

PROGRESS REPORT

H2 2025 - 2026

An overview of WHAI's collective
impact from October 2025 -
March 2026.



Women &
HIV/AIDS
Initiative

Legend

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About WHAI

The Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative is a community-based response to HIV among women and gender-diverse people. Our work is carried out through a network of coordinators positioned at AIDS-service Organizations (ASOs) across the province, supported by a provincial team (PWHAI). We work to alleviate structural exclusion that adversely impacts HIV risk and health outcomes of those living with HIV, with specific goals to:

1

Reduce HIV risk for those disproportionately affected by HIV.

2

Enhance local community capacity to address HIV.

3

Build safer environments to support people's HIV-related needs.

Our work focuses on community organizations, service providers, women and gender-diverse people who are living with HIV, African, Caribbean and Black (ACB), Indigenous, newcomers, who use drugs or substances, have experiences with violence and/or have been/are incarcerated. Within these communities, our work includes those who are pregnant or parenting, living with different abilities, and spans from young adults to seniors.

WHAI's work across Ontario is rooted in the principles of community development and collective impact. Guided by diverse working groups and advisory committees, our work is informed by the principles of Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV and/or AIDS/Meaningful Engagement of People Living with HIV and/or AIDS (GIPA/MEPA), ensuring we always include the voices and wisdom of those most affected and impacted by this work.

To learn more, visit our website at whai.ca

Snapshot of Impact



GIPA/MEPA (Greater Involvement and Meaningful Engagement of People with HIV/AIDS) are guiding principles at the heart of WHAI's work, ensuring those most affected by HIV help shape our responses. Embedded in the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030's emphasis on evidence-based programs and population-specific approaches, these principles inform how WHAI builds capacity across the province

During the October 2025 to March 2026 reporting period, WHAI Coordinators across Ontario worked to reduce HIV risk, build community capacity, and create safer environments under the framework of **WHAI's priority areas of collaboration**.

This work directly supports the three priorities of the **Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030**: reducing new infections, reaching those undiagnosed, and supporting those not yet in care. The culmination of this work demonstrates significant efforts towards addressing women and gender-diverse people's HIV-related risk and health outcomes across the province.

Coordinators shared over 3,000 resources (print + online) in their communities to initiate and deepen awareness about HIV education, prevention, care and support. Resources distributed included facilitation guides, toolkits and postcards. The prevention medications booklet, which was recently added to the WHAI pool of resources, proved to be popular in the community as more people appreciated having information on PrEP, PEP and PIP in one place.

5 WHAI coordinators were involved in the planning of the webinar and at least 12 helped with recruitment for the HIV Linkages to Care webinar, actively engaging service providers and women with living/lived experience (WWLE) to attend.

WHAI coordinators found social media content, and weekly communications from the PWHAI team helpful to strengthen their community capacity building work.

**Between October 2025
and March 2026:**



Priority Areas for Collaboration



WHA! has established 6 priority areas for collaboration, rooted in the voices of women and gender-diverse people with living/lived experience, community workers, and the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030. The Action Plan calls for population-specific approaches, regional service network collaborations, health equity, and evidence-based programs; all of which are reflected in WHA!'s priority areas.

This year, we focused our capacity building work on:

**HIV EDUCATION, PREVENTION,
CARE AND SUPPORT**



WHOLISTIC CARE



**WOMEN-CENTRED HARM
REDUCTION**



HIV Education, Prevention, Care & Support

100% of WHA! coordinators engaged with their local communities to increase collective capacities for HIV Education, Prevention, Care and Support, WHA!'s core priority area of collaboration. This work directly advances the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030's goals to reduce new infections, reach the 11% of people with HIV who are undiagnosed, and support the 13% diagnosed but not yet in care.

Between October 2025 and March 2026, all Coordinators engaged in the development and sharing of critical HIV-related resources. They also recruited community partners, service providers, and women to join learning opportunities anchored to these resources, and amplified women's voices in research and planning spaces.



HIV Linkages to Care Webinar

In this reporting period, WHAI coordinated a working group to produce the HIV Linkages to Care webinar, focusing on both social and physical sciences around HIV care and support. Five (5) Coordinators were part of the working group and at least 12 helped recruit participants to attend, including both service providers and WWLE.

