

2021



Disclosure Toolkit - How To Guide

Welcome to the WHAI Women & HIV Disclosure Toolkit. This toolkit includes a series of resources that can be used together, separately, or in other creative ways. It is part of a broader series of toolkits and resources created by WHAI. This How To Guide provides some basics about this toolkit's resources including what this toolkit includes, who it is for, ideas about how to use it, and information about what WHAI is.

WHO IS THIS RESOURCE FOR?

This Women & HIV Disclosure Toolkit was developed for people who work with Cis and Trans women who are or may be living with HIV or facing systemic risk for HIV acquisition. Due to stigma about HIV, we don't always know who is living with HIV; however, we know there are women living with HIV across Ontario. If you work with women in any capacity from health care to community based programs or other social services, this toolkit is for you.

WHAT DOES THIS TOOLKIT INCLUDE?

This toolkit includes the below resources. It can be used as a complete set, or broken down based on what you, your staff team or your organization need. It can be used as a training tool, or is easily adaptable for different situations. We encourage you to think about creative ways to use it so it can fit your needs.



The term 'disclosure' in this toolkit refers to sharing someone's HIV positive status without consent in the context of community or social support roles.

SECTION

1

AN INTRODUCTION TO DISCLOSURE

This resource is intended to provide a foundation for the other resources in this toolkit. It also includes information about policies and laws that govern people's personal health information. There is a lot of information to know. This resource is an introduction to give some of the basics, but we encourage you to check out additional resources listed in the [More Information](#) section of this toolkit and continue learning and asking questions.

TIPS FOR USE:

- Share this resource with new staff to orient them to the basics of HIV Disclosure in the context of their work with women living with HIV.
- Include the content from this section in training and onboarding for new volunteers and Board members.
- Use this information to frame discussions at drop-ins or groups.
- Use this information to enhance your policies, procedures or agency practices.

SECTION

2

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING WOMEN

This resource is presented as a journey of disclosure with tips about how you and your organization can create a welcoming, supportive space for disclosure, build women's autonomy and sense of respect, and contribute to positive health outcomes for women living with HIV.

TIPS FOR USE:

- ☐ Use as a tool to review your team's approach to working with women who may be living with HIV.
- ☐ Use this as a tool to identify areas where your team can build their capacity to help create positive disclosure experiences for women living with HIV.
- ☐ Use as a training tool in a workshop.

SECTION

3

DISCLOSURE: MYTH OR FACT

This resource is a series of cards which can be used in pairs or small groups to create discussion and examine everyday scenarios that may come up. Each includes a situation, some discussion questions, and some information that may help to build knowledge and awareness.

TIPS FOR USE:

- ☐ Add a scenario to a staff meeting agenda to encourage group discussion, create a safe space for staff to ask questions, and build staff knowledge and capacity to support people living with HIV.
- ☐ Use the scenarios to stimulate dialogue amongst staff and/or Board members when reviewing organizational policies and procedures regarding universal precautions, maintaining case files and note taking, and/or organizational privacy and confidentiality.
- ☐ Use the scenarios and recommendations to inform how you may support someone living with HIV who is experiencing systemic challenges, stigma, or discrimination when accessing services in the community.

SECTION

4

🔍 MORE INFORMATION

More Information includes examples of organizations and resources where you can find more specific information on many areas of disclosure. This can be used to find answers to additional questions you may have, increase your knowledge, the knowledge on your staff team, or to make referrals for women you're working with. More information is always emerging, so this is just a starting place.

TIPS FOR USE:

- ☐ Provide to new staff and volunteers to orient them to services and information related to women living with HIV.
- ☐ Share with others in the community at events such as trainings or educational events, community gatherings, or information sessions.
- ☐ Share services and resources with women living with HIV as part of your support to them.

WHY WAS THIS RESOURCE DEVELOPED?

In 2016, WHAI conducted community consultations across Ontario with women living with HIV or facing systemic risk for HIV acquisition (i.e. populations of women who statistically have higher rates of HIV), along with people who work with women living with HIV and other community stakeholders.

800

This consultation included over 800 people in Ontario.

55%

55% of the participants were women living with HIV or facing systemic risk for HIV acquisition (i.e. women from African Caribbean or Black communities, Indigenous women, Trans women, women who use drugs, women who have been incarcerated).

45%

45% of the participants were service providers and community stakeholders.



14 out of 16 communities involved in the consultations identified disclosure as an issue.



One of the biggest challenges identified by women living with HIV was control over how and when their HIV status is disclosed. Many women reported negative experiences with having their status shared by service providers.



This resulted in fear of having one's status disclosed, which in turn prevented women from accessing services or resulted in them travelling far away (i.e. to other cities) to access care and services.

Women who had their HIV status disclosed in a positive, supportive way reported an increased sense of community connectedness, access to useful and important health care services and supports, and an increased sense of autonomy to support other people living with HIV.

In response, WHAI explored what resources exist on this topic to support people working in organizations. We found a lot of amazing resources out there; however, many of them are aimed at people living with HIV, but not as many are focused on those who may be working with women living with HIV. In an effort to grow our collective capacity to respect and support women living with HIV, we developed this toolkit for people working in support professions.

About WHAI



The Women & HIV / AIDS Initiative (WHAI) is a community response to HIV and AIDS among women* in Ontario with a focus on the structural and societal factors that increase risk factors for HIV. WHAI works in 16 regions across Ontario.

WHAI'S GOALS



Reduce HIV transmission among women.



Enhance local community capacity to address HIV and AIDS.



Create environments to support women and their HIV and AIDS-related experiences.

WHAI'S OBJECTIVE

WHAI's objective is to strengthen the capacity of communities to support women living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

Thank you for using this toolkit.

We hope you find helpful ways to use it, either all together or by drawing on different parts. Be creative. Use this toolkit in ways that work for you!

Please remember, this is a starting point and there are a lot of resources and information out there. We hope you find this a helpful part of your learning!



GENDER LANGUAGE: People have different comfort levels with language, and WHAI strives to find ways to be accessible and inclusive and to reflect the advancement of gender-inclusive language. People have different preferences, and these preferences can change depending on the context, situation, sense of safety, or personal identity. This resource strives to be inclusive of all women who use drugs, including Trans and Cis women, people who are designated or assigned female at birth, people who are female-identified that are Trans or Non-Binary and people that are on the Transfeminine spectrum. The terms “woman” and “women” are often used throughout the toolkit to encompass a wide range of identities, and in places we specify

Trans or Cis to help clarify or remind us of the importance of striving to build inclusivity. Regardless of our comfort levels, for the safety of all women and in an effort to create accessible, respectful, and inclusive spaces, it is important to address people by whatever terms they identify with. For more information on WHAI's work toward Trans inclusion and gender-inclusive work, please see WHAI's Trans Inclusion Pocket Guide at whai.ca.

For helpful information on language and terminology, check out The 519's Glossary of Terms at the519.org/education-training/glossary.