



**Halifax Sexual Health Centre
Annual Report
2025 - 2026**

Executive Director's Report

Every year, when I sit down to reflect and to write the Annual Report, I am *shocked* by how much the staff, clinicians, and volunteers of the Halifax Sexual Health Centre accomplish in just twelve months. I swear I have been here the whole time! I thought that I had used most of this year to do some “boring”, back-end things, but it turns out that even during our most stable, consistent years, we are doing amazing things in-house and in the community.

One of HSHC's true strengths is our ability to network and work in coalition with others. We reinforced these partnerships this year. By getting together with other clinicians who provide gender-affirming medical services, we made it clear that no one is working alone. There are many, many clinicians who are dedicated to this rewarding work, and who will stand up for patient access. We continued our work with AccessNow NS, a coalition calling for free universal access to contraceptives. This year, we secured two visits to the Nova Scotia Legislature to advocate for our position for gender equity, best medical practices, and smart economics. We worked in tandem with the entire network of Sexual Health Nova Scotia to create an incredible updated *Sex Over Sixty* guide (read on to see some amazing illustrations!). We've created a referral system for expedited referrals from the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners program. There are so many more examples of us working in partnership with those who share our cause for accessible and affirming sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming care. When we work together, we are that much stronger, especially in times of austerity funding and divisive politics.

Speaking of the “boring” things... this year, myself, the admin team, and the Medical Director have been striving towards updating and streamlining our policies, procedures, and patient communication plans. As everyone in the non-profit sector knows, those things can very quickly get away from you. While these types of improvements are not flashy, not impressive to funders, and not necessarily felt by patients, they are key to our reputation and capacity as an employer and clinical location. Thanks to our online booking and confidential test communication software, we have been able to optimize how to communicate with patients and manage follow-up tasks. We used the opportunity of an intern student to update some of our core fundraising documents. Additionally, we have started a journey towards having a full Workplace Safety Audit and Policy completed. During this period of heightened political violence and misinformation regarding our core sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming services, we want to be sure that we are doing our very best to support our patients, providers, and staff. While final documents were not completed in the 2025-2026 year, many hours have been put in, and we look forward to seeing the results in the next fiscal year.

Our team has grown this year! In addition to two HSHC babies (Congrats to our new moms!), we have a new registered nurse and several new physicians join our team. In addition, we have hired a Gender-Affirming Care Coordinator, a position that has been dreamed of for

several years. This role is a combination of administrative and social service support – a one stop shop for patients seeking gender-affirming care (GAC). While we do not take on patients as a family practice, we know that our relationship with our GAC patients is considerably more involved, complex, and longitudinal than some of our other services. We are so excited to have the staffing infrastructure that reflects that relationship.

We have certainly felt the impact of the challenging national and global political and financial climate. Considerably less funding opportunities have popped up, and those that are available are noticeably choosing to fund “uncontroversial” projects that shy away from 2SLGBTQ+, sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health and education topics. What this tells me, however, is that the services and skills of HSHC are needed more than ever. Sexual health is not “boutique,” not an “extra,” or just a “nice to have.” It is a core part of the human experience, at the root of our relationships with ourselves and with others. HSHC continues to fight through the noise, offering reliable and consistent direct services.

As an organization, HSHC has seen so much over its **55 years**. It continues to exist thanks to its champions and allies across all sectors, past and present. Thank you to our passionate and dedicated board members, staff, clinicians, volunteers, funders, and community partners who make it all possible every day. There is nowhere I would rather be.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abbey Ferguson'.

Abbey Ferguson
Executive Director, HSHC

Board Chair Report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your continued support of Halifax Sexual Health Centre over the past year.

Governance & Strategic Oversight

Throughout the year, the Board remained focused on its governance responsibilities - providing strategic oversight, strengthening organizational sustainability, and ensuring HSHC remains well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Over the past year this included advancing work to strengthen our governance through improvements to board recruitment and community engagement, refining governance practices, and supporting the development of policies that promote professional development and organizational excellence. The Board also worked closely with leadership to review recommendations arising from the clinic's security assessment, supporting ongoing improvements that enhance the safety of patients, staff, and volunteers.

