHC can achieve this by placing building noticeboards in publicly accessible locations, such as the lobby, to display tenant suggestions and responses from TCHC staff. They can also publish annual public reports on health and well-being indicators, informed by tenant surveys. It is worth examining the published reports produced by Atira (described in this report) to assess the level of transparency that non-market housing organizations strive to achieve. TCHC should consider this a long-term goal, displaying their commitment to data transparency, and enabling stronger client and tenant relationships.
  
4. Create a systemic approach to tenant input: To begin addressing KPIs, housing organizations need to learn about their tenants and what service interventions they desire – whether they are improvements to education, employment, transport, childcare, or health systems. TCHC already engages with tenants, as outlined in their 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, displaying a commitment to tenant feedback. TCHC should expand further ongoing tenant engagement, founded in trust and actionable support. TCHC can do this through in-person and online outreach with residents, town hall meetings, and staff and resident training sessions around a consistent set of wellbeing indicators. TCHC should consider this a short-term goal that can be achieved through becoming part of their strategic plan objectives, but long-term in its usefulness to engage residents.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) is the largest public housing provider in Canada (TCHC, 2025a). It serves residents in 88 of Toronto’s 158 neighbourhoods, providing homes for more than 41,000 households, with very low to low incomes (TCHC, 2025a). TCHC, like other public housing providers, has a larger proportion of seniors, children, people with disabilities, single parent-led families, women-led households, and racialized people (Figure 1) (City of Toronto, 2025; TCHC, 2024a, 2025d). All these populations have specific needs that require not only nearby services such as parks, health clinics, and childcare centres, but specific services within buildings, such as employment readiness, mental health services, or English as a second language services (Blunden, & Valentine, 2023; Peel Region, 2021). In contrast to market landlords, TCHC acknowledges that:

We are not just a landlord, but a vital part of the network of housing and social services in Toronto. Housing is the foundation that enables the success of other supports and interventions for the city’s most vulnerable citizens. We have established partnerships with agencies that provide food security, mental health support, youth programming, and other programs and services directly in TCHC communities. We know we can do more to foster these important connections in more of our communities to facilitate access to the services and supports tenants tell us they need (TCHC, 2025).

TCHC has therefore identified measures in their 2025-2029 Strategic Plan to support safe, healthy, and inclusive tenant communities by working to improve safety, strengthen partnerships to deliver social support for tenants, empower tenants to lead and shape community initiatives, listen to tenants to better understand their needs, and tailor the programs and services they offer, including applying an anti-Black racism lens (TCHC, 2025c).

Figure 1: Demographic table of TCHC tenants and household composition

TCHC demographics	Percentage
Female-led households	53%
Single-parent households	25%
Households with a mental disability	22%
Households that have a member with at least one type of disability	53%
Households that speak a language other than English	37%
RGI households whose income source is OW/ODSP	44%
Senior tenants	22%
Youth tenants (13-24)	22%

Source: City of Toronto, 2025; TCHC, 2024a, 2025c

Additionally, TCHC has co-developed service interventions to address the concerns and needs of residents. In 2024, TCHC launched the iHelp Centre in partnership with the West Toronto Ontario Health Team, which provides on-site critical care services to TCHC tenants and surrounding neighbours (TCHC, 2024). Currently, TCHC has two iHelp Centres – located at 901 Weston Road and 100 High Park Avenue – to better address the needs and gaps in service provision that are not accessible to tenants and residents.

TCHC also operates a Community Safety Unit (CSU) service, which offers 24/7 community engagement, support, and call response for residents and staff (TCHC, 2025b). Peace officers, known as Special Constables, lead the CSU through delegated police powers, allowing them to assist victims of crime, apprehend offenders, and work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders (TCHC, 2025b; TCHC, 2022).

As part of the City of Toronto’s efforts to preserve and expand the number of affordable homes by 65,000 and the number of supportive homes by 18,000 over the next decade, TCHC has been authorized to review several of its properties for possible redevelopment or retrofit (City of Toronto, 2023a). There are also ongoing initiatives, including with the provincial government, to enhance access to health and social support services within TCHC buildings, and to improve the neighbourhoods where TCHC properties are located. Initiatives include the Integrated Service Model (ISM) for Toronto Seniors Housing and the new permanent Rapid Housing Sub-stream under the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (City of Toronto, 2023a, 2025b).

