

# **WRHA Position Statement on Supports in Community Housing Environments**

**June 2012**

---

**Mission:**

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) Mission is to co-ordinate and deliver safe and caring services that promote health and well-being.

**Vision:**

Healthy People, Vibrant Communities, Care for All

**WRHA Position:**

- Because the WRHA recognizes the importance and impact that quality, affordable housing with related support services, has on the health of individuals and communities;
- And because facilitating individuals to live in integrated community living environments through the provision of appropriate accommodation and integrated supportive services supports health across the lifespan;
- And because the integration of health services into living environments for individuals with complex needs facilitates improved stability and enables individuals to remain in their communities;
- And because the development of innovative models of community-based housing with supports requires collaborative inter-sectoral approaches which are beyond the scope of any one sector;
- And because inadequate housing and support options result in an overreliance on emergency and hospital-based care;

The WRHA will work in partnership at policy and service delivery levels to identify and promote housing and health support options that will facilitate improved personal and community health outcomes; lessen expenditure growth in the acute care sector; provide accessible and stable options across the lifespan and use a proactive preventive approach to reduce reliance on hospital and other institutional settings.

WRHA will focus their role on the development and delivery of supportive health services provided in community housing environments.

**To that end the WRHA is committed to:**

- Working in partnership with government and non-government community partners, housing developers and landlords to identify populations that would benefit from improvements in quality, quantity and array of affordable housing and support options for Winnipeg citizens.
- Creating a range of cost-effective, client-centered health service strategies in housing environments to support individuals to remain in integrated community-based options across the lifespan.
- Integrating community-based health services required by individuals with complex needs to facilitate improved housing stability and personal health outcomes while maximizing independence and supporting personal choice.

- Using a collaborative community development approach to support the collective commitment of partners and the development of innovative models informed by evidence and experience.
- Supporting internal collaboration within the WRHA across the continuum of programs, sectors and population groups to facilitate the development of innovative housing with health support options.

## **Background Information to WRHA Position Statement on Health Services in Community Housing Environments**

### **Health and Housing:**

- Housing is a determinant of health. The quality of the physical living environments impact the health of individuals and improvements in mental and physical health are achieved when housing environments are improved (World Health Organization, 1986).
- Stable housing in safe, supportive communities is correlated with positive health outcomes for children and adults.
- The goal of community housing and support options is to maximize the independence of individuals and to support choice and community integration.
- A range of affordable living environments and supportive health and social services are required to promote health and ensure that the needs of individuals and families are met.
- Inadequate housing or the lack of appropriate supports often results in an overreliance on emergency and hospital-based care.
- Hospitals become a destination for individuals who lack adequate housing and community-based support services when their situations break down as this is often the only available option for people and the system.

### **The Need for New Approaches:**

- Increasing demographic pressures will require enhanced options to provide quality, cost-effective client-centered health services in community housing environments to a wide range of populations.
- Lack of community-based housing with appropriate supportive services has resulted in the reliance on special contracts to provide care models for individuals with complex needs. These arrangements are often co-funded by WRHA and Family Services. Family Services indicates that the number of people who will require more intensive levels of supportive services is increasing rapidly.
- Individuals with complex health and social needs frequently lack appropriate housing and supports, are high users of emergency departments, and have multiple hospitalizations.
- A lack of affordable housing and access to appropriate community health and supportive services contributes to a greater number of people who are at risk of homelessness.
- Socioeconomic status (SES) directly affects health status and the quality of housing options people access. Additional affordable options are required to decrease the reliance on institutional settings based primarily on economic need.
- Alternative levels of care in our hospital system (non-acute patient days) demonstrate that there are a small number of individuals in hospital who remain for long periods of time and generate approximately 25 to 30% of non-acute days. These individuals often require alternative housing and support options or more affordable options to transition them out of hospital.

- The need for alternative models of care for younger populations is placing increased pressure on personal care homes.
- The development of innovative models of community based living environments linked to appropriate supportive services enables people to remain in their communities at all ages across the lifespan and provides solutions to more costly hospital and institutional based care.

**Benefits of Housing with Support Innovation:**

- Strategic partnerships and collaboration across government, housing, health and community sectors will support the health of individuals and communities.
- Quality, affordable community based living environments with access to appropriate recovery based health and social supports will result in improved health outcomes, decreased reliance on higher cost hospital and institutional-based care and facilitates independence and integration.
- The development of a range of housing and support options will provide choice to Winnipeg citizens recognizing and respecting the diversity of our community.
- The development of new options will be informed by consumers and families.
- Developments in this area will impact the growth curve in demand for institutional health services and provide innovative, client-centered care options.