
WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC **STRATEGIC PLAN**

2016-2021



women's
health clinic

Introduction

Women's Health Clinic (WHC) is a pro-choice, feminist community health centre in Manitoba that offers a wide range of woman-centred services in the 4 key areas:

- » Medical services, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health (including abortion services) and an emphasis on teens and young adults
- » Mental health services – long term therapeutic counselling for adults and teens and specialty services in the area of eating disorders
- » Maternal health and wellness services, including group based teaching and support for prenatal and postpartum women and families and management of Manitoba's first midwifery-led birth centre
- » Health promotion and health education activities in all the above areas.

Since its beginnings as a volunteer birth control and pregnancy information service in 1981, WHC has been an innovative service provider and advocate for women's health. We now have 120 staff, 80 volunteers and a budget of nearly \$7 million. Our Board of Directors is comprised of 18 Directors – 15 community women elected by the membership, 2 staff representatives and a volunteer from our Birth Control & Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling Program. We have core funding from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Healthy Child Manitoba and the United Way of Winnipeg.

During a period of rapid growth between 2006 and 2011 that nearly doubled our size, WHC added three important new areas of work – a therapeutic abortion clinic (previously Jane's Clinic), the Provincial Eating Disorders Prevention and Recovery Program and Manitoba's first Midwifery-led Birth Centre. From 2011- 2015, we focused special attention on ensuring that these new programs were fully integrated and that we had the infrastructure and leadership strength we needed to move forward.

In the Spring of 2015, the Board of Directors undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process that included an environmental scan, feedback from clients, staff, Directors and community partners and a 2-day planning retreat. The result is an ambitious new 5-year plan that will see WHC think "out of the box" to improve access to services that are delivered from our unique philosophy and approach. We are particularly interested in individuals in unserved and underserved communities in Winnipeg and across Manitoba – those for whom barriers are the norm and access to appropriate services has not been possible. We will raise new revenues to support service initiatives and acquire new space to replace our aging Graham Avenue site. The strategies we will use to achieve our goals are tried and true – innovation, partnership, education and advocacy.

Current Situation

As part of the strategic planning process, Women's Health Clinic reviewed key reports on women's health and community health in Manitoba, talked to clients and community partners,

and asked staff and volunteers for their opinions. Here are some of the key things we learned:

Challenges in our Current Areas of Interest

There continues to be a need for attention in many of the areas in which WHC is already an active service provider, including:

Abortion

Access to abortion is a reality for some – and an impossibility for others. Travel is a huge barrier for many women outside Winnipeg and some come from small communities in which information about and access to sexual and reproductive services does not exist. Attitudes among community members and health care providers may prevent women from accessing service.

Maternal Health and Wellness

Community Support

WHC offers a wide range of excellent programs and services in the area of Maternal Health and Wellness. “Coping with Change” workshops, originally developed by WHC’s Mother’s Program, have supported thousands of women and their families and are being delivered by service providers across Manitoba and beyond. At the same time, there are insufficient resources available for women experiencing perinatal mental health issues.

Midwifery

The number of midwives in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has remained largely unchanged for a number of years. 40% of women who ask for a midwife are unable to have one. Admission and birth numbers at the Birth Centre have increased steadily since 2011 but further growth will be limited by the number of midwives.

Medical Services

Pelvic Pain

Women with pelvic pain require an interdisciplinary, flexible approach to service. The health care system has little to offer these women. WHC has developed expertise in this area but resources permit us to see only a small number of the many women who struggle with this condition.

Free Birth Control

Access to free birth control is a cost-effective way to prevent unwanted pregnancies and connect women to health care services. There are some free programs for teens but little outside WHC for adults.

Mental Health

Adults

We have both free and low cost counselling options for women. Referrals come from within and outside WHC and the demand far outweighs the supply because we offer a service that is not available anywhere else. Our waiting list for community women averages a year in length.

Teens

The absence of adequate service within the system for adolescent mental health has been noted in health care, family services and the education system. WHC is the only community-based service in Winnipeg offering ongoing therapeutic counselling to teens – and many of our partners refer young people to us because they do not have the resources themselves.

Other Planning Considerations

Beyond our own direct experience, we know that there are other factors affecting women, men and families that bear consideration in our strategic planning:

Health Equity

The growing gap between the rich and the poor, women's health outcomes significantly poorer than those of men.

