

Toronto Public Health (TPH) has established a system to monitor the deaths of homeless people in Toronto. Our first year of reporting was 2017.

We rely on members of the community, both individuals and agencies, to report this information to Public Health. This email explains the details of this reporting system.

A reporting form can be accessed at the following link:

https://s.tphsurvey.chkmkt.com/deaths_of_people_experiencing_homelessness

As a general rule, the definition of "homelessness" used for this project is that established by the Canadian Homelessness Research Network of York University. That is,

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful, and distressing.

Thus someone who is temporarily staying with friends or family, or transitioning to new housing, but has experienced long periods without a permanent home, would be considered homeless for the purposes of this work.

The questions included in the form are, we believe, self-explanatory. Finding the balance between collecting all the information we can gather, and providing a relatively simple and accurate collection tool, was challenging. The form should take five minutes or less to complete. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions regarding its use or improvement. In addition, we are very interested in your thoughts and ideas as we work to improve this process over time.

One question that has been raised concerns the use of the deceased person's name. The decision to include a space for the name was based on the prevailing feeling that homeless people are nameless for too long and that they deserve to be named in death. Including the name will also improve the quality of the data. Although we encourage you to include it, you may omit it if you wish. All fields on the form are optional. No names, or any other individual information, will be publically reported.

All information will naturally be treated as confidential, in compliance with applicable privacy laws. The TPH Privacy Officer has approved the use of Checkmarket to collect this information. The highest degrees of protection available with this software are being used. If, however, you still have concerns about this, please contact me to arrange an alternative reporting method.

The Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario will be contacted for verification of death, in all cases.

Duplicate reports will be detected by comparison of various pieces of information, such as name, gender, age, and place and date of death. We will combine information from various sources to assemble the most complete and accurate information possible. As such, it will be very helpful to have the contact information of those reporting to us. Again, this information is not mandatory.

Over the past two years, we have tried to raise awareness of this project by reaching out to many individuals and networks involved with the homeless community. Inevitably, not everyone has been reached. Your help in sharing this information throughout your agencies and networks would be much appreciated.

Thank you so much for your support in this work. We hope it will be an important step in improving the health and lives of this most vulnerable population. Please don't hesitate to contact me for more information.

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