



SEPTEMBER 2023-MAY 2024

Year-End Report: Mental Health & Addictions Advisory Council



Winnipeg Regional Health Authority | Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg

Mental Health & Addictions
Recovery Services

History

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) Mental Health and Addictions Recovery Services Advisory Council is comprised of individuals, family members, natural supports and community members with a variety of lived experience and expertise facing mental health and/or addiction issues. Together, they provide an important mechanism for input into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of WRHA Mental Health and Addictions Recovery Services.

The Council has been an active and valued component of the Health Region since 2005 with significant input into projects including the creation of the Crisis Response Centre, Alternative Response to Citizens in Crisis (ARCC), Regional Involving Families/ Family Engagement Practice Guideline, Peer Support within the Crisis Response Center, mental health transformation, strategic planning, active engagement in focus groups, and numerous quality improvement initiatives.

Membership & Meetings

During the 2023-24 year, the Council worked with WRHA Volunteer Services to successfully recruit and orient 2 new members in September 2023 and another 3 new members in February 2024. As of May 2024, 12 active individuals with personal experience living with a mental health and/or addictions issues and/or family members (natural supports), assembled the Council. The 2023-24 Council agreed to return to in-person meetings and 5 meetings were held between September 2023 to May 2024.



“My lived experiences with and for my daughter – no one should go through. By being a board member for MHAAC my goal is to assist with positive change that can impact all of the current and future people who are seeking WHRA services.”

Emerging Themes



Engagement & Representation

Refamiliarizing ourselves and our role within the Council brought the opportunity for clarification of Shared Health and WRHA as Service Delivery Organizations and the integration of Addiction Services within WRHA Mental Health Services. The new landscape of aligned Mental Health and Addictions Services created the opportunity for the recruitment of new membership and we are grateful for the partnership with WRHA Volunteer Services to ensure diverse representation of the Council.

WRHA Quality & Patient Safety, Patient & Family Engagement Consultant, Trish Roche presented their work around meaningful family engagement and ensuring that family/natural support experience low-barrier engagement. A knowledge exchange between Trish and the Council around the Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower model of engagement and the work that was being done around Dignity in Care was shared.

Shared Health, Mental Health & Addictions Regional Educator, Karen Burgess engaged the Council to present and gain feedback on the new education framework in development. She shared the purpose of the framework and highlighted how the foundation of Recovery was embedded throughout the framework. The Council members provided input and further engaged in meaningful conversation around how they would see this framework impact direct care through the education of staff.



“As a person living with Mental illness I feel so grateful to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority for considering the voice of the community in the work they do. The system is large and complex and it can often be easy to forget that every case involves a human being with thoughts, feelings and unique challenges. Having a community based advisory council signifies to me that the WRHA wants to keep patient-centered care at the front of the work they do”.



“A reliable institution knows that it is accountable to its users. Dialogue is a great foundation. Since I expect so much from the WRHA, I am happy to contribute.”



Website & Digital Service Navigation

Service navigation with low-barrier and clear access points into services was an important topic the Council was interested in exploring. This opened the opportunity to review, compare, and critically analyze different websites (Canadian Mental Health Association, The Link, East Coast Health, WRHA) and explore ideas for future website development for WRHA Mental Health & Addictions Recovery Services. The Council members discussed how to improve information and communication through the sites, accessibility of information, mobile and desktop ideas, language, placement of information on the site pages, the use of colour and symbols, and the ability to “search” services. Not only did the information gained from this robust conversation actively support the edits to the current WRHA Mental Health & Addictions Recovery Services pages, it is the future hope that the Council will have ongoing meaningful input and guidance into the WRHA website as a whole.



Resource Development

The ‘Stay Safe’ brochure, a patient engagement tool which has been used in the Community Mental Health Program was originally driven and created with the Council. To reflect system changes that included an addictions services lens and to expand the scope to include representation from our partners in Primary Care, Public Health and Home Care, this valuable resource required an update. The Council members have and continue to be involved in providing feedback around inclusive language, meaningful information across the lifespan and a comprehensive approach to prompting health and wellbeing beyond ‘staying safe’. A collaboration between WRHA Mental Health Promotion and WRHA Communications is operationalizing the voice of Council members in the creation of a finished patient engagement tool that can be used by all.

“As a person with lived experience and an avid volunteer, I feel I can contribute knowledge and another point of view to the committee. Through the committee, I feel my opinions matter and can contribute to change and improvements for all people needing help with their mental health.”



Looking Ahead

The Mental Health & Addictions Advisory Council continues to look for meaningful ways to share their valued input into the molding of the health care system that they, their family, and community member's access. The Council is dedicated to ensuring that the voices at the table are heard, validated and transposed into meaningful change. The Council is a wealth of knowledge and will continue to be a highly valued perspective in providing guidance to Leadership on specific initiatives, projects, and priority areas.

Future Considerations for Council Engagement

- Patient tracker- to support finding efficiencies in pathways to services
- Access points/navigation support online
- Resource development
- Engagement with WRHA Quality & Patient Safety - Dignity in Care
- Creating a youth-specific Mental Health & Addictions Advisory Council
- Participation in the recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) Report
- Mental Health & Addictions Recovery Services re-branding
- Quality improvement initiatives (i.e. engaging Primary Care)
- Roots of Hope – suicide prevention strategy
- Virgo Report 2.0- Engaging in conversation and taking action

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for your willingness to give your time, energy, and talents. Your active engagement with the WRHA Mental Health & Addictions Advisory Council allows us to continue fulfilling our mission in active involvement of people with lived expertise in our health system.

Thank You