



Background

- Every year in Edmonton, approximately 100 women are pregnant while experiencing homelessness, and are in desperate need of housing, health and social supports to address a wide range of complex needs, including mental health and addictions issues, coping with the impacts of trauma, and dealing with poverty.
- These vulnerable women often do not access health care and other supports consistently due to their mental health and addictions, precarious housing situation, lack of knowledge about services and/or fears that their babies may be apprehended by Child and Family Services.
- Women may come to hospital just before giving birth without adequate prenatal care, which often results in undernourished mothers and underweight and unhealthy babies who need neonatal intensive care.
- Early childhood experiences have a significant impact on physical and mental health later in life.

Pregnancy Pathways Program

- A unique partnership of some 25 stakeholders from acute health care, addictions, mental health, government and non-profit sectors, collaborating to address the unmet housing and support service needs of pregnant women experiencing homelessness, many of whom are also struggling with addictions or mental health issues.
- Boyle McCauley Health Centre (BMHC) is the Lead Agency managing and staffing Pregnancy Pathways.
- The program operates in a dedicated apartment building with 24-7, on-site supports; each Participant rents an apartment in the building from our landlord, Capital Region Housing, with an affordable rent and Homeward Trust Edmonton provides financial support to assist with housing start-up needs.
- Our Team is led by our Wellness Coordinator, who works with Participants to identify achievable goals; the Wellness Coordinator and our Team of Client Support Workers link women to the health care, treatment and other supports they need, and help them build life and parenting skills.
- BMHC has holistic health and wellness services, including pre-natal care, and works closely with Alberta Health Services, one of our partners, to supplement services and coordinate access to needed physical, mental health and addiction support services.

- All supports will be provided from a harm reduction, strengths-based and trauma informed perspective.
- For many women, reconnecting with their culture is important to building wellness. A majority of our Participants are Indigenous, and we work to ensure they have access to cultural ceremonies and teachings from Elders and traditional knowledge keepers. Similarly, we work with women from other cultures to help them explore and practice their cultural traditions in accordance with their wishes.
- After 6-18 months, each woman will transition away from Pregnancy Pathways, with a plan in place for affordable housing and access to the supports she needs to continue to work toward her goals.

Participants

- All women joining the Pregnancy Pathways program are:
 - currently homeless and pregnant;
 - able to live independently with the supports that are available; and
 - interested in the program, and willing to engage with the Team.
- We will be mindful of whether the housing location and harm reduction environment is appropriate for a particular woman, and any risks of violence must be able to be mitigated.
- There are more pregnant women experiencing homelessness than Pregnancy Pathways is able to assist, so the following are considered when deciding on priority for Intake: the women's age, substance use history, work in the sex trade, medical complications during pregnancy or otherwise, access to prenatal care and other areas a woman may identify needing support.
- Over a three year project phase, we expect to work with 30-36 women. Our objective is to help women and their babies be healthy, with a better chance for everyone to meet their potential. Through the program, mothers will also be better able to make a decision about raising their baby, finding other ways to become involved in their child's life or choosing adoption or foster care for their newborn. We will also empower women to make decisions about their future fertility.

Evaluation

- Stakeholder feedback will be sought throughout the project phase, and robust evaluation will be undertaken to help refine the program design for Pregnancy Pathways, and to support sustainable long-term funding.

Pregnancy Pathways Steering Committee:

*Alberta Health Services, Bent Arrow
Traditional Healing Society, Boyle
McCauley Health Centre, Catholic Social
Services, City of Edmonton, E4C, Homeward
Trust, Metis Child and Family Services,
Royal Alexandra Hospital, Streetworks,
University of Alberta, YMCA of Northern
Alberta, and YWCA of Edmonton*

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