"The webinar strengthened community capacity building by highlighting both the social and clinical sides of HIV care and emphasizing culturally inclusive, holistic approaches. The practical examples were especially useful for applying ideas locally."

"Information shared in the webinar regarding HIV and chest/breast feeding sparked discussions about the gaps in service to support parents living with HIV in Niagara. Management and WHAI worker have been reaching out to community partners to explore opportunities to build capacity to provide adequate support around HIV and infant feeding."

"The explicit focus on supporting linkage to care for gender diverse people gained recognition and appreciation when I shared it with community partners. I really enjoyed the discussion and sharing during the session."

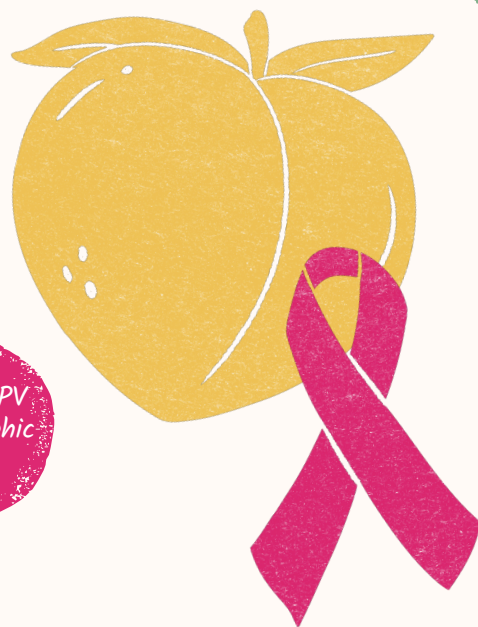
HIV, HPV and Anal Cancer Factsheet

75% of WHAI coordinators used this newly developed factsheet in their community capacity building work.

Women living with HIV are at significantly higher risk of developing anal cancer due to Human Papillomavirus (HPV), yet this connection is rarely discussed in care settings. WHAI developed the HIV, HPV and Anal Cancer Factsheet to fill this gap, giving coordinators and service providers accessible, plain-language information about the link between HIV, HPV, and anal cancer screening for women.

"I shared the resources with some primary care physicians and local cancer screening services. The resource was also circulated among other service providers who support women living with HIV such as newcomer service agencies and VAW shelters."

"I've used the factsheet to facilitate quick, low-barrier education and normalize discussions about HPV and anal cancer during drop-ins. It was an effective graphic aid for directing conversations without overburdening participants."



HIV Prevention Webinar Recording

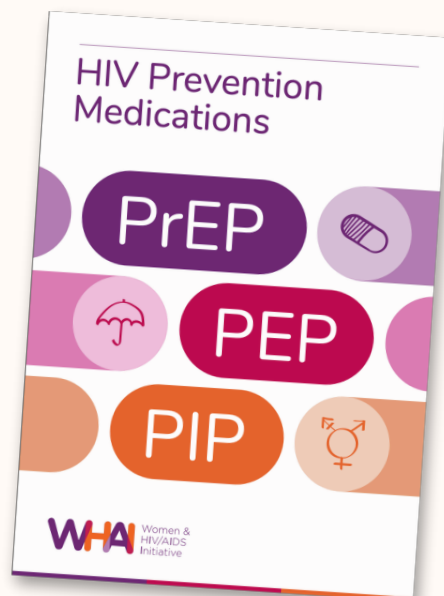
"I used the webinar recording to educate and train other service providers on HIV prevention options, including PrEP, PEP and PIP."

44% of WHAI coordinators used the H1 HIV Prevention Webinar recording in their community capacity building work in H2, sharing it with service providers and integrating insights into workshops and outreach.

In H1, WHAI hosted an HIV Prevention Webinar focused on HIV medication options, including PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis), and PIP (PEP in Pocket). The webinar was recorded and used further in H2 to strengthen the capacity of WHAI coordinators and service providers to have informed, accessible conversations with women and gender-diverse people about the full range of HIV prevention medications available to them, directly supporting the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030's Priority 1 to reduce new HIV infections by increasing awareness of and access to effective prevention tools.