A set of comparable health and well-being indicators would be helpful in these efforts to ensure TCHC can continue to serve its tenants successfully amidst an evolving climate of needs. TCHC also hopes to help build more complete communities and a healthy society, reduce operational risks, and help preserve the already strained social and emergency services infrastructure of the city (hospitals etc.) The primary objective of this report is to assess the draft indicators provided by TCHC and supplement them with additional guidance through a literature and policy review on non-market housing health services, as well as interviews with two experts. Indicators have been assessed based on their adherence to TCHC 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, ability to be comparable to buildings and projects, replicability in data collection, and availability through published reports or online sources.

# 2. COMMONLY USED WELLBEING INDICATORS

## 2.1 WHY DO NON-MARKET HOUSING PROVIDERS USE WELL-BEING INDICATORS?

Non-market housing providers, including municipalities and public housing authorities, cooperatives, and non-profit agencies, have developed well-being indicators to measure tenant health and safety (Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Peel Region, 2021; United Way Greater Toronto, 2024). Examples of sources include regular tenant surveys, focus groups, or meetings; collecting statistics from service agencies such as police, fire, ambulance, and nearby community health centres, and information from building staff (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Blunden, & Valentine, 2023; Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Foster & Kleeman, 2023; Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Pawson et al., 2015; Raphael et al., 2020; Regulator of Social Housing, 2022).

The goal of measuring tenant well-being is to identify unmet needs that may require additional support or new interventions. Organizational changes can drive a better experience for social and community housing residents (TCHC, 2025c). Indicators help housing providers to understand their residents' needs, and to evaluate the impacts of their community-building efforts over time (Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024).

By providing transparent dialogue and comparable well-being indicators, non-market providers can justify the need for new programs and interventions, while having the support of their community (Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; World Health Organization, 2018). Indicators uncover trends based on demographics, location, services used, and any systemic barriers or enablers (United Way Greater Toronto, 2024). A key aspect of ensuring successful indicator collection is being open and honest with residents living in non-market housing. Bad organizational and tenant relationships could result in skewed data collection, not truthful of residential concerns. Longterm commitment to tenant involvement is the only way non-market housing providers can guarantee beneficial collection of well-being indicators (Pawson et al., 2015; Peel Region, 2021).

Indicators are also beneficial in benchmarking key performance indicators (KPIs), especially if multiple agencies use the same indicators to understand their performance relative to others trying to achieve the same or similar objectives (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025). To be successful in using KPIs, they must be reflective of an organization's needs and of the priorities of its residents (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025).

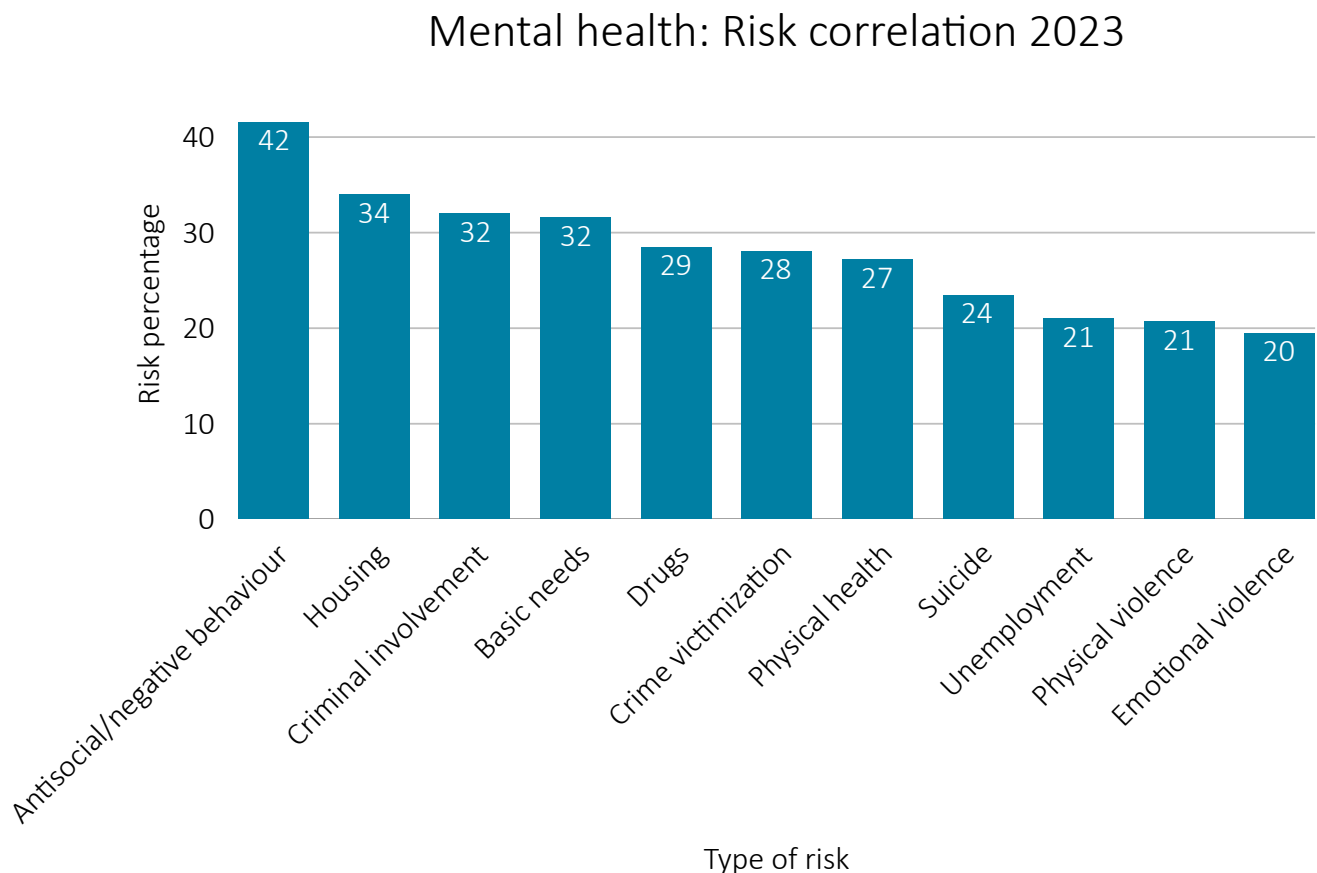
Examples of successful well-being interventions made through agency collaboration and transparent dialogue with residents are contained in Peel Region's Community Safety and Well-being Plan 2020-2024. Peel Region included accountability and transparency as a key theme in the Community Consolation section of their Community Safety and Well-being Plan, stating a commitment to transparency with findings and sharing learnings back with the community (Peel Region, 2021).