Supporting a Strong Organization

The Board continued its stewardship of the organization through regular financial oversight, audit review, and strategic governance, helping to ensure HSHC remains resilient in an evolving healthcare and funding environment. Looking ahead, we will continue our strategic planning work to establish clear priorities that support long-term sustainability and guide consistent, transparent, and thoughtful decision-making.

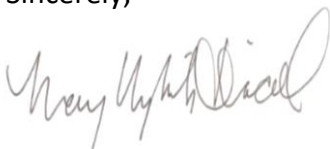
We are grateful for the leadership of Executive Director Abbey Ferguson and the dedication of our staff, physicians, volunteers, funders, and community partners. Their commitment, expertise, and compassion continue to strengthen HSHC and the communities we serve.

Looking Ahead

As we look to the coming year, the Board remains committed to strengthening governance, supporting organizational sustainability, and fostering an environment where HSHC can continue to deliver responsive, inclusive, and high-quality care.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your continued trust and support.

Sincerely,



Mary Myketyn Driscoll
Board Chair

Medical Director's Report

HSHC 2025-2026 proved to be another busy year in terms of patient care, including ongoing high demand for all types of appointments.

Our physician workforce is currently 12 part-time physicians, working in various capacities. As of March 1, 2026, long-time provider Dr. Elisabeth Gold moved her practice from HSHC to her own location. We welcomed several new providers including Dr.'s Hayley Gillis, Nova Zhao, Archchana Rajmohan and Jeana MacLeod, all who did clinical placements at HSHC at some point during their medical training. Dr. Laci Williams continues to do an excellent job of managing the learners' schedule, with demand for learning opportunities exceeding availability. As of January 1, 2026, daily preceptor stipends increased from \$90/day to \$100-\$210/day, depending on the type of learner.

The Gender Affirming Care (GAC) provider group continues to meet monthly to discuss challenging cases and issues concerning GAC care in Nova Scotia. Since our last AGM, plastic surgeon Dr. Nadim Joukhadar has been offering gender-affirming top surgery here in Halifax. Dr. Linda Chow continues to focus solely on GAC patient care but plans to retire at the end of 2026. We continue to search for new GAC providers to take on Linda's extensive patient list and for any new GAC patients. Unfortunately, our GAC sessional fee ended March 31, 2026.

RNs Christine Preston, Michelle Harvey (on maternity leave as of March 2026) and Kaylin MacNeil (recent RN graduate who is covering for Michelle) continue to provide excellent support to clinicians, admin staff and HSHC patients. HSHC RNS continue to partner with Public Health to provide vaccines for persons at high risk of infection. Thanks to the ongoing generosity of our donors and RN coordination, our compassionate medications for birth control and STI treatments are greatly appreciated by patients.

Physiotherapist Amy Prescott continues to provide excellent, very appreciated care to patients with Gender Affirming Care (GAC) and pelvic floor concerns (approx. 50/50). Social Worker Jey Benoit and their team of students provide much needed and valued support for GAC patients as well as one-off counselling sessions for a wide range of HSHC patient concerns. The addition of a Gender-Affirming Care Coordinator to the administrative team has helped track our GAC patients, with the goal of taking on all GAC appointment bookings and care inquiries.

Abbey, Suzanna and Tamara did an excellent job of streamlining our current MedAccess task lists and creating a "How To" guide for clinicians so that we have a consistent, more effective way to send tasks to administration. An emphasis on provider and staff safety has resulted in a continued effort to update our HSHC office security procedures.