HIV Prevention Medications Booklet: PrEP, PEP & PIP

69% of WHAI coordinators used the new HIV Prevention Medications Booklet in their work. The booklet and accompanying postcard were distributed at community events, health fairs, International Women's Day celebrations, and tabling events across the province.



"I love this resource! I have found that by having the three prevention methods in one handout, it makes those who are interested in prevention more apt to reading about a way they may not have considered originally."

"The booklet is very convenient because it brings information on PrEP, PEP, and PIP together in one place compared to the previous individual pamphlets. The side-by-side comparisons are clear and easy for community members to understand, which makes it an effective tool during outreach and education."



HIV and STBBI Testing Awareness

Coordinators actively raised awareness about HIV and STBBI testing through the GetaKit 5-Step Guide, testing stickers and postcards, and social media campaigns. The Love Positive Women, Black History Month and Strawberry Ceremony campaigns included key messages about HIV and STBBI testing and reached communities province-wide, with all coordinators sharing these posts which encouraged regular HIV testing body positivity.



"When I am tabling, facilitating or speaking, I always try to pull in data or information gathered from our resources. When I was the keynote speaker for IWD, I shared some highlights around HIV and stats regarding Women in general — and afterwards, a community provider shared how he was so taken by the numbers and would love for me to come speak at his organization."*

Wholistic Care

Work under Wholistic Care recognizes the layered and intersecting determinants that impact HIV-related health and wellness. This directly supports the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030's Health Equity strategy, which calls on the HIV sector to address stigma and discrimination and improve access to meaningful, culturally responsive services. Decolonial practices are emphasized along with non-Western healing models to support the well-being of WHAI's priority populations. WHAI coordinators work with each other, WHAI partners and communities on caring strategies to address stigma, discrimination, and social determinants of health.

All 16 coordinators (100%) engaged in Wholistic Care work this reporting period. Activities ranged from arts-based and creative programming to Black History Month celebrations, faith forums, and supportive drop-in spaces for women living with HIV.



A Seat at the Picnic Resource

88% of WHAI coordinators found the A Seat at the Picnic training session helpful and are actively integrating the resource into their community practice.

"A Seat at the Picnic" is a facilitation resource that uses the metaphor of a picnic to help organizations reflect on who gets a seat at the table and who is left out. It guides service providers and community partners through structured conversations about the structural and social determinants of health, such as housing, income, racism, and gender-based violence, that shape whether women and gender-diverse people can access HIV prevention and care. This directly supports the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030's Health Equity strategy, which calls on the HIV sector to address systemic barriers and create stigma-free, culturally responsive services, as well as its Population-Specific Approaches strategy, which recognizes that services must be adapted to the intersecting needs of each population.

By bringing this resource into partnership meetings and capacity building events, WHAI coordinators are translating the goals of the provincial HIV Action Plan into practical, community-level action.



"This resource has been very valuable in facilitating meaningful conversations with community partners and service providers about systemic barriers, stigma, and gaps in care. It has supported a more reflective and structured approach to identifying how organizations can improve access and create more inclusive spaces."

"The Seat at the Picnic resource has been well received and generated strong interest among service providers. It was introduced during International Women's Day at St. Joe's and later shared at additional community events."

"It's a very helpful tool in partnership building meetings and community awareness events to collectively reflect on structural barriers and opportunities for change. I recently adapted this tool in a community partnership meeting about building capacity on supporting newcomer communities."

Soft Skills Workshop

87% of WHAI coordinators found these workshops helpful.

In H2, WHAI hosted two Soft Skills Workshops facilitated by BK Chan, a trainer with expertise in trauma-informed practice and supportive communication. These workshops came directly out of feedback from WHAI Coordinators, who shared that community members were disclosing sensitive and distressing experiences during capacity building work including experiences of violence, mental health challenges, and substance use.

Coordinators requested practical tools to respond thoughtfully and compassionately to these disclosures while also protecting their own mental health and well-being. The workshops equipped coordinators with skills in active listening, boundary-setting, and safe referral practices, supporting WHAI's commitment to wholistic, wraparound care and the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030's call for culturally responsive, person-centred services.

"Amazing workshops. Loved them. I have used them to support working with service providers around disclosure and safety. The information was really well received."

"The soft skills workshops were very helpful and relevant to my work. They provided practical tools and approaches for responding to difficult disclosures in a way that is empathetic, trauma-informed, and grounded in active listening."