Hey Neighbour! Collective’s Practice Guide on Landlord and Housing Operator-led Approaches to Growing Community in Multi-unit Housing also displayed successful transparent action through their partnership with Catalyst Community Development Society. The partnership was able to create open communication, trust-building, and collaborative problem-solving by organizing meetings between the residents, staff, construction team, contractors, community partners, investors, municipal staff, and councillors (Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023).

## 2.2 WHAT INDICATORS ARE BEST?

Based on the academic and grey literature consulted, most non-market housing providers collect indicators concerning tenant social well-being, mental and physical health, and satisfaction with their housing situation (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Pawson et al., 2015; Peel Region, 2021; United Way Greater Toronto, 2024; World Health Organization, 2018). The reason for collecting these types of indicators stems from increased mental health concerns surrounding residents in crisis and the adverse effects it has on their social, physical, and economic well-being (Figure 2) (United Way Greater Toronto, 2024).

Figure 2: Chart representing how mental health contributes to other risk factors



Source: United Way Greater Toronto, 2024

## ***Social well-being***

Well-being indicators refer to how residents experience a sense of belonging, social inclusion, and safety in their social relationships, connections, and physical, emotional and spiritual well-being (Blunden, & Valentine, 2023; Pawson et al., 2015; Simon Fraser University, 2021, 2021; United Way Greater Toronto, 2024; World Health Organization, 2018). Indicators that non-market providers use to measure social well-being include perceptions of sense of belonging, safety, and loneliness, changes in income, security of tenure, employment status, satisfaction with neighbourhood and location, proximity to transit stations and local amenities, and individual tenant supports accessed.

Indicators that TCHC is exploring in gaining social-well-being data include:

- Tenants in good standing
- Rate of tenants participating in funded engagement activities
- Rate of tenants participating in tenant engagement systems

To attain data on the indicators listed above, housing organizations depend on surveys administered to tenants for quarterly or yearly review (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Blunden & Valentine, 2023; Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023b, 2023a; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Simon Fraser University, 2021). Surveys can be done online, through mail-outs, or in a face-to-face setting. Survey results, in most cases, are consolidated into data representing the pros and cons of the current well-being framework and made publicly available.

## ***Mental and physical health***

Well-being indicators, which discuss mental and physical health, refer to tenants' safety, ensuring residents feel supported in all types of situations, including assistance with individual and family needs (Blunden & Valentine, 2023; Pawson et al., 2015; Peel Region, 2021; Simon Fraser University, 2021; United Way Greater Toronto, 2024). Indicators that non-market providers use to measure mental and physical health include the general happiness level of tenants; tenants' satisfaction with their current health; satisfaction with the safety of their home, building, and neighbourhood; changes in violence or public safety risks in the neighbourhood; comfort level in asking for help/support; and satisfaction with individual and family support.

