

nellies.org



nellie's

IMPACT
REPORT
2025



After 50 years, our shelter is needed **more than ever**



Nellie's has been providing safe shelter for women and their children for over 50 years, and it's as necessary now as it was then — if not more so. Gender-based violence is occurring at alarmingly high rates and is continuing to increase, and that means more and more women and their children are in need of a safe place to stay. And as long as there are still women in need, we will be here to help them get through the trauma of abuse, poverty, and homelessness.

We are proud that our shelter can be a safe haven for women who have nowhere else to turn. But the biggest challenge we're currently facing is that we don't have enough space to safely accommodate everyone who reaches out to us for help. Over the last few years, the length of stay for women and their children in the shelter has dramatically increased, with some families needing to stay with us for up to eight months. In a city where the average person has a difficult time finding rental housing, you can imagine how it becomes nearly impossible for a woman staying in a shelter — especially if they're relying on government assistance for help. All of these elements make finding safe, affordable housing even harder, so women are staying at Nellie's for increasingly longer time periods because they have nowhere else to safely move on to.

Our city needs a better system for housing women who are fleeing violence, because right now there just isn't enough space to accommodate all of those who need us. And when our shelter system is constantly at capacity, this also means that many more women are staying longer with their abuser because they have no option to leave.

Despite these challenges, we continue to move forward in supporting the women and their children who stay with us. Throughout this report, you'll learn more about what life is like for the women at Nellie's, how we support them while they're living at the shelter, and the various programs we run for both our adult and child residents. Our team works hard to create a safe, warm, and welcoming "home away from home," supporting the residents as they heal, grow, and build a brighter future.

Of course, this support wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our donors. Thank you for your support and trust, and we hope you'll continue to join us in our efforts to build a world free of gender-based violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ingrid Graham'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ingrid Graham, Director of Development & Acting Co-Executive Director

What women and children find when they come to stay at **Nellie's**

- 22 bedrooms with private bathrooms, providing space for up to 38 beds
- Industrial kitchen
- Large communal dining room
- Accessible kitchenettes for preparing meals, snacks, and baby bottles
- Living room for socializing
- Children's playroom and kitchen
- Outdoor kids' play area
- Dedicated space for tweens and teens
- Spiritual room for reflection and prayer
- Counselling offices
- Program rooms
- Computer room
- Laundry room
- Pet care room
- Green space for pets
- Elevator for access to all floors
- Welcoming reception office
- Staff offices





A home away from home: How we support the women staying at our shelter

When a woman first walks through the doors at Nellie's, whether by herself or with young children in tow, she's arriving at a safe space for healing, personal growth, and renewed strength. It's a place where, for the first time in perhaps a very long time, she can let her guard down.

“When a woman first comes into the shelter, she can sleep peacefully without feeling unsafe,” says program director Jiin Yiong. **“For a woman who has just fled violence, we really wish them to have a full, complete rest.”** Jiin explains that for the first few days, our staff does very minimal intake work, preferring to give the women the space and time to adapt and settle into their new surroundings.

Although our shelter building is very large, our staff works hard to make it feel welcoming and homey for our residents. Our cafeteria-style dining room allows women to socialize and make new connections with the other women staying at Nellie's, and our in-house programming provides an opportunity for learning, healing, and empowerment.



Once a new resident has settled in, our case management team will sit down with her to discuss her needs and how we can support her. If she needs support navigating legal systems — such as dealing with custody arrangements — we will work with her to get legal aid or a lawyer, and we will continue to support her through the entire court process. If she needs help securing safe, affordable housing, we will help her complete housing applications. Even once we've helped her find a new home, our team makes sure that her transition is smooth, connecting her with local resources, and making sure she is adequately set up with the items needed to make her house feel like a home.

But since the length of stay for women and their children at the shelter has been steadily increasing, it's become even more crucial that we focus on how we can best support our residents, and how we can make them feel comfortable and at peace in this space. One of the ways we do this is through how we honour our residents' cultures. **“For cultural holidays, we always ensure we have an educational component of our celebration, and include cultural food as part of the menu,”** explains Jiin. **“This is especially important for helping women of different cultures feel included and valued while they're staying with us.”**

Looking forward, Jiin is prioritizing the development of more in-house programming and activities — something she thinks is critical to help address some of the issues they're currently facing. **“As a woman's length of stay gets longer, many of them are struggling with motivation,”** Jiin says. **“I feel there may be some sense of hopelessness. So the question is: As staff, what can we do to encourage these women? What can we do to bring out their resiliency?”**



Our in-shelter programs transform lives

Children's Program

We know how important it is for children to be able to process their experiences, while also having plenty of opportunities to just be kids. Our children and youth programs are designed to meet both of these vital needs. Through fun and engaging activities, we provide a safe space for kids to express emotions and work through trauma in an age-appropriate way.

From homework club and circle times, to craft projects and special outings to local attractions, our Children's Program provides the crucial support that our young, vulnerable residents need.

Empowerment Programs

At Nellie's, our approach to addressing violence is full-spectrum prevention. The women living at Nellie's have the opportunity to participate in our trauma-informed Empowerment Self-Defense (ESD) program. Different from traditional self-defense models, ESD takes a proactive approach, focusing on preventing, responding to, and healing from violent events.

For the kids living at Nellie's, we run a world-renowned anti-bullying program called Rock and Water. Through a series of exercises and games, kids ages five and up learn about setting their own boundaries, making independent decisions, using communication, and respecting others' limits. Rock and Water has a lasting impact, empowering kids with the essential skills they need to build healthy relationships throughout their life, so they can break the cycle of violence.



Peer Support Groups

Our Peer Support programs bring together women who have had similar experiences. Through talking, listening, and sharing coping strategies, women find comfort and renewed strength. These programs equip our clients with the tools and skills they need to make informed decisions and take brave steps toward a new chapter, while also providing the relaxed settings where women feel supported to process their experiences, build connections, and find the confidence that will drive them forward.

Groups include WEAV (Women Experiencing Abuse and Violence), Women on the Move (for those living with physical disabilities), a Substance Use and Addiction program (an innovative program we also rolled out to other shelters), and an Arts and Crafts Support Group. We also offer organized social outings for cultural and artistic events, as well as recreational activities.

Transitional Housing Support Program

Our Transitional Housing Support Program is designed to help women access safe, affordable housing so they can leave violence, poverty, and homelessness behind for good. We do this by assisting them through the application process for subsidized housing and helping them develop individual safety plans. Once they've secured a new home, we connect them with local resources, so they can access the support and tools they need to establish themselves in the community. Through our agency partnerships, our team also assists with finding furniture and household items to help a house feel like a home.

2024 Shelter Stats

62 women arrived
at Nellie's

50 children (ages
0-17) arrived at
Nellie's

8 months is the
average length of
stay, due to the
complex nature
of our clients, and
severely limited
housing availability



THANK YOU
for your continued support.

Find out how you can help us build a future
free of gender-based violence:
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