"Much of the work that I do surrounds the ideas of wholistic care, so I make sure to implement strategies like those that BK Chan was sharing to help in my connections with community."

"The learnings from these trainings have strengthened my community capacity building work by deepening my understanding of how to provide wrap-around, culturally inclusive, anti-racist, and holistic support to WOLE."

Local Wholistic Care Highlight

In addition to coordinated efforts developed with the network, coordinators also engaged in locally driven wholistic care strategies that they brought to life in diverse ways across their communities. These included:



Facilitating art sessions at shelters to cultivate low-barrier, trauma-informed spaces of support for creative expression and open conversation.



Offering a 'Love Positive Women Self-Care Afternoon' with nail care, hair brushing, reiki and other wellness services for women living with HIV.



Supporting programs aimed at young Black women integrating economic empowerment, mental health, and harm reduction education.



Co-hosting Black History Month celebration events with housing shelters, centering ACB community members.



Collaborating with the Métis Nation of Ontario to support access to HIV prevention and care.

Women-Centred Harm Reduction

Women-Centred Harm Reduction work for coordinators translates into capacity building and training for service providers, as well as advocating for gender inclusive harm reduction practices and spaces for women and gender-diverse people. This work directly supports the Ontario HIV Action Plan to 2030's Priority 1 to reduce new HIV infections specifically through expanding access to harm reduction resources such as naloxone, safer use supplies, and consumption treatment services, particularly for women and gender-diverse people who use drugs.

100%	of coordinators engaged in harm reduction work this period	94%	of coordinators worked on core principles of harm reduction
88%	of coordinators engaged with Overdose Awareness Day activities	88%	of coordinators used the Women-Centred Harm Reduction Toolkit
88%	of coordinators used the Opioid, Pregnancy and Overdose Factsheet in their local work	75%	of coordinators used the Gendered Analysis of Supervised Consumption Site Closures Factsheet
69%	of coordinators drew on local data to support their harm reduction capacity building	62%	of coordinators used the Bill 6 & 10 Factsheet

Coordinators did this work with a wide range of partners, including harm reduction program staff (75%), shelter workers (69%), peer workers and people with living experience (62%), and health care workers (31%).

Coordinators applied harm reduction through a wide range of approaches including integrating core harm reduction principles into outreach and HIV education, working with sex worker communities, distributing naloxone kits and safer sex supplies, and supporting communities around the closure of supervised consumption sites.

One coordinator in Guelph-Wellington described the local harm reduction landscape as deeply challenging, with almost all local funding and access to harm reduction supplies being cut by decision makers and noted the urgent importance of continuing to build community capacity in this context.

The Women and Harm Reduction Toolkit continued to be referenced by coordinators in their work with service providers, shelters, settlement agencies, and sex worker communities. Coordinators also made presentations on WHA's harm reduction resources at community and faith-based gatherings.

"Regular programming at the jail with the women's ranges — I do education, awareness raising and provide resources on HIV, harm reduction, and sexual health."

"Working with CTS staff, Queenston Neighbours Community Group and local Free Store to host a holiday Coffee Outside gathering at the CTS to create a welcoming space for people who use drugs."

"I've supported women-centred harm reduction locally through ongoing drop-in programming that addresses social determinants of health and creates space for peer support among women living with HIV and/or experiencing housing instability."

"I applied strategies through harm reduction initiatives such as distributing naloxone and sexual health supplies, ensuring services are responsive and accessible. The toolkit continues to be a strong reference point as I adapt programming to meet diverse community needs."

Interconnected Work in other Priority Areas for Collaboration



While the areas of focus this period were on HIV Education, Prevention, Care & Support; Wholistic Care; and Women-Centred Harm Reduction, we recognize that in order to meet WHA's goals and integrate the key priorities and strategies outlined in the HIV Action Plan, our work must be intersectional. This means that coordinators also engaged in Community Connection, Economic Autonomy and Safety. This year, Community Connection was a particularly strong area of intersectional work, with coordinators building peer-led spaces and community networks that reduce isolation and support women living with HIV.