Indicators that TCHC is exploring that are useful in gaining mental and physical health data include:

- Tenant satisfaction rate with safety level
- Staff satisfaction rate with safety level
- Tenant satisfaction rate with support level
- Rate of calls for service by unit
- Rate of referrals to external supports
- Neighbourhood crime rating
- RentSafe apartment evaluation rating

Similar to the above section, mental and physical health indicators are primarily collected through surveys. These types of surveys can be more intimate, with staff or medical professionals consulting tenants one-on-one to gather data. From the data collected, non-market providers have created new programs such as regular townhall meetings, and support groups, and have facilitated tenant interaction by initiating tenant action out of shared concerns (Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023b, 2023a; Simon Fraser University, 2021; Taylor et al., 2023).

Survey questions on tenant mental and physical health include:

- Thinking about the adults in your household, are they generally working more or less than when they were in the previous home?
- Have you noticed any difference in how the child is performing or enjoying school since you moved into this home?
- What is your perception of area-based discrimination?
- Neighbourhood problems? (Drug dealing, robbery/assault, litter, vandalism)
- Do you have a good relationship with your neighbours?
- Problems with neighbour(s)? (Harassment, noise level, intimidation, filed a complaint)
- How safe do you feel from theft or violence?

### ***Satisfaction with housing***

Well-being indicators discussing satisfaction with housing refer to tenants feeling secure in their housing situation, including affordable and stable tenure, maintenance and utilities, and their relationship with their landlord (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Blunden & Valentine, 2023; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Peel Region, 2021; Simon Fraser University, 2021; United Way Greater Toronto, 2024). Indicators that non-market providers use to measure satisfaction within their housing organizations include tenant satisfaction with the housing provider; perceived level of care the landlord has for the tenant and their family; dispute management; tenant life improvement since moving into social/community housing; state of the unit and suitability to the tenant's situation; how responsive the landlord is to maintenance and repair requests; and the approachability of staff and program operators.

Indicators that TCHC is exploring that are useful in attaining data on satisfaction with housing include:

- Rate of households that have made a complaint in the last year
- Complaint resolution rate
- Tenant satisfaction rate with maintenance quality and timeliness
- Tenant satisfaction rate with cleanliness
- Neighbourhood crime rating
- RentSafe apartment evaluation rating

To attain satisfaction with housing, non-market providers administer surveys, focus groups, and workshops (Blunden, & Valentine, 2023; Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023a, 2023b; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Peel Region, 2021; Simon Fraser University, 2021; Taylor et al.,

2023). Satisfaction with maintenance and repairs is primarily collected through surveys administered before and after the work is done, measuring wait times and tenant satisfaction. To gather a broader sense of satisfaction with the housing provider, staff, and buildings, focus groups and workshops are held among the provider, staff, tenants, and service providers to facilitate active discussions on improvements. From these discussions actionable outcomes include collaborative reports with new policies, new tenant committees, and amendments made to service provisions.

Questions providers can ask on housing satisfaction include:

- How satisfied are you with TCHC housing? (high, medium, low)
- % satisfied or very satisfied with physical and material aspects of home, by overall level of home satisfaction (location, value for money for rent paid, size of unit/home, security, privacy, design/layout, design of apartment block)
- Are there any material problems with the property? (Cooling system, pests, heating system, plumbing, peeling paint/plaster)
- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? ‘I think my landlord cares about me and my family.’
- How would you describe your housing provider?
- Do they manage the properties well?
- Are they easy/hard to communicate with?
- How do they manage disputes?
- Do they help you with other things you need – for example refer you to other services?

## 2.3 USING INDICATORS TO PRIORITIZE INTERVENTIONS

Non-market housing providers use a variety of mechanisms, including tenant engagement sessions, collaborative formulation of KPIs, and reactive response measures.

### *Engagement sessions*

The best way to ensure tenant satisfaction and cooperation is through transparency and accountability in how the units and their services are managed (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Pawson et al., 2015; Peel Region, 2021; Simon Fraser University, 2021). Housing providers achieve transparency and accountability through providing published and disaggregated data online and working collaboratively with residents on performance and service delivery improvements (Blunden & Valentine, 2023; Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Pawson et al., 2015; Peel Region, 2021).

Engagement sessions can take the form of outreach with residents, town hall meetings, staff and resident training sessions, and through resident advisory committees (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023; Pawson et al., 2015). For example, Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) developed a Tenant Talks Team that travels to their communities getting feedback on

resident safety and well-being, while adopting a community-based problem-solving approach (McIntosh, 2023;2024).