In October, several of us met with Cobequid Youth Health Services representatives to learn more about their offerings. Christine, Michelle, Abbey and I worked with three medical students on a CESL (Community Engaged Service Learning) Project involving HSHC, SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program) and the provision of Emergency Contraception IUDs. We are now partnering with SANE to help facilitate rapid EC IUD insert access when and if possible. Christine and I continue to work part-time at the Victoria General STI Clinic, helping to maintain an informal, but mutually beneficial, connection between HSHC and the VG-STI clinic.

For 2026/2027, we will continue to advocate for resources for the ongoing provision of sexual and reproductive health primary care, including GAC, in our community and beyond. My hope is to recruit more physician providers to not only maintain but expand our ability to meet the needs of our large patient population.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Gibson", followed by a period.

Dr. Julie Gibson
Medical Director, HSHC

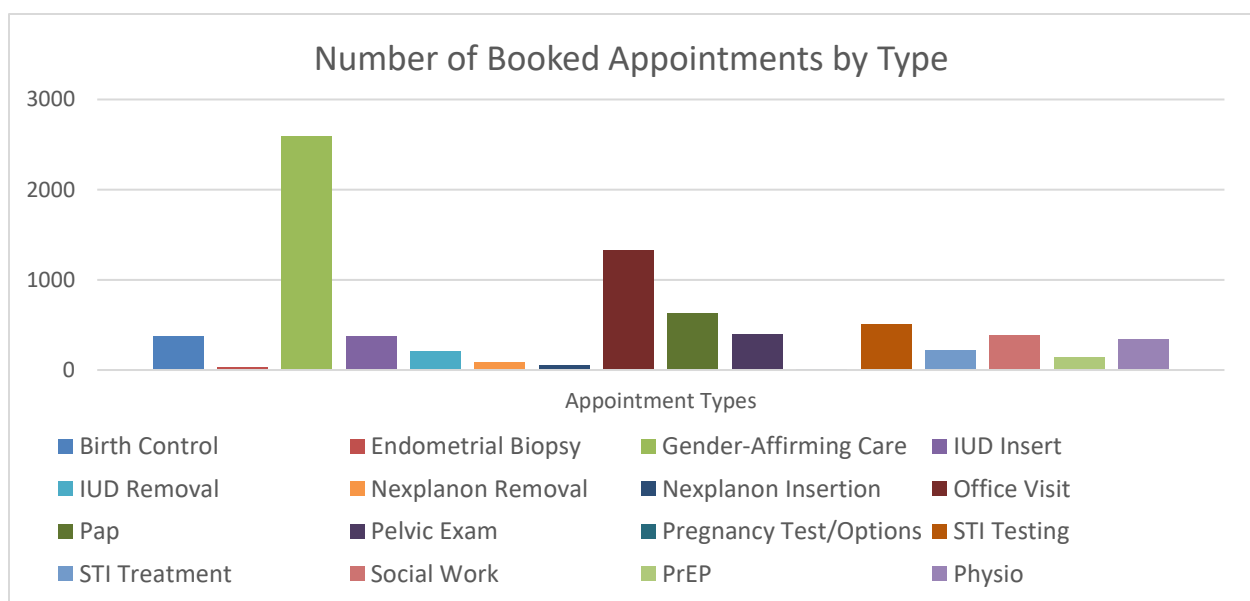
Clinical Operations & Services

Caring, affirming clinical services are the heart and soul of the Halifax Sexual Health Centre. HSHC provided primary sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health care to **3,361 patients** and booked **9,381 appointments** during the 2025-2026 fiscal year (not including STBBI testing). We are not a walk-in clinic as we require an appointment for all physician and nurse visits (except for requests for emergency contraceptives).

In addition to our primary care services with our physician team, we offer nurse run anonymous and non-nominal HIV/STBBI (sexually transmitted and blood borne infections) testing. This fiscal year, we performed **over 100 STBBI tests (blood draws)**. When possible, our incredible RN team does in-clinic draws in collaboration with the physicians, totaling an **additional 185 blood draws**.