Community Connection

Coordinators built community connection through peer-led gatherings, women's support groups, social events, outreach, and partnerships. Examples include:

- Collaborating on Trans Day of Visibility gatherings and Sip & Social Tea Parties to create inclusive, welcoming spaces.
- Engaging with Women's Parent Advisory Council networks and WhatsApp groups to maintain ongoing community links.
- Co-hosting Monthly Women's Groups with ACCHO workers for women and gender-diverse people living with HIV.
- Collaborating with Niagara Transgender Action Coalition to build spaces for Trans and gender variant people.

"I supported community connection through ongoing engagement with WWLE in both group programming and informal interactions. I facilitated activities such as Sex Toy Bingo and therapeutic art sessions at the shelter, creating safe, welcoming spaces for open conversation and peer connection."

"I collaborated with local service providers to offer more holistic support to women with lived experience. I also helped form a support group for WWLE, creating a safe space where people can connect, unwind, and express themselves. This has strengthened relationships and reduced isolation."

Safety & Economic Autonomy

Work on safety and economic autonomy took shape through collaborative work with partners working in gender-based sexual violence, shelters, and through outreach and care linkages that connect women to housing services, food security and mutual aid. This work furthers the cultivation of safer environments to support women's HIV-related needs.

Building Community through Gatherings and Collaboration

A critical component of WHAI work is to meaningfully engage with service providers, community partners, women from WHAI's priority populations, Women with Living/Lived Experience (WWLE), peers, PPN workers, and local or regional networks. Also named as the work of mutually reinforcing activities, building relationships and strengthening linkages for learning and care is core to WHAI's goals.

In this reporting period, coordinators engaged a total of 2075 people. 627 were service partners and providers, and 1448 included women and gender-diverse folks from WHAI's priority populations. This took place through 98 gatherings ranging from conferences and forums, service provider training and working groups, cultural and newcomers' events, women's network events, pride events, faith-based groups, health fairs, shelter spaces, and social outreach and well-being events.

Coordinators collaborated extensively across the network and community. Key collaborations included:



Working with YMCA and SACHA on a GBV and HIV webinar.



Partnering with ACCHO, GMSH, local networks, and other WHAI Coordinators on capacity building events.



Supporting service providers from settlement and integration centres for newcomers.

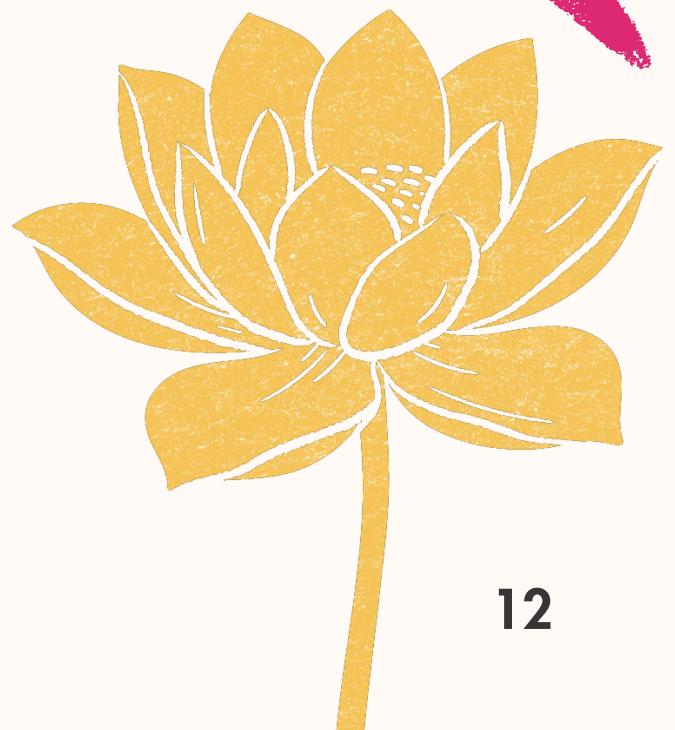


Organizing presentations and events for LPW, Black History Month, and International Women's Day with ASO colleagues, Oahas, LUSO Community Services, Anova, and My Sisters' Place.



Facilitating panel discussions on HIV care and the Women-Centred Pocketbook at BIPOC women's symposiums.

"Community engagement has been strong this period. Peer-led gatherings and outreach have built trust and visibility, and partnerships with local organizations are deepening. Women are showing up, sharing, and shaping the work in powerful ways."