### ***Collaborative formulation of KPIs***

Instead of internally formulating KPIs, non-market housing organizations are turning toward collaborative practices in addressing them. To begin addressing KPIs, housing organizations need to learn about their tenants and what service interventions they desire, whether they be improvements to education, employment, transport, childcare, or health systems (World Health Organization, 2018). From there, organizations can start building KPIs in partnership with organizations, including emergency services, school boards, social service providers, cultural organizations, governments, and resident groups (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023; Peel Region, 2021). OCH, in its efforts to improve services in their communities, takes “Pulse Surveys” after every maintenance job is completed (McIntosh, 2023). The survey provides real-time feedback on tenant satisfaction, allowing OCH to make improvements immediately (McIntosh, 2023).

Information on KPIs should also be easy to find, along with supporting documents used to inform them. A key aspect of effective collaboration is ensuring transparency and providing tenants and partner organizations with clear, accessible information, which helps prevent gaps or inconsistencies (Health Justice Program, 2020). Finding resources successfully allows tenants to receive the help they need without barriers and allows non-market housing organizations to provide information in a timely and adequate manner (Health Justice Program, 2020).

### ***Responsive measures***

To display that non-market housing providers are being responsive, listening to their residents' concerns, and acting upon concerning well-being indicators, they need to be visibly responsive to their tenants' needs. To achieve this TCHC, in partnership with the City of Toronto, can initiate trials, non-randomized comparative studies, case controls, or cohort studies (World Health Organization, 2018). They can also initiate training for stakeholders and staff – based on evidence collected through well-being indicators – to elevate housing conditions and service standards (Peel Region, 2021; United Way Greater Toronto, 2024; World Health Organization, 2018). Responsive measures, most importantly, mean progressing policy and health directives. Examples of progressive policies include the Social Housing White Paper in the U.K., which proposes changes to the consumer regulation of social housing to strengthen the accountability of landlords for providing safe homes, quality services, and treating residents with respect (GOV.UK, 2021). B.C. has initiated new amendments to their Residential Tenancy Regulations to include guest policies and wellness checks that allow supportive housing agencies the right to prohibit guests who could cause further harm to resident healing (BC Housing, 2024). TCHC again would have to solicit the help of the City to get these objectives done, but B.C. and the U.K. show that it is possible, leading to progressive tenant health. In the interim, TCHC can learn from OCH, who has also responded to tenant concerns of safety by initiating a Safety Service Team that proactively visits OCH properties (McIntosh, 2023).

# 3. CASE STUDIES

To gather information on well-being indicators being used by non-market housing providers, interviews were conducted with two individuals who have extensive experience in developing indicators: Hajar Majoud of Atira Women’s Resource Society in Vancouver and Dr. Erika Martino from the Australian Healthy Housing Centre for Research Excellence (CRE).

## 3.1 ATIRA WOMEN’S RESOURCE SOCIETY

Atira Women’s Resource Society is a not-for-profit organization based in Vancouver, B.C., working to support anyone who identifies as a woman and has experienced gendered violence and misogyny (Atira, 2025). Atira’s mission is to break down barriers women experience due to stigma around gender-binary systems, violence, poverty, and discrimination (Atira, 2025). They offer a variety of supportive homes to women and their children, including women-only Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, modular housing, second-stage transition houses, transition houses, and shelters (Atira, 2022). Atira additionally offers programs encompassing family care, health and well-being, outreach, education, and employment (Atira, 2025).

Atira tracks well-being data primarily through Critical Incident Reports (CIRs) generated from each of their supportive and transitional housing projects (Atira, 2022). The purpose of monitoring CIRs is to assess Atira’s performance in reporting and management, as well as its resources, practices, policies, procedures, and training (Atira, 2022). Tracking incidents enables Atira to see which locations experience the most incidents and the types of incidents that are reported most frequently. It also allows them to identify which times of the year are most susceptible to incidents, granting Atira the opportunity to plan for incident prevention in advance. Critical incidents Atira tracks include violence-related incidents, drug poisoning, flooded infrastructure, health-related incidents, fire events, tenant deaths, missing persons, barred guests, accidents/injuries, police interventions, theft, suicide attempts, false alarms, and underage guests (Atira, 2022).

TCHC can use Atira’s method of collecting CIRs to compare where service interventions are most needed within its building portfolio. As TCHC is a larger organization than Atira, CIRs could provide an opportunity for collaboration in collecting data between health, fire, and police departments. Based on the collected data, service interventions could be utilized to aid in addressing incidents or managing their frequency. For example, Atira was able to manage the frequency of fire alarms going off in their buildings due to smoking by working with the B.C. fire department to create a 30-second delay after smoke was detected before sampling the air again. CIRs would help TCHC collect data it currently struggles to obtain, including information on tenant vulnerability such as seniors, youth, single mothers, deaths, and access to external supports.