Overall, services in highest demand were Gender-Affirming Care (2,592 appointments), Pap Testing (627 appointments), STI Testing (507 appointments), and general Office Visits (1,325 appointments). Office Visit appointments can be used to discuss all sorts of sexual and reproductive care services, both virtual and in-person. Some examples include vasectomy referrals, menopause care, pelvic pain, result follow ups, and much, much more.

These numbers reflect the reason chosen by patients when booking. HSHC allows multi-reason visits. We also offer a fulsome intake conversations. In practice, many patients arrive with one reason for a visit, but may leave having received multiple services. For example, patients who book a cervical screening (Pap test), are likely also have an STI swab and a conversation regarding their contraceptive options during their visit.





We continue to provide **telehealth services** (we offered **2,619 televisits**) this fiscal year. Televisits make up 28% of our total services. It provides great accessibility to services like gender-affirming care, menopause support, PrEP management, and contraceptive prescriptions to those who live outside of Central Zone and unfortunately must look to Halifax for their sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming care needs.

On the tail end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, our clinical team started training to start offering Pentrox ("green whistle"). Pentrox is a non-opioid rapid onset analgesic, self-administered under supervision. While not appropriate for every patient, Pentrox use during IUD insertions, endometrial biopsies, and other pelvic exam services can be a game changer for those who experience pelvic pain, trauma regarding pelvic exams, and more. This practice change was led purely by our passionate physicians. HSHC is proud to staff clinical staff that take pain management in reproductive health seriously.

Gender-affirming care makes up just under a third of total services at HSHC. Eight of our physicians offer gender-affirming health services, which include hormone therapy, surgical referrals, navigational support, and post-operative care. This past year, HSHC supported **835 transgender/gender diverse patients with their gender-affirmation journeys**. We have a total roster of 1,904 patients who see us for gender-affirming care. These numbers do not account for patients who may be trans/gender diverse but only see us for general sexual and reproductive care.

Over the past several years, staff and clinicians have strived to maintain waitlist-free access to gender-affirming care. While we were able to hold that position for almost two years, this year the waitlist did return. We have been able to keep this list to a minimum, and are still seeing patients within three months, on average.

Thanks to the generous contributions of the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, we currently staff a Masters of Social Work to offer both gender-affirming specific social work care, as well as collaborative primary care social work services. Our MSW continues to be available to offer FREE surgical readiness assessments to meet provincial funding coverage requirements. Collaborative primary care social work service can include services such as diagnosis acceptance support, assistance with forms, referrals to outside non-profit and community services, single session mental/sexual health discussions, navigational support, needs assessments, appointment debriefing, and more. We booked 379 social work appointments this year. Additionally, **we have grown our social work team to include a Gender-Affirming Care Coordinator!** This position is a blend of admin and social service support, to expand our capacity to support our gender-diverse patients.