Resources

Resources relevant to HIV related education, risk and care are vital to furthering WHAI's goals. Coordinators actively support the development of WHAI resources, ensuring that these are informed by the voices of women in their communities, and are responsible for sharing these resources to facilitate learning with service partners.

In this period, coordinators distributed over 3,000 print resources and shared additional links online in their communities to initiate and deepen community capacity building around HIV awareness, prevention, care and support. Below is a list of the most popular resources:

PrEP, PEP & PIP Pamphlets

1,591 COPIES COMBINED

Legacy individual pamphlets, being phased out. Still in active circulation as Coordinators use existing stock.

HIV Prevention Medications Booklet: PrEP, PEP & PIP

405 COPIES DISTRIBUTED

New consolidated resource. An additional 458 copies requested to meet growing local demand.

5 Steps for Testing with GetaKit Guide

162 COPIES DISTRIBUTED

Supporting HIV self-testing awareness in line with the HIV Action Plan to 2030's Priority 2 to reach the 11% of people with HIV who are undiagnosed.

Love Positive Women Implementation Guide

109 COPIES DISTRIBUTED

Used to build community capacity around the Love Positive Women campaign.

Women and HIV in Ontario: An Introductory Toolkit

105 COPIES DISTRIBUTED

Equipping service providers and community members with foundational knowledge about HIV and the needs of women living with HIV.

Additional Items

A range of smaller items used to facilitate conversations about HIV prevention and linkages to care including bookmarks, postcards and stickers.

The Seat at the Picnic poster and TRC MMIWG Landscape of Community Change posters were also distributed, continuing to build local capacity around structural determinants of health and decolonial practice.

Social Media

100% of WHAI coordinators rated social media content as useful or very useful for their local community capacity building work.

The PWHAI team co-develops relevant content for coordinators to use in strengthening their capacity building work. This period, social media campaigns focused on sexual and reproductive health, HIV and sex positivity, and key awareness days meaningful to WHAI's priority populations including campaigns tied to harm reduction, Indigenous justice, and gender-diverse communities, all reflecting the HIV Action Plan's Health Equity strategy.

WHAI social media content was rated useful or very useful by 100% of coordinators for their local community capacity building work. The most widely shared posts this reporting period included (by % of Coordinators):

- 100%** Love Positive Women, Black History Month & Strawberry Ceremony
- 94%** International Women's Day
- 88%** 16 Days of Activism
- 75%** Transgender Day of Remembrance
- 69%** National Day of Action from MMIWG2S
- 63%** Trans Awareness Week
- 63%** Black Mental Health Week
- 63%** National Women & Girls' HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- 50%** International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers

Equity, ABR, Gender Diversity and Decolonial Practice

WHA! dedicates continued work and resources towards critically examining and strengthening our work to rupture colonial systems of white supremacy, noting these as foundational to HIV gender inequities that exist today. This is a critical part of our work on the provincial HIV Action Plan to 2030's strategy around health equity.

This includes work that challenges anti-Indigeneity, anti-Black racism, and gender-based discrimination. WHA! coordinators are continuously engaged in this work and in collectively learning how to rupture inequities.

San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training

All WHA! coordinators complete San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) Training courses which consist of two (2) parts or levels. In this period, coordinators continued completing levels of the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training and shared widely positive feedback. This work is also moved forward through the use of WHA!'s facilitation tool, "Landscape of Community Change," which supports the facilitation of discussions for individual and organizational anti-Indigenous racism work.

"The TRC resource encouraged me to rethink my outreach work with Indigenous community. Instead of proposing education circles, I am working with local knowledge keepers and elders in land-based activities to improve Indigenous people's social determinants of health."

"Completing the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety training was very helpful in deepening my understanding of the ongoing impacts of colonization, systemic racism, and intergenerational trauma on Indigenous communities."



Anti-Black Racism (ABR) Facilitated Capacity Building

94% of coordinators found the ABR gatherings helpful or very helpful this reporting period.

WHA! held 7 ABR sessions held in H2, which were acknowledged by Coordinators for their open, structured, and reflective format. Coordinators participated in both "together" group sessions and caucused breakout discussions, with mixed feedback about the balance of formats.

