

New Women and Families Centre at a Glance



"AT 12, MY MOM DUMPED ME ON THE SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY AND SAID, 'I'M DONE WITH THIS.' AT 14, I STARTED USING DRUGS AND DRINKING. IT PROGRESSED TO SPEED AND HEROIN IN MY 20S. I SUFFERED REPEATED PHYSICAL ABUSE. EVENTUALLY, I THOUGHT, 'WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?'"

Emily, Sanctuary Alumnus / UGM Work Intern

LIVING IN THE SHADOWS OF THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

Trauma experienced by young girls can be the first step along a tortuous road. Women who have been victimized are more readily preyed upon by people waiting to exploit their circumstance. They can be forced into the sex trade or trafficked as sex workers. They can be introduced to ever-more-addictive and deadly substances. They can be injured and are likely to become sick or be infected with sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. For many the greatest fear is the risk of losing their children.

Almost 1 in 3 overdoses are women

1,500-2,000 'survival' sex workers are estimated to be living in the DTES

Women who have to wait long to get into recovery are **80% more likely to go back to drug use**

The severity and magnitude of issues facing women can be as hidden as the women themselves. As a result, services and resources for women who want to change their lives lag well behind the need.

Between the end of intensive treatment and where women – especially mothers with children – live while maintaining sobriety is challenging. **Bridging this gap is as urgent as it is life-changing.**

UNION GOSPEL MISSION'S PLAN TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND RECOVER LIVES

In 2012, UGM began taking further steps to address the distinct needs of women struggling with addiction.

- UGM's Outreach program has been providing as-needed assistance such as food hampers, diapers, counselling and more for women who ask for help and aren't in a residential program or ready to pursue recovery. This allows the women to get to know UGM and builds their trust.
- The Sanctuary, a ground-breaking initiative opened in 2014 in the East Cordova facility. A 24/7 stabilization program for single women and mothers with babies helps them reach a point where they are healthy enough and ready to commit to the hard work of recovery.

While these are strong starts, UGM recognizes that more is needed to support the long term recovery of women in need. There is no supportive housing in the DTES that enables women, and women with children, to continue their recovery while living in a real home where they can grow their strength and build their independence.

Research shows that after five years of receiving the right supports, women who have been deep into addictions, poverty, and homelessness have the same rate of life success as people who have always been clean and sober.

The New Women and Families Centre

Opening in 2021, the new Women and Families Centre will play a pivotal role in empowering women to change - and most importantly, to sustain transformation through the rest of their lives. The seven storey facility will replace the former UGM building on Cordova Street. This will be a place for women - especially women with children - to heal, stabilize and build the solid footing needed for long term recovery.

The new Women and Families Centre will expand wrap-around services to better support women in two key stages of recovery:

- The first 6-12 months are critical when women, and women with babies, are immersed in the hard work of recovery by taking part in counselling and programs that enable them to grow stronger and build the courage for the next phase of their journey
- The transition to supportive housing, enables single women and women with children to live for a longer period of time in housing that is a real home and provides access to child care – while they further hone their living skills, seek employment and find a permanent home.

- Floors 1 to 3 will provide spaces for outreach services, programs for school-age children and youth, residential spaces for pre-recovery stabilization and accommodation for women in early recovery.
- Floors 4-6 will be supportive housing, offering the ideal environment for women, and women with children, to strengthen independent living skills. They will continue long term recovery in the company of other women, grow their community of support, seek employment and begin the search for their own home.
- Floor 7 will be dedicated to child care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Integrating comprehensive care for young children within a recovery-oriented Centre is unique in the DTES, and maintains the powerful bonds between mothers and children.



Northwest view at corner of E. Cordova and Princess



Main Foyer View from Entry



Children/Youth Multipurpose Room



Childcare Exterior Play Area