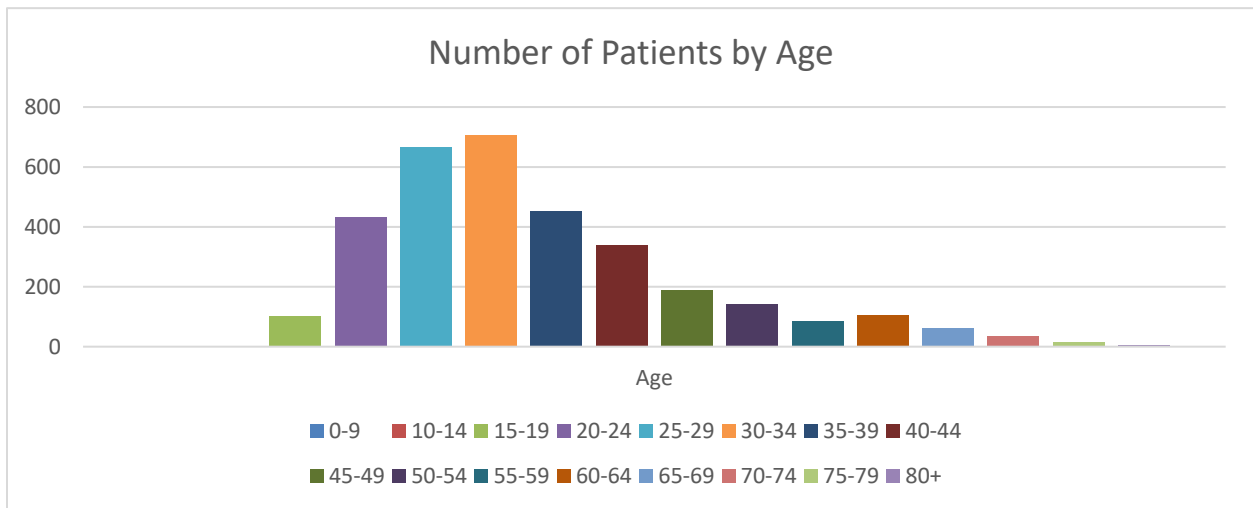
In February 2025, we launched a **new clinical service – physiotherapy!** Our innovative physiotherapy program has been a resounding success and has found its footing in the 2025-2026 year. Our physiotherapist offers both gender-affirming physio services (pre- and post-operative support, managing binding and tucking, gait, and more) and pelvic physio services (pelvic pain, painful sex, pregnancy, incontinence, and more). This service is being offered for free to patients, with no private insurance coverage required. As physio, and especially pelvic physio, is prohibitively expensive to access privately without insurance, we look forward to giving more access to expansive, patient-centered care to a greater proportion of our community, all within the safe and trusted space of HSHC. We booked 335 physio appointments this year. 40.5% were gender-affirming care related services, and 59.5% were for pelvic health. Patients reported enjoying access to physio in a familiar, clinical setting and the internal-referral process, as many did not know that physio would be a service that would help them with their health goals. We look forward to continuing to grow and develop the program!



Amy Prescott, HSHC's Physiotherapist, presenting to a community physio office.

We are seeing a significant increase in requests for menopausal care and support, and globally, it is a trendy health topic. We are proud to have several providers who are passionate about this topic. HSHC can provide support and guide patients through the online noise. We have seen a decrease in requests for support accessing PrEP – we think this is a result of patients taking advantage of the amazing new access to PrEP via pharmacists. We are proud to have been a part of the PrEP-Rx study that led to this scope change, and are so glad that patients are finding it to be an accessible and comfortable option!

Of the 3,361 clients we saw at HSHC this year, the majority were between the ages of 20 and 40 years old. This average remains stable, and continues to challenge the public assumptions that HSHC primarily sees teenagers.



We are seeing a significant increase in 2SLGBTQ+ patients seeking care who have (or will be) relocating from the United States. It's wonderful that HSHC can be a safe clinical landing space for newcomers to Nova Scotia. We utilized medical translation services for over 60 appointments, and are often using a hand-held medical translation device with the administrative team. Multilingual support and culturally informed newcomer health support are on the forefront of our minds for clinical programming development. Overall, it is significant that many requests for services are much more complex and multi-faceted than what is stereotypically expected of our clinic. A huge thank you to our clinicians who take this in stride, and continue to meet our patients where they are at. From the most routine STI test, to referring patients on to cancer care, HSHC is here for patients along their entire sexual health journeys.

During this fiscal year, the Halifax Sexual Health Centre was open from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday and 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM on most Tuesdays. Our average wait time for an in-person appointment throughout the year was approximately 5 weeks. **Our clinical schedule, released monthly, takes on average 1 – 3 days to fill during the**

past year. We have on average 700 – 850 appointments available in a month. That means that every other caller looking to make an appointment during the rest of the month is a request for a service beyond our capacity to fulfill.