Rural Residents

Absence of women-centred health services for individuals in rural and northern communities, particularly sexual and reproductive health (including abortion).

Transgender Health

Gaps in and barriers to service for trans individuals.

Specific Areas of Concern

- » Women's mental health services designed to meet the needs of specific populations – Aboriginal women, newcomers, perinatal mental health
- » Teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates remain high, and are highest in rural and northern populations
- » Fewer family physicians providing low risk obstetrics
- » Need to ensure gender-sensitive care and elimination of gender bias in the provision of health care in Manitoba

The WHC Strategic Plan 2016-21 articulates goals and objectives that will guide us to prioritize and act on a number of these important concerns. Whether through modifications and improvements in WHC's current programs, expanding to include new areas of service, or advocating for a better system response, our work will be designed to advance a woman-centred, interdisciplinary approach to service and produce positive health system change.

Strategic Plan

The Board of Directors took time to reflect on the values that underpin our work, our vision for the future and the mission we have embraced. Following are the new statements that emerged from that important reflection.

Vision

Accessible and equitable health and wellness services, delivered through a feminist lens.

Women's Health Clinic has developed a unique feminist and woman-centred approach to the delivery of all of these services. It is non-judgmental and seeks to meet clients where they are as they begin their journey with us. The clients are treated as the key participants and decision-makers in their own lives and health. WHC ensures that they have the information they need to make choices that will meet their needs and achieve their goals – as they define them. This approach has served women well but is equally healthy and effective for all WHC's clients. Our vision is to see a health care system in which all persons have access to this positive, client-driven and respectful approach.

Mission

Women's Health Clinic promotes health and wellness by:

***Providing accessible, woman-centred education and services.
Creating strategic partnerships.
Advocating for system change.***

Our mission remains consistent with those we have stated in the past, although a new emphasis has been placed on partnerships. As we seek to ensure that we are as inclusive as we can be, we will seek the counsel of and work collaboratively with our community partners, both within Winnipeg and across the Province.



Values

All of our actions are rooted in these fundamental beliefs:

Choice

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity for informed choice in all aspects of their lives, recognizing that the right to choose is both personal and political.

Inclusion

We believe that every individual is equally deserving of respect and dignity and that our actions should strive to open both doors and minds.

Social Justice

We believe in taking action with individuals and communities to advocate for a society in which all people have the opportunity for safety and health and are recognized as experts in their own lives.

Innovation

We believe in advancing health and well-being for all people through creative approaches rooted in evidence and feminist analysis.

Integrity

We believe in being transparent and accountable in everything we do and aligning our actions and resources to serve the best interests of Women's Health Clinic, our clients and the community.

Strategic Goals

The five strategic goals align with our mission and will move us toward achieving our vision. They will enable us to build on our strengths and be responsive to the needs and opportunities in the communities we serve.

1. Partnering to Improve Access to WHC Services in Winnipeg.

Within Winnipeg there are many people who still face barriers receiving inclusive, holistic health services delivered with understanding and respect. We will work with community partners to reduce these barriers and provide better access to our services and our approach to service delivery.

2. Expanding WHC core services throughout Manitoba.

In many communities in Manitoba, access to core women's health services is limited or non-existent. We will work with health regions and community partners to support their efforts to find sustainable solutions to these critical service gaps.

3. Influencing the women's health agenda.

As policy development and planning take place at regional, provincial and national levels, it is important to keep women's health issues at the forefront, including the impact of the determinants of health. We will build on our reputation as leaders in women's health and our ability to develop unique women-centred approaches. We will use these assets to influence policy and resource allocation decisions at community and system levels.

4. Diversification of the revenue base.

Access to alternate funding sources will allow us to expand the depth, reach and quality of our services in Manitoba and ensure the sustainability of those services for the future. We will seek out those individuals and organizations that are interested in advancing women's health and ask for their involvement and support. We will undertake a successful capital campaign to acquire new space for our services.

5. Strengthen organizational health.

Our success depends on our staff and volunteers and we will ensure they have the tools, knowledge, systems and resources they need to innovate and respond to client needs. We will be self-reflective and open to change. We will foster a collaborative team culture focused on staff engagement and support an environment of coordination and quality improvement.