Another way Atira has started collecting well-being indicators is through adapting an international Quality of Life Initiative into their tenant surveys. In 2023, the City of Vancouver, as well as 10 other global cities, participated in a pilot program in partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) to develop a global quality of life index (City of Vancouver, 2023; UN-Habitat, 2024). Indicators were designed in two layers: Global Layer (universal indicators that reflect quality-of-life dimensions relevant to most cities) and Local Layer (community-specific indicators that reflect the unique needs, values, and priorities of each city) (Alawamleh, 2024). Each layer measures nine essential quality of life domains: basic services & mobility, culture & recreation, economy, education, environment, governance, health & well-being, housing, and social cohesion (Alawamleh, 2024). Atira has adapted the model by comparing its indicators to those of the city and assessing its metrics against their own, developing priorities and challenges that are unique to their organization.

TCHC can learn from Atira by encouraging the City of Toronto to partner with the UN-Habitat's Quality of Life Initiative to advance local policy on the well-being of residents and advocate for systemic change in non-market housing service provisions. Most importantly, TCHC can adopt Atira's model of publicly publishing CIRs and any new policy directives/ data on health and well-being indicators. Atira is very transparent in their data collection, making organizational mandates, policies, and changes easy for tenants to access. Transparency enables trust in tenants and makes them more inclined to view the organization as committed to their health and safety. Examples of reports Atira makes public include Joint Health & Safety Committee Evaluation reports, Staff Meditation and Mindfulness Training reports, AWRS & APMI Critical Incidents Analysis reports, and Impact reports.

### **3.2 THE HEALTHY HOUSING CRE**

Funded by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council, the Healthy Housing CRE seeks to address how healthy housing interventions can reduce disease and strengthen tenant well-being through policy and research initiatives (Healthy Housing Centre of Research Excellence, 2025). They collect data through interdisciplinary partnerships that bring together leaders of health research that focuses on housing aging over time, quantifying the health gains of housing interventions, and measuring and responding to healthy and unhealthy exposures to housing (Healthy Housing Centre of Research Excellence, 2025). One of the ways the CRE examines health and well-being indicators is through evidence-based exposures and outcomes that people experience when living in unhealthy housing. Exposures can include home hazards, homelessness, unaffordability, crime, unsafe neighbourhoods, lack of food, or low access to services. Based on the severity of the exposures, tenants experience various outcomes, including mental health challenges, decreased physical health, a small support network, or a lack of trust in service interventions.

To mitigate unhealthy exposures in housing and reduce unfavourable outcomes experienced by tenants living in TCHC buildings, it is recommended that it works with local grassroots organizations or community groups. Similar to many other sources (Alawamleh, 2024; ATIRA, 2025; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Awaworyi Churchill et al., 2025; Blunden & Valentine, 2023; Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Fulcher et al., 2022; GOV.UK, 2021; Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; Pawson et al., 2015; World Health Organization, 2018), the CRE advocates for a collaborative approach to constructing well-being indicators with tenants and the community. To understand your clientele and the area you are serving, you need to understand what they need and want and work together to develop successful interventions. It is a bottom-up approach to working with the community for their betterment. To address the uneven power structures and barriers that marginalized groups face, TCHC can consult grassroots organizations to support tenant advocacy initiatives and mitigate systemic barriers to receiving service support. Grassroots organizations TCHC can consult with include Engaged Communities, Coalition of Women in Leadership, Toronto ACORN, and Black Urbanism Toronto (BUTO).

An additional aid the CRE suggests for guiding TCHC in achieving healthy housing in its practices is the Women's Livability Assessment tool, created by the YWCA of Australia. Funded by Homes Victoria, the Women's Livability Assessment tool is a 30-minute online assessment quiz that offers principles and actions across operations, housing development, and property acquisition (YWCA, 2025). It addresses uneven power dynamics between women residents, developers, governments, and community housing providers, helping them to reevaluate and improve their housing for women residents (YWCA, 2025).

TCHC can benefit from using the Women's Livability Assessment tool to better comprehend the health and well-being of its female residents, contributing to gender equality in its buildings, and improving relationships between staff and residents (YWCA, 2025). It would be beneficial to their partnership with WoodGreen Community Services, which works to empower women-led families with children in their buildings by bringing to light the negative experiences women have faced both outside and inside the housing system, leading to trauma-informed development of health and well-being indicators that acknowledge the diverse experiences of their women residents (TCHC, 2025d). It would also strengthen their wellbeing indicators by adding genderspecific considerations, particularly around women's experiences and sexual orientation.