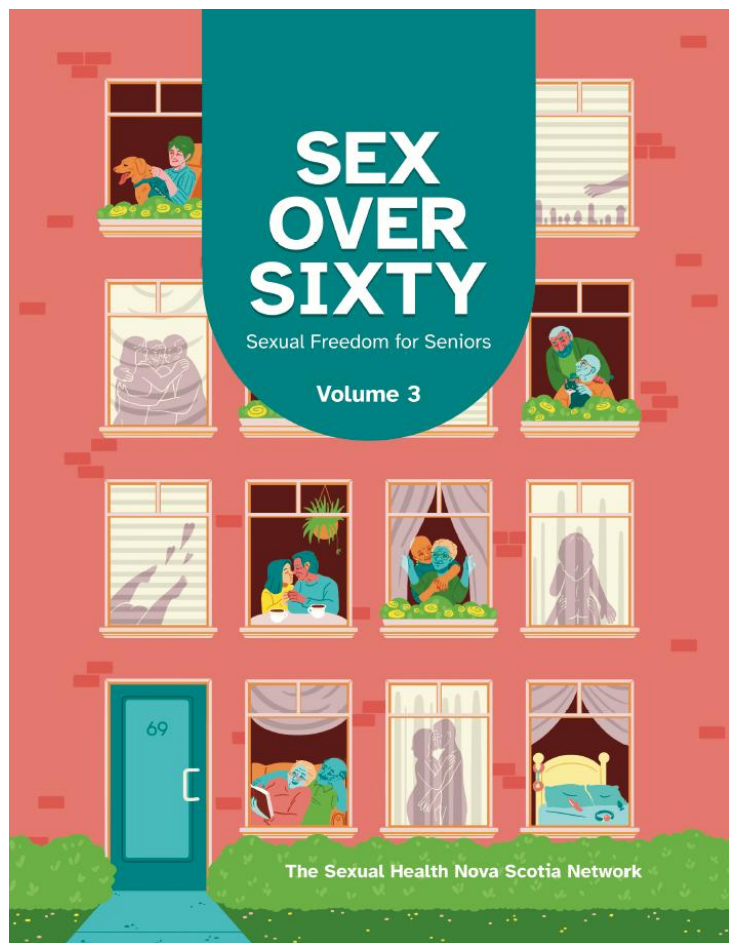
While tracking appointment and patient data is one way to demonstrate our service reach, we would be remiss to not mention the immense volume of phone calls that we receive. Due to the nature of HSHC's services and the sheer volume of calls we receive, **we are unable to track the specific number of unique client contacts and individual requests for information and services beyond our capacity.** Our admin team answers several hundred calls a week from people looking for medical services beyond our capacity, substantial healthcare navigation, sexual health education, general support, etc. over the phone. The rate of this type of contact and assistance is so high that it is our chief complaint from clients and patients. Previously, we had opted for an online booking system and priority voicemails for certain patient populations and intra-professional communications. This year, we are hoping that the addition of our Gender-Affirming Care Coordinator will alleviate some of the administrative burden, and offer a large patient population a streamlined communication option. **The continued demand for services indicates how important sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming care is to Nova Scotian's lives, and how few resources there are to meet patient needs.**

Health Promotion, Programming, & Advocacy

Clinical services are the backbone of Halifax Sexual Health Centre’s program delivery. However, one of the best features of HSHC is that we get to do so much more than your traditional primary care office. We get to participate in Nova Scotian’s larger health journey, not just in the exam room, but in the classroom, conferences, community meetings, and more. Health promotion activities, unique community and in-house programming, and advocacy are key components to the way that we get to enact our shared vision, that “All members of our community have full, equal, non-judgmental and safe access to sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health care and education.”

This year, we were able to go in-person into the community to provide approximately **25 hours of comprehensive sexual education to over 240 participants and 13 hours of professional development sessions to over 200 participants**. We had several opportunities to speak to the media about sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health topics and to promote and advocate for HSHC and our services. This year, we created a new presentation on Destigmatizing Pleasure, to add onto the roster of pre-made workshops available to be booked by community members and organizations. Additionally, we tabled at many school and community events, such as the Atlantic Sex Show, engaging with hundreds of individuals as we gave out safer sex supplies, Diva Cups, and sexual health information. We also continued to produce online content for social media. This year, our social media reached over 808,800 users, thanks to a viral post about an upcoming fundraiser.

