

Stepping Up During the Pandemic

Angela Blouin has been a lactation consultant for Youville Centre for 18 years and has been pleased to watch as services to support families have expanded in that time. “As a community of public health professionals, we’ve done a good job getting the message out that breast feeding is one of the best things you can do for your infant,” she says. “But that also puts a lot of pressure on women to get it right, and it’s not a one-woman job. There is so much that we can and should be doing to support families as a whole.”

Daily peer-support programs, home visits and others support normally available to families ground to halt during the pandemic as many public health nurses were called away to do contact tracing and other tasks related to Covid-19. “When we realized what had happened to services, we knew we had to do something,” continues Blouin. “As a team here at Youville, we reorganized our workloads so that I could start providing 12 appointments a week compared to the two or four I was offering pre-pandemic.”

These extra slots mean the world to families who are struggling to find the right routine for them and their baby. “Some of the people we support are very vulnerable,” explains Blouin. “Last week, I worked with an immigrant who had recently arrived in Canada with her young toddler and a newborn. Her husband hasn’t gotten here yet, she can’t drive and has no support system in place. This is the type of person who truly needs a home visit.”

Finding the balance between in-person care and pandemic safety has been an interesting challenge. “I’ve created a series of videos that cover topics like latching,” Blouin says. “So we start with a phone call and review the videos together. We strategize some things families can try. If that works, wonderful! If not, we can look at an in-person visit, while following all public health guidelines. I’ve been pleasantly surprised to find that about 30% of our appointments with just phone and video have been able to resolve many of the issues families are facing.”

The impact a lactation consultant can have on a family’s breastfeeding experience is incalculable. In a culture where many expect women to breastfeed, but there is still often a veil of secrecy and a desire to hide the act itself, it’s hard to know where to start. “In cultures where breastfeeding is the norm and celebrated, there’s no need for lactation consultants,” concludes Blouin. “Here in Winnipeg, we have women saying that they have never had someone support their choices or their baby’s preferences. The act of listening and offering advice is incredibly validating for these families. With the right supports, they find success and create a happy, healthy, bonding experience for them and their little one.”

BY THE NUMBERS



3 locations



33 staff (FTE)



\$3.5 million
operating budget



15,000 visits per year
to the Community Health Centre
& Community Diabetes Centre

Youville Centre is a part of Réseau Compassion Network, a family of 13 health and social services agencies in Manitoba. Entrusted by pioneering women to bring together people of all faiths, traditions and cultures to serve Manitoba communities wherever the needs are the greatest, Réseau Compassion Network is proud to support this important work in our community.



ABOUT US

Youville Centre

For over thirty years, Youville Centre has offered a wide range of services focused on healthy living – from health care and wellness education to counselling and support. Established by the Grey Nuns in 1984 as a reliable and accessible health resource, the Centre and is committed to meeting the needs of the community, offering the public the tools they needed to make informed choices about their health. Youville Diabetes Centre at 33 Marion Street provides diabetes self-management education and support for the Winnipeg region and beyond. Our second location at 845 Dakota Street delivers primary health care, health promotion, counselling and substance use supports for the community of St. Vital. Our third and newest site is centrally located between the other 2 sites and is home to the collaborative St. Boniface/ St. Vital Youth Hub – serving youth between the ages of 12-29. Services at Youville Centre are offered in both official languages. Youville Centre offers an open and friendly environment and believes in offering services grounded in equity, inclusion and anti-oppression. Youville Centre's staff team includes dietitians, community health nurses, counsellors, physicians, community development facilitators, management, outreach/liaison workers, volunteer coordinator, foot care nurses, office assistants, peer navigators and volunteers and students! All staff are committed to providing professional caring service and support for everyone who walks through the doors.



BOARD DUTIES & COMMITMENTS



Board: every other month
(no meetings in July & August)



Total time commitment per month:
2-3 hours

Network Members

Abri Marguerite | Actionmarguerite | Aulneau Renewal Centre |
Centre de santé Saint-Boniface | Ste. Rose Health Centre | Centre Flavie-Laurent |
Youville Centre | Charités Despins | Gestion Providentia | Saint-Boniface Hospital |
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