# 4. ANALYSIS

## 4.1 COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The literature consulted and the interviews conducted point to successful well-being indicators being a product of collaboration. Without tenant involvement, engagement, or feedback, non-profit housing organizations would not know the priorities and needs of their communities. For well-being indicators to be effective, they must accurately reflect the trauma, hardships, and setbacks experienced by residents, and then be proactive in the measures taken to mitigate them. Asset-based community development, whether through collaboration with grassroots organizations, tenant advisory councils, or youth groups, makes well-being indicators empowering and thoughtful, providing services that residents desire (Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023).

Collaboration between national or global organizations has also proven to be useful in creating new advancements in well-being indicators. The Quality-of-Life Initiative and the Women’s Livability Assessment tool prove that when countries, municipalities, and local governments work together, they create stronger avenues for well-being data collection, performance measurement, and decision-making (Alawamleh, 2024; YWCA, 2025). It also proves that well-being and healthy housing initiatives are a global concern, needing higher service standards and improvement in the quality of life of residents (Alawamleh, 2024).

## 4.2 ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Transparent development of well-being indicators and accountability for the management of services and maintenance in buildings foster a better relationship among tenants, staff, and partner organizations. Transparency and accountability of well-being indicators mean that non-market housing providers need to nurture open dialogue and trust between themselves and the residents (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Hey Neighbour! Collective, 2023; Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024). Transparency can take the form of a common agenda, shared measurement matrices, and mutually reinforcing activities (Peel Region, 2021).

Accountability can be shown through non-market housing operators disaggregating data and showing it publicly. For instance, both Atira and the Healthy Housing CRE measure well-being indicators through incidents and outcomes, assessing how the organization has responded to incidents and what procedures and protocols were followed. All information is then publicly shared in a report. TCHC monitors incidents and outcomes through its Enterprise Risk Management Policy – however, it does not publicly disclose the types of incidents that have occurred, or the steps taken to develop treatment plans in response to those incidents.

### 4.3 SHARED ORGANIZATIONAL WELL-BEING INDICATORS

Based on literature and interviews, the most pressing indicators that community and social housing providers use include housing stability status, physical and perceived safety and support, and levels of tenant engagement.

Housing stability refers to tenants feeling secure in their housing situation and having a good relationship with their housing corporation regarding maintenance and repairs. When residents have secure, affordable, stable tenure, they are more willing to create social ties within their buildings, allowing for a stronger community network to evolve (Hey Neighbour! Collective & Happy Cities, 2024; World Health Organization, 2018). Similarly, the physical state of a building has an impact on the happiness of residents in social and community housing. When housing poses health-related risks, it increases the likelihood of injury and sickness, reducing its ability to provide safe, long-term shelter to tenants (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2025; Fulcher et al., 2022; Simon Fraser University, 2021; World Health Organization, 2018).

To gather housing stability indicators, TCHC can refer to the indicators outlined in the Housing Satisfaction section, which make note of non-market providers measuring tenant satisfaction in relation to the housing provider, the level of care the landlord has for the tenant and their family, dispute management, tenant life improvement, state of the unit, and how responsive the landlord is to maintenance and repair requests.

Indicators TCHC should prioritize for housing stability include:

- Rate of households that have made a complaint in the last year
- Complaint resolution rate
- Tenant satisfaction rate with maintenance quality and timeliness
- Tenant satisfaction rate with cleanliness
- Neighbourhood crime rating
- RentSafe apartment evaluation rating

Physical and perceived safety and support refer to tenants feeling that the housing corporation is a safe environment that cares about their well-being, providing them with support through assisted care or programming. For instance, Atira provides its residents with a legal clinic, counselling program, pregnancy outreach, housing outreach, pet outreach, and a childcare program. The CRE also suggests examining the cultural aspects of safety and assessing how minority groups perceive the support they receive from the housing organization.

TCHC can use the indicators outlined in the mental and physical safety section to aid in their gathering of physical and perceived safety and support indicators. Indicators that measure mental and physical health include the general happiness level of tenants; tenants' satisfaction with their current health; tenants' satisfaction with the safety of their home, building, and neighbourhood;

changes in violence or public safety risks in the neighbourhood; comfort level in asking for help/support; and satisfaction with individual and family support.