Thanks to the Age Friendly Communities Grant, Sexual Health Nova Scotia was able to partner with HSHC and the full network of rural sexual health centres to update Sheet Harbour Sexual Health Centre’s (now named Seahorse Sexual Health) **Sex Over Sixty** guide with an eye to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and



develop and deliver an accompanying workshop to be delivered across the province. What resulted was an incredible 44-page guide filled with incredible illustrations (by Shannon Long) and accessible information relevant to all seniors as they explore their sexuality, sensuality, and health in their later years. Requests for workshops related to senior sexual health (as well as sexual health as it pertains to cancer and other competing health issues) have boomed over this past year. We are delighted to use this amazing resource for years to come. Find it for free online and in community organizations around the province!

Thanks to funds from the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia DAWN Fund, we were able to launch the **Gender-Affirming Surgery Recovery Program**! This program provides direct financial support for individuals undergoing gender-affirming surgery who do not have access to compensation to support necessary time away from work for surgical recovery. The primary objective of this program is to ease the financial burden of taking unpaid time off for beneficiaries. We hope that with this financial support, beneficiaries will not feel as pressured to return to work prematurely, thus reducing risk of associated complications. Thank you to CFNS for recognizing that (unfortunately) health care support needs are not only dictated by our bodies, but by our wallets!



Dr. Laci Williams at the Gender-Affirming Medical Care Providers Networking Night.

For a long time, we have had this event on our bucket list. We finally made it happen! This year, thanks to the passions of Dr. Laci Williams, we partnered with prideHealth to host a **Gender-Affirming Medical Care Providers Networking Night**. Inspired by a similar event hosted by Venus Envy, this event was an informal gathering of clinicians who provide gender-affirming care across the province and with different patient populations. Participants were invited to share a five-minute introduction to their practices and how to access their services. Clinicians were very excited to meet people who they had previously only communicated over fax! Reinforcing strong inter-professional connections is a key part of ensuring that gender-affirming care continues during periods of politically motivated hate. Thank you to Doctors Nova Scotia for supportive funding for this event!

We partnered on a unique project this year – a scholarship! Financially supported and created by Garry Dart, a local 2SLGBTQ+ advocate and educator, **the Dart Sexual Health Leadership Scholarship** is eligible to anyone going into a post-secondary program that wants to pursue studies and provide services in sexual health. They must demonstrate how they have worked or volunteered in sexual health leadership. We were proud to work with Garry and Sexual Health Nova Scotia to house the scholarship. We are looking forward to choosing the first recipient next fiscal year!

Thanks to funds from the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia VISIONS fund, our award-winning and longest-running program got a HUGE upgrade last year! Our Compassionate Contraceptives program, which offers patients free and discounted prescription contraceptives, has now grown to become the **Expanded Compassionate Care program**! With these additional funds, on top of contraceptives, we have been able to offer patients free in-house treatments to common genital infections (such as yeast, HSV, and bacterial vaginosis), free gender-affirming hormone injection supplies, and free post-operative gender-affirming surgery support kits (medical and emotional support items such as bandages, scar cream, colouring supplies, and more). As always, we do not require any paperwork or financial information to access the program – just let our nurse or doctor know at your visit. Removing the barrier of cost has a huge impact on our diverse patient population. Funding for this program extended into this fiscal year, and was generous enough to support the purchase of enough supplies to last us a good while.

