

Implementation Booklet

5 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV IN CANADA

In Canada and around the world, women living with HIV face unique challenges and human rights violations related to sexual and reproductive health ([WHO, Consolidated Guideline 2017](#)). Through community consultation and using research evidence centred on the priorities of diverse communities of women living with HIV, we identified five key recommendations for transforming enabling environments that shape sexual and reproductive health and rights by, with, and for women living with HIV in Canada.

This document provides guidance on how to implement each of the 5 key recommendations to advance the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV. Included are examples of best practices of the recommendation in Canada, supplementary info to learn more about implementation, and references to global documents that have informed this work. Use this booklet to learn from best practices and implement the key recommendations in your own work.

HOW DID WE DEVELOP THESE RECOMMENDATIONS?

These recommendations are the result of a multi-year national consultation. In 2017 the [World Health Organization](#) released the [Consolidated guideline on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV](#), based on a global consultation process. This guideline is focused on centring the priorities of women living with HIV to create environments that support their sexual and reproductive health.

In Canada, a core team of researchers, community advocates, global programming and policy-makers, and clinical and social care providers came together to develop a [national webinar series](#) that explored the consolidated guideline within a Canadian context. Extensive feedback was collected through an in-person event and through an online survey, and the core team used this feedback to create the 5 recommendations outlined in this document.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

- To learn more about the national consultation and the five key recommendations, including additional guidance on implementation, view the open access paper ([Kaida et al, Women's Health 2022](#)) or contact Dr. Angela Kaida at angela_kaida@sfu.ca.
- For a full reference list of all the resources included in this document, please refer to [page 6](#).

Kaida A, Cameron B, Conway T, Cotnam J, Danforth J, de Pokomandy A, Gagnier B, Godoy S, Gormley R, Greene S, Habanyama M, Kazemi M, Logie CH, Loutfy M, MacGillivray J, Masching R, Money D, Nicholson V, Osborne Z, Pick N, Sanchez M, Tharao W, Watt S, Narasimhan M. Key recommendations for developing a national action plan to advance the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV in Canada. *Womens Health (Lond)* 2022;18:17455057221090829.

1

Meaningfully engage women living with HIV across research, policy, and practice aimed at advancing the sexual and reproductive health and rights by, with, and for all women living with HIV.

In a nutshell:

Involve women living with HIV in all decision-making spaces, recognize that women living with HIV are diverse and all bring essential expertise to this work, and actively work to address systems of oppression.

A bit more in-depth:

- Recognize and implement essential expertise of women living with HIV at all levels within programming, policy, and whenever decisions are made. Meaningful engagement avoids tokenism, provides sufficient training and compensation and recognizes women's right to self-determination in their own sexual and reproductive health. Embedding peer support into services for women living with HIV and providing adequate compensation and support to peer leaders for their time and expertise is one example of meaningful engagement.
- Respond to the diversity of women's individual priorities, experiences, and identities, and meet women where they are at by addressing specific needs of communities facing intersecting systemic and structural inequities related to colonization, racism, and gender (e.g., Indigenous, African, Caribbean, Black, and trans women living with HIV).
- Ground all efforts aimed at advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV within an anti-oppressive framework,¹ which includes acknowledgement and active disruption of patterns and experiences of systemic, institutional, and lateral violence.²

Helpful Resources:

How can I be more informed?

1. [Learn about the experiences of women living with HIV in the involvement of the design and delivery of HIV/AIDS services](#)
2. [Learn how women living with HIV envision women-centred HIV care](#)

How can I put this to practice?

3. [Understand practice guidelines in peer health navigation for people living with HIV](#)
4. [Support training for women living with HIV to engage in this work](#)
5. [Compensate women living with HIV for their work](#)
6. [Explore a WHO checklist for community engagement](#)

¹ We define anti-oppressive framework as an approach that actively challenges systems of oppression in which we operate and critically analyzes roles within these systems.

² Lateral violence is defined as: violence against one's peers rather than one's adversaries, which results from and is rooted in systemic cycles of abuse and oppression trauma, racism, and discrimination.

2

Centre Indigenous women's priorities, voices, and perspectives in all efforts to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV.

In a nutshell:

Centre the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action in all work. Create space for Indigenous women living with HIV to access and incorporate their traditional knowledge and practices within healthcare spaces.

A bit more in-depth:

- Integrate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (particularly those related to health, justice, family and community welfare) to support the creation of enabling environments by, with, and for Indigenous women living with HIV, with attention to redressing health inequities shaped by experiences of historical and ongoing colonization.
- Acknowledge and honour the strengths Indigenous women living with HIV draw from traditional ways of knowing, healing, and medicines. Create environments that enable access to a range of culturally safe and relevant support and services.

Helpful Resources:

How can I actively learn and unlearn?

7. Learn how to uproot anti-Indigenous racism and promote cultural safety
8. Learn Canada's history from an Indigenous perspective
9. Learn more about how Indigenous women living with HIV understand and support their health and well-being by drawing upon Indigenous teachings and healing

What do I need to know to understand the context of this work?

10. Read the report of the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
11. Read the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
12. Read the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

How can I put this recommendation into practice?

13. Involve Indigenous women living with HIV in strategic planning
14. Focus on HIV prevention using upstream interventions

3

Use language and terminologies that are actively destigmatizing, inclusive, and reflective of women living with HIV's strengths and experience when discussing sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women living with HIV.

In a nutshell:

Ensure that the language you use when talking to or about women living with HIV is "people-first", respectful, and inclusive. Acknowledging that language is continuously evolving, ongoing reflexivity and learning are key.

A bit more in-depth:

- Choose careful, intentional, respectful, and non-stigmatizing written, verbal, and body language. Language can be a source of power, connection, inclusion, healing, and affirmation when chosen carefully; failing to do so risks (re)producing language and guidance that is limiting, universalising and/or otherwise insufficiently inclusive of the diversity of women's experience. Adopting open and non-judgmental body language is important to facilitate respect.
- Recognize what is considered appropriate or affirming in language may change over time and in different contexts. Understanding this, investing time in staying up-to-date, and entering conversations with a sense of humility and willingness to change are essential in choosing language that creates enabling environments.

Helpful Resources:

Why is the language I use important?

15. [Learn why language matters and explore more resources](#)

Where can I find examples of how to choose de-stigmatizing language?

16. [Learn about choosing empowering, rather than stigmatizing language directly from people living with HIV](#)

17. [Read this guide for respectful language around sexual health, substance use, and sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections](#)

18. [Refer to this guide developed during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic for inclusive, trauma-informed language choices](#)

4

Strengthen and expand Knowledge Translation (KT) initiatives to support access to and uptake of relevant and contemporary sexual and reproductive health and rights information for all stakeholders.

In a nutshell:

Use diverse communication strategies to share information that will create environments that affirm the autonomy and support the safety and wellbeing of women living with HIV.

A bit more in-depth:

- Ensure that women living with HIV have access to and understand their rights, and available resources and supports. KT outputs should be used to support and build capacity for self and community advocacy.
- Support access to up-to-date information for all stakeholders to create environments that enable autonomy, choice, and informed decision-making of women living with HIV. Invest in developing targeted KT strategies that appeal to diverse audiences through diverse mediums, improving use, applicability, and uptake.

Helpful Resources:

What resources can I access as a woman living with HIV?

19. [Use the Women-Centred HIV Care toolkit to support your navigation of the healthcare system](#)
20. [Review a women's toolkit for navigating healthcare adapted for a global audience of women living with HIV](#)
21. [Understand research findings from a community-based research study with women living with HIV](#)

What resources can I access as a provider?

22. [Learn about how Indigenous women living with HIV envision their health](#)
23. [Learn how to support mothers living with HIV](#)
24. [Learn how to provide women-centred care for women living with HIV](#)
25. [Learn how to support women living with HIV as they navigate disclosure of their HIV status](#)

How can I share information to influence change?

26. [Write a letter to policymakers to end the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure](#)
27. [Watch a short film about life and love as a woman living with HIV](#)

5

Catalyze the reciprocal relationship between evidence and action such that action on sexual and reproductive health and rights is guided by research evidence, and research is guided by what is needed for effective action.

In a nutshell:

Make sure that time, funds, and infrastructure are dedicated to relationship building across disciplines that drive relevant action, centred on the priorities of women living with HIV.

A bit more in-depth:

- Create and support the interdisciplinary collaborations across stakeholder groups that are necessary to create a system that integrates and adapts to the priorities of women living with HIV and emerging actionable and community-driven research. Commit to providing infrastructure support and funding to sustain and nurture these collaborations.
- Ensure that the diverse expertise of all women living with HIV is integrated and honoured throughout the process.

Helpful Resources:

How can I ethically and equitably create partnerships in the work I do?

28. [Watch a presentation on improving partnerships between community-based organizations and researchers](#)
29. [Read about how to ethically involve women living with HIV within research](#)
30. [See examples using a global framework about creating evidence-based and community driven programming to address violence against women living with HIV](#)

RESOURCE LIST

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RESOURCE LIST

17. Canadian Public Health Association. Language matters: Using respectful language in relation to sexual health, substance use, STBBIs, and intersecting sources of stigma. 2019. Canadian Public Health Association.
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22. Prentice T. Visioning health: Using the arts to understand culture and gender as determinants of health for HIV-positive Aboriginal women (PAW). University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, 2015.
23. Khosla P, Ion A, Greene S. Supporting mothers in ways that work: A resource toolkit for service providers working with mothers living with HIV. 2016. Hamilton, ON.
24. Canadian Public Health Association. Language matters: Using respectful language in relation to sexual health, substance use, STBBIs, and intersecting sources of stigma. 2019. Canadian Public Health Association.
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27. Kilpatrick E. HIV made me fabulous. Canada 2020.
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We would like to honour all women living with HIV, including those who have gone before us and those who stand with us today. This work is dedicated to you.