Indicators TCHC should prioritize for physical and perceived safety include:

- Tenant satisfaction rate with safety level
- Staff satisfaction rate with safety level
- Tenant satisfaction rate with support level
- Rate of calls for service by unit
- Rate of referrals to external supports
- Neighbourhood crime rating
- RentSafe apartment evaluation rating

Tenant engagement refers to the level of activity housing organizations exhibit in receiving and gathering tenant input and working collaboratively with them to develop and implement policies. The interviews emphasized that housing organizations must foster trust between tenants and the relationship they have with staff and upper management. Tenants need to feel their input is valuable, or they will not see the benefit of answering surveys or questionnaires on well-being.

TCHC can use the indicators outlined in the Social Well-being section to aid in its gathering of tenant engagement indicators. Indicators used to measure social well-being include perceptions of sense of belonging, safety, and loneliness; changes in income; security of tenure; employment status; satisfaction with neighbourhood and location; proximity to transit stations and local amenities; and individual tenant supports accessed.

Indicators TCHC should prioritize for tenant engagement include:

- Tenants in good standing
- Rate of tenants participating in funded engagement activities
- Rate of tenants participating in tenant engagement systems

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TCHC is on the right track to creating avenues for better health and wellness service interventions in community housing through their iHelp Centres and CSU service. However, more can be achieved if TCHC goes beyond its usual protocols and strives for deeper community involvement, transparency in data collection and resource allocation, and advocates for stronger policy directives on health and wellness in community housing standards. Every tenant housed in a TCHC building represents a particular demographic, community, and health situation that cannot be addressed with a single solution.

TCHC, as a City of Toronto-owned organization, can emulate B.C. Housing and help the City redefine its residential tenancy regulations to address missing policies and wellness criteria. TCHC can also support the City in achieving national and global standards for healthy housing initiatives by participating in international movements, such as the Quality-of-Life Initiative and the Women’s Livability Assessment tool. They can additionally strive for more transparency in their data collection by publicly publishing their findings, creating deeper tenant and community support and trust.

TCHC’s 2025-2029 Strategic Plan is the first step in achieving health and well-being throughout their properties. Recommendations made will focus on TCHC’s five Strategic Plan priorities: (1) Support safe, healthy, and inclusive, tenant communities, (2) Improve the cleanliness, maintenance, and accessibility of TCHC buildings, (3) Strengthen TCHC’s affordable housing portfolio to deliver critical housing to Torontonians, (4) Foster a collaborative, diverse, and thriving workplace, and (5) Improve TCHC’s ability to lead, learn, and innovate.

### *Recommendations for TCHC*

1. Improve current health and well-being metrics and benchmark data: TCHC should develop comparable and replicable data. It should investigate, with the City of Toronto, common well-being data that can be used across all non-market housing providers. It can also work with the City of Toronto on international partnerships for health and well-being indicators like the UN-Habitat initiative described in this report. TCHC should consider this a short-term goal that can be integrated within the Strategic Plan Objective of “supporting safe, healthy and inclusive communities”.
2. Develop two communities of practice – one with other public housing authorities in the province, and another with Toronto area non-market housing providers – to work toward common indicators and better collective ways to meet tenant needs. Shared key performance indicators would improve consistency and accountability in the quality-of-service delivery. It might also improve partnerships with service organizations, including emergency services, school boards, social service providers, cultural organizations, governments, and resident groups. TCHC should consider this a long-term goal as it is a complex set of partnership processes.

3. Display transparency in health and well-being metrics: Housing providers achieve transparency and accountability through providing published and disaggregated data online and working collaboratively with residents on performance and service delivery improvements. TCHC can achieve this by placing building noticeboards in publicly accessible locations, such as the lobby, to display tenant suggestions and responses from TCHC staff. They can also publish annual public reports on health and well-being indicators informed by tenant surveys. It is worth examining the published reports produced by Atira (described in this report) to assess the level of transparency that non-market housing organizations strive to achieve. TCHC should consider this a long-term goal, displaying their commitment to data transparency and enabling stronger client and tenant relationships.
  
4. Create a systemic approach to tenant input: To begin addressing KPIs, housing organizations need to learn about their tenants and what service interventions they desire, whether they are improvements to education, employment, transport, childcare, or health systems. TCHC already engages with tenants, as outlined in their 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, displaying a commitment to tenant feedback. TCHC should expand further ongoing tenant engagement, founded in trust and actionable support. TCHC can do this through in-person and online outreach with residents, town hall meetings, and staff and resident training sessions around a consistent set of well-being indicators. TCHC should consider this a short-term goal that can be achieved through becoming part of their Strategic Plan Objectives, but long-term in its usefulness to engage residents.

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