This year, we continue to focus on **advocating for free, universal access to contraceptives**. In 2023, we joined Access Now Nova Scotia, a coalition of professionals, clinicians, and activists advocating for barrier free, universal access to contraception in consideration of gender equity, best medical practices, and smart economics. While federal and provincial talks regarding pharmacare



Abbey Ferguson, Executive Director, at the AccessNow rally outside of the Nova Scotia Legislature.

plans have stalled, we still believe that free birth control is a worthwhile and impactful initiative. We used our walking group in the Halifax Pride Parade to make our message regarding Pharmacare access clear. This year, we were invited to the Nova Scotia Provincial Legislature twice to speak on the topic. In June we spoke as witnesses to the Standing Committee on Health. In September, in honor of World Contraceptive Day, we led a rally before being invited in by the NDP as guests related to a bill introduction. We will continue to advocate for this important cause – hopefully one day, we will no longer need our Compassionate Contraceptives program.



*Volunteers walking with HSHC in the 2025 Halifax Pride Parade.
Photo credit: Stoo Metz Photography.*

We had a whole host of students this year! Over this fiscal, we were joined by Lucy (Masters of Social Work), Hannah (Masters of Social Work), Buthaynah (Bachelors of Health Promotion), Rebekah (NSCC Medical Office Administration), Kaylin (Beal University Nursing), and one cohort from the Dalhousie Medicine Service Learning program, Johanna, Brittney, and Jessica. Special shout out to Johanna, who was a volunteer with HSHC before being accepted into medical school! We love when volunteers come back to us along their academic and professional journeys! Lucy and Hannah assisted our staff MSW in performing intakes and assessments for gender-affirming care and gained impactful clinical experience, along with shadowing and

support for health promotion activities, such as presentations and tabling events. Hannah also assisted with grant writing. Buthaynah shadowed and supported health promotion activities, such as presentations, social media posts, and tabling events. Rebekah learned the ropes of office management and best practices in discussing sexual health with patients. Kaylin learned clinical nursing skills with a diverse set of patients. Our Service Learners prepped all year for a big fundraiser scheduled to occur in the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Stay tuned for the details! Students and interns provide incredible opportunities to HSHC by increasing our capacity and creating future sex-positive and gender-affirming professionals for the community. Thank you!



Social Work placement students, Elle and Hannah, in the Social Work office.

The Team

At the heart of everything HSHC does is our dedicated team of professionals who work hard to ensure HSHC offers the best quality care and service to all of our clients. Without our multidisciplinary team, HSHC would not be able to meet the clinical or educational sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health needs of our community. We have grown our team this year, thanks to several grants!

Executive Director

Abbey Ferguson is the current Executive Director of HSHC. She is responsible for general oversight and management of the clinic and staff, as well as all of the amazing collaborations that HSHC gets to participate in. She has continued to do Health Promotion Coordination as well, and regularly gets out of the office to deliver comprehensive sexual education and professional development sessions in the community.

Volunteers

Volunteers are very important members of our team here at HSHC. Volunteers help with our daily operations (e.g. reception, appointment bookings and reminders, specimen management, etc.) and our fundraising initiatives. We had over 20 volunteers pick up shifts this year, **contributing over 1,619 hours of support!** We are so grateful for their help.

Administrators

This past fiscal, HSHC employed 2 full-time Medical Office Administrators and 2 casual Administrators. Our admins are the front-line contact for our patients and do so much more than book appointments. We thank them endlessly for their skills in healthcare navigation, clinical management, and being the supportive voice on the line for so many community members. Our admin have put in many hours this year working on streamlining our task management, managing our clinical growth, and training our incredible teams of students and volunteers. A special shout out to Maddie Clark-O'Brien, who has completed her Bachelors of Social Work, and is now in the community providing impactful front line services.

Nurses

This fiscal, HSHC employed 1 full-time RN and 2 part-time RNs. Our RNs also offered a preceptorship to one RN student, who we have since hired! Welcome Kaylin! We'd also like to wish Michelle well with her new baby, and can't wait to have her back on the team. Nursing is an integral part of our service model and proved invaluable this past year. Our nurse provides critical follow-up of all urgent issues, runs the STBBI testing and treatment program, works closely with our gender-affirming care patients to initiate new assessments and provide injection teaching, and is available to answer clients' questions by phone on a daily basis. Managing the clinic without