Coordinators noted a distinction between ABR work as a space for Black coordinators and the broader work of equity, raising important questions about how discussions of anti-Black racism can be held alongside, without being merged with, other equity conversations such as gender diversity. WHA! is taking this feedback seriously as it considers how to structure future ABR gatherings in a way that protects the integrity of anti-Black racism work while continuing to honour its broader commitment to equity across all priority populations.

"The gatherings provided practical ways to manage micro-aggression at the workplace because of racism, which was very helpful."

"How frequent the ABR gatherings were was tremendously helpful in building on my understanding and being able to apply learnings in real time."

"There were sessions where we were grouped according to race and it allowed honest conversations to happen."

"I really liked the facilitators this period. The gathering was highly effective due to its engaging and well-structured format, which fostered thoughtful, insightful discussions."

Gender Diversity and Language

Following broad consultation with coordinators, lived experience advisors, partner agencies, and key stakeholders, WHA! has updated its language from "cis and Trans women, 2-Spirit and non-binary people" to "women and gender-diverse people." This change reflects our commitment to language that is accessible, inclusive, and consistent.

More detailed population descriptions will be developed for contexts where greater specificity is needed. Coordinators noted that the current language works well with the Trans community and with racially diverse newcomer communities and emphasized the importance of continuing to review language across diverse cultural contexts.

"The gender language is important to be thoughtful about because in different cultures, and with different people's histories and experiences, it is important to both prioritize women and also gender diversity. The language works well in our community and with our activities."

Communication and Support

The PWHAI team offers backbone support for coordinators within the network, ensuring that they are well-informed, resourced, and connected to opportunities for learning and engagement that continue to strengthen WHAI Coordinator work.

A core part of how WHAI works is the investment in continuous learning for coordinators because they can only educate communities well when they are themselves well-supported and well-informed. Also, capacity building is collectively planned based on needs identified by coordinators. Beyond monthly meetings, facilitated gatherings, Lunch and Learns, and workshops, PWHAI sends weekly Friday emails that cover a broad and intentional range of topics. These have included HIV science, epidemiology and treatment updates, prevention medications, sexual health and STBBIs, disability justice and accessible practice, gender inclusivity and trans-affirming care, anti-Black racism and decolonial frameworks, trauma-informed and wholistic models of care, harm reduction policy and emerging substance trends such as medetomidine, and community development tools and resources. This breadth is deliberate as WHAI coordinators work at the intersection of HIV, gender, race, poverty, housing, and systemic violence, and their capacity to build knowledge in their communities depends on staying current across all of these areas.

The weekly emails, alongside the Google Hub, San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety training, and ABR facilitated gatherings, ensure that learning is not a one-time event but an ongoing, embedded part of the work.

The majority of WHAI coordinators found the WHAI Google Hub, weekly emails and network collaborations helpful in supporting their capacity building work. Meetings were a particular strength: all coordinators agreed that they helped them learn about WHAI's priority areas and connect with one another, and nearly all found meetings to be welcoming, warm, and encouraging of their participation.

"PWHAI's communication with the network has been clear, consistent, and supportive. The weekly emails and Google Hub make it easy to stay informed and access resources. Meeting structures are thoughtful, with a good balance of updates, discussion, and peer sharing."

Coordinators also suggested themes for future sessions including: supporting women with experience of incarceration, how to translate ABR reflection into action, and new technologies including critique and limitations around AI.

"Having time for reflection and skill-building was especially valuable. Moving forward, more interactive formats and region-specific breakout discussions could deepen engagement and support tailored strategies."

Emerging Trends

Across Ontario, WHAI coordinators are reporting a shared set of pressures that are shaping their communities in distinct ways.

CENTRAL / GTA

In Central/GTA, coordinators are seeing the direct impact of IRCC funding cuts on newcomers' access to health and social services, alongside growing presentations of GBV and IPV alongside other service needs and widening mental health support gaps.

SOUTH-WEST & CENTRAL SOUTH

In the South-West and Central South, the closure of consumption and treatment sites is affecting women who use drugs, immigration and deportation barriers continue to limit access to care, and demand for low-barrier, street-level outreach is increasing.

"There has been an increased need for mental health support, particularly among women and gender diverse people experiencing multiple intersecting challenges such as housing instability, substance use, and systemic barriers. The closure or reduction of some harm reduction services has also created gaps that coordinators are working hard to fill."

EAST

In the East, financial strain and housing instability are driving safety concerns, IPV remains deeply intertwined with HIV risk for women, and coordinators are witnessing verbal racist harassment directed at Black women in community programming spaces.

NORTH & NORTHEASTERN

In the North and Northeastern region, coordinators are navigating a significant medetomidine withdrawal education gap among service providers, an increasingly hostile policy environment for harm reduction work, and persistent gaps in linkage to care for people leaving incarceration.

"A major emerging trend is the impact of funding cuts by the IRCC. Newcomers are struggling to access the services they need as eligibility has changed for a number of programs including English classes and even health. In addition to a challenging economy, service providers are expressing concern about their clients."

Coordinators across regions have identified clear areas where WHAI support would strengthen their local work.

CENTRAL / GTA

Those in Central/GTA are calling for more support around prison and correctional outreach education, arts-based community methods, and better data dissemination across ASOs.

SOUTH-WEST & CENTRAL SOUTH

South-West and Central South coordinators are asking for a harm reduction refresher that includes gender-affirming approaches, deeper engagement with trans inclusion beyond pronouns, and disability justice embedded across WHAI's priority areas.

EAST

In the East, coordinators want resources that are practical for rural and smaller-city contexts, programming that addresses economic autonomy and safety, and partnerships with trans clinics to strengthen harm reduction delivery.

NORTH & NORTHEASTERN

Coordinators in the North and Northeastern region are asking for a more intentional and explicit focus on anti-Indigenous racism across WHAI's work, gender-affirming harm reduction workshops, and harm reduction education specifically designed for legal settings.

Growing the Work



In the second half of 2025-26, WHAI Coordinators have actively worked towards growing and sustaining meaningful work in HIV Education, Prevention, Care and Support, Wholistic Care, and Women-Centred Harm Reduction. Their work has been incredibly vast and intersectional, from hosting and recruiting for the HIV Linkages to Care webinar, distributing the new HIV Prevention Medications Booklet province-wide, facilitating Seat at the Picnic workshops, to creating space for peer support and community connection during a period of significant funding pressure.

They have co-developed resources and programming to address structural and social determinants of health and worked together to adapt existing resources for diverse contexts and populations. While advocating against the systemic curtailing of funds, resources and spaces for marginalized women and gender-diverse communities, they have also responded to these cuts by creating spaces for peer support and connection.

In the next reporting period, Coordinators will continue core work in HIV Education, Prevention, Care and Support, furthering the HIV Action Plan's three priorities of reducing new infections, reaching the undiagnosed, and supporting those not yet in care. Work will focus on other priority areas of collaboration including Women-Centred Harm Reduction, and Community Connection. WHAI will also work with partners such as the Ontario AIDS Network to organize knowledge translation sessions on harm reduction, effective HIV care linkages, and use of local data, all in support of the HIV Action Plan's goals to 2030.

Some key areas in which Coordinators are strategizing include:

- Continuing to integrate the HIV Prevention Medications Booklet (PrEP, PEP & PIP) and GetaKit guide into community outreach, workshops, and one-on-one engagements to build local capacities.
- Creating opportunities for knowledge sharing around social and structural determinants of health with service partners using the Seat at the Picnic resource.
- Working with PWHAI and the network on upcoming campaigns and gatherings, including the Love Positive Women, Black History Month and Strawberry Ceremony campaign.
- Exploring local resource adaptations for northern and rural communities to address gaps in access to HIV prevention medications.
- Continuing to build peer-led spaces for WWLE so they can support and learn from each other.

Through significant engagement with local and regional partners, service providers, peers, and WWLE, Coordinators have made strong impacts in their communities towards furthering WHAI's goals of reducing HIV risk, building capacities, and cultivating safer environments. Their sustained efforts show valuable promise for improved health outcomes for women and gender-diverse folks in WHAI's priority populations.

Through generative work under WHAI's framework of community development and collective impact, Coordinators alongside the PWHAI team, are driving the network towards invaluable community care and growth.

We thank all the people whose voices and collective work meaningfully moves this work forward.