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ABOUT

The Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative (WHA) is a community-based response to HIV and AIDS among cis and Trans Women, 2-Spirit and Non-Binary people in Ontario. Through a network of 17 Coordinators located in 16 AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) throughout Ontario, WHAI aims to:



Reduce HIV risk for **women** disproportionately affected by HIV



Enhance local community capacity to address HIV



Build safer environments to support **women's** HIV-related needs

Our work is informed by the experiences of those who face structural discrimination and exclusion, HIV risk, and whose health outcomes are impacted by living with HIV. We are also committed to amplifying the voices of the communities we work with. Particularly, cis and Trans **women**, 2-Spirit and Non-Binary people who are living with HIV, African, Caribbean and Black (ACB), Indigenous, or 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 span from young adults to seniors.

The term '**women**' is written in colour on this poster to prioritize and centre communities of **women** who face disproportionate structural risk factors related to HIV, and to serve as a reminder that gender is not binary. Thoughtfulness towards inclusivity for Trans, 2-Spirit, and Non-Binary people in WHAI work is of critical importance. Identities are capitalized throughout as well, with the exception of "cis." This is to remind us of the privilege and space afforded cis people, and to support the amplification of identities outside gender-binary constructions.

How we work:

We draw on a community development approach which means that:

- The work is defined by the community
- The work is collaborative between community organizations, groups, workers and those with lived and living experience
- The work is ongoing
- The goal is to collaboratively build community capacity to address shared health concerns

CONSULTATION PROCESS

In 2021 the Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative (WHA) began the process of province-wide consultations with cis and Trans women, 2-Spirit and Non-Binary people to focus its work to reduce HIV transmission; enhance community capacity to address HIV; and create environments that support **women** in their HIV-related experiences. The process was planned in collaboration with the WHAI Network and community partners within a **de-colonial, anti-racist, participatory and trauma-informed lens**.

Four (4) knowledge gathering tools were developed:

1. Story telling Tool
2. One-on-one Discussion Guide
3. Focus Group and/or Talking Circle Discussion
4. Brief Interaction Tool



All tools could be adapted based on COVID-19 related public health restrictions, facilitation styles and engagement styles. The stories gathered were carefully reviewed to inform a second phase of consultations with community organizations and networks. An additional discussion guide was developed to support Coordinators to facilitate these consultations.

PARTICIPANTS

501 people from WHAI's priority populations were engaged with particularly strong representation from **women** who use drugs / substances, those who have experienced violence, **women** living with HIV, ACB **women**, and Indigenous **women**



135 consultations were also held with **317** community workers from **161** organizations and networks across Ontario

"Women don't know what help is available and bridges are needed to connect more women to resources."

- Community Voice

"I think education should never stop. I think it would be helpful to use peers from the community as facilitators. The women can relate to them a lot more than they relate to use. I think we should go into the communities and not wait for them to meet us at the office."

- Community Voice

FINDINGS

The findings were synthesized into **six (6) key "areas for collaboration"** and seven (7) underlying intersectional factors impacting the areas for collaboration.



HIV Education, Prevention, Care and Support intersects directly with the other 5 themes and underlying experiences. We saw that:

- ➔ **365** participants were asked "Do you know what PrEP or pre-exposure prophylaxis is?" **52%** answered "No."
- ➔ **188** participants were asked about their familiarity with the concept of **U=U or Undetectable=Untransmittable**. **54%** answered "No, they were not familiar with U=U."
- ➔ **370** participants were asked about their awareness of **HIV self-testing**. **54%** answered that **they were not aware**.
- ➔ **165** participants were asked about their top preferences for HIV testing options, and:

- 47%** preferred **home self testing kits**
- 46%** preferred **anonymous testing** (at a community organization or sexual health clinic)
- 31%** preferred **Point of Care / Rapid Testing** (at a community organization or sexual health clinic)
- 21%** preferred **nominal / non-anonymous testing** (with a family doctor, at a health clinic or public health unit)

"U=U completely changed how I think about HIV and wellness. Wish it was more widely taught in high schools and universities, (they) still have incorrect opinions about HIV. Campaigns like U=U are very important in educating people."

- Community Voice

"Wellness requires connection to others, like really connecting with people and being part of a community."

- Community Voice

NEXT STEPS

To increase awareness amongst our priority populations, WHAI is committed to community capacity building, education, and strengthening access to:

- **PrEP and other HIV prevention tools such as PEP** (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) and **PIP** (Post Exposure Prophylaxis-in-your-Pocket) or an advanced prescription for PEP),
- **U=U** and what it means in the context of WHAI's priority populations
- **Awareness raising and accessible HIV testing**, focussing on **self-testing, anonymous testing, and point of care / rapid testing primarily**.

To date, we have created the following resources for WHAI's priority populations to support this work:



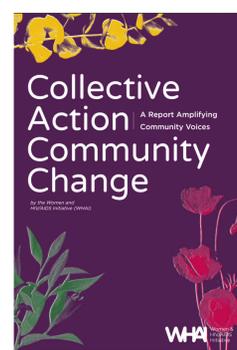
Living in the Asterisk*: What does U=U mean for Women*?
A resource supporting community dialogue, considerations, and learning about U=U



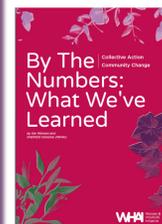
HIV Testing Bookmarks
A tool to enhance community dialogue and access to information about the new HIV testing guidelines in Ontario



Prep & PEP Pamphlets
An educational tool for sharing information about HIV prevention and considerations for both service providers and communities across Ontario



Collective Action Community Change
A report detailing WHAI's consultation process, learning, and priority areas for collaborative towards future work



By the Numbers
Quantitative results and learnings from the consultation process



A Prescription for Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PIP)
A tool to build awareness about prescriptions for PEP provided before an urgent need, to reduce the burden of access during a crisis situation and to support people's autonomy to HIV prevention

Scan here for more about WHAI:

