

Background

Bruce House has continuously evolved since its founding in 1988, striving to meet the changing needs of people living with HIV, while facing the challenges of doing so in an under-funded and under-valued sector. The most recent challenges have been the COVID-19 pandemic; the rising costs of food, housing, and other basic needs; and the grossly inadequate support provided by the Ontario Disability Support Program. Our clients count on Bruce House more than ever for help in meeting their basic needs, while the need for practical supports continues to grow.

Our Mandate

Bruce House is a community-based organization providing housing, compassionate care and support in Ottawa for people living with HIV/AIDS, believing that everyone has the right to live and die with dignity.

Our Vision

We envision a physically, socially, psychologically, spiritually and economically healthy community where everyone, including people living with HIV/AIDS or impacted by HIV/AIDS participates fully in all aspects of community life.

We envision a community free of stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS.

We envision adequate sustainable and flexible funding to enable the provision of a full range of high-quality services that respond to the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

We envision a well-integrated, coordinated service system that is accessible to people living with HIV/AIDS, regardless of their ability, age, culture, economic status, ethnicity, lifestyle, gender, or sexual orientation.

Our Values

We are accountable to our clients, the community, and each other. We take a holistic approach that recognises emotional, physical, social, spiritual and economic realities. We respect people's diversity and their different needs including, but not limited to ability, age, culture, economic status, ethnicity, lifestyle, gender and sexual orientation.

We support empowerment by providing information, sharing authority, promoting participation and providing choices.

Strategic Directions

Strategic Direction 1:

Support clients in meeting their basic needs using a holistic approach.

Approximately 90% of Bruce House clients receive financial assistance from the Ontario Disability Support Program, which effectively forces people to live in poverty. With rising costs of food, housing, and other necessities many people living with HIV struggle daily to meet basic needs, and are financially unable to meet any additional challenges. Bruce House has increasingly been called on to bridge this gap, particularly in areas not supported by most other agencies such as personal hygiene supplies and special one-time purchases.

Key Points:

Bruce House will:

- Continue to provide, and advocate for, more affordable and appropriate housing.
- Restructure food supports under a single program, striving to meet food and nutrition needs through internal Bruce House programs and services, referrals to external services, and ongoing advocacy, taking care to provide culturally-appropriate foods and respecting individual preferences.
- Assist clients in meeting their needs for personal hygiene products and household items, respecting preferences for cruelty-free and/or environmentally responsible products whenever possible.
- Continue to address one-time special needs through a Health & Wellness fund, assisting clients with purchases or expenses which may be unaffordable for them and which will make a significant impact on their quality of life, health, and wellness.
- Recognize the importance of pets to the lives and wellness of our clients and seek out means to support clients in obtaining pet supplies and essential veterinary services.
- Explore options for complimentary therapies (e.g. massage) to enhance health and wellness of clients, including partnerships and referral agreements with other service providers.

Intended Outcomes:

People living with HIV are able to meet their daily needs for food, personal and household supplies, and other necessities; and have access to a fund to meet special one-time needs. Clients can maintain their health and have stability in their lives.

Strategic Direction 2:

Prioritize mental health and its part in overall health and wellness.

Mental health has a tremendous impact on overall health and wellness, yet remains one of the least served areas. Undiagnosed or untreated mental health conditions can curtail an individual's ability to fully participate in society, can be a detriment to physical health, and can cause lasting harm.

Key Points:

Bruce House will:

- Recognise social isolation as a significant health concern—one made even more significant by the pandemic. This will require an emphasis on programming and services to reduce social isolation, improve social skills and increase community connectedness.
- Strongly advocate for greater and timely access to mental health and addiction services to improve the well-being of our clients.
- Continue to partner with service providers to support our clients in achieving better mental health and overall wellbeing.
- Resume and enhance counselling programs and the volunteer Buddy Program.

Intended Outcomes:

Bruce House clients are fully able to participate in society, enjoying mental and physical well-being, and have access to the resources they need to support their mental health.

Strategic Direction 3:

Recognize intersectionality and the complex challenges PHAs face.

Bruce House recognises the individuality and unique circumstances of all individuals, and that a rigid approach to program and service delivery ultimately fails the people in greatest need of support. We will continue to challenge ourselves and educate ourselves, working towards an understanding that each aspect of a person impacts their overall health and wellbeing.

Key Points:

Bruce House will:

- Support clients as whole individuals, who are not divisible and cannot be reduced to one trait or quality.
- Challenge ourselves and our communities to address systemic colonialism, racism, and oppression and be cognisant of the ongoing impacts these have on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
- Continue our efforts towards the process of Indigenous Reconciliation.
- Recognize that non-HIV-related illnesses, injuries, and episodic disabilities have significant impacts on our clients and may threaten overall health and housing stability.
- Continue to support clients in all aspects of their lives.
- Advocate for more respite/recovery supports.
- Offer meaningful employment and volunteering opportunities to PHAs via peer positions.

Intended Outcomes:

Bruce House clients are meaningfully seen and heard, respected and supported in the many facets of their lives, and receive culturally appropriate services.

Strategic Direction 4:

Continue to maintain and improve the health and capacity of Bruce House as an organization.

Providing reliable and effective services for people living with HIV requires organization capacity and stability. Bruce House will work to enhance capacity and maximize the use of resources to best serve our community in the short and long term.

Key Points:

Bruce House will:

- Ensure a solid foundation by continuing to use responsible budgeting, flexibility in program delivery, and advocating for sustained long-term funding.
- Shift from a staff-run and volunteer-supported organization to one in which staff and volunteers work together in a collaborative environment with volunteer positions having meaningful responsibility and authority. This will allow growth and access to expertise, strengthening the organization without imposing additional budgetary pressures or increasing staff workloads.
- Consider the long-term needs for office space, addressing capacity and accessibility, and develop a plan to implement required changes.
- Recognize the irreplaceable value of our experienced and engaged staff by prioritizing appropriate staff compensation, explore options for a comprehensive benefit package with retirement planning, staff recognition program, and training opportunities.
- Develop long-term financial and equipment needs forecasting.
- Develop a strategy to increase donor support, fundraising, and funding.
- Build organization capacity, including continued efforts to obtain secure long-term funding and increasing partnerships with other service providers.

Intended Outcomes:

Bruce House continues to be a vibrant and flexible organization, with the stability needed to weather future challenges, and the capacity to provide the services and programs needed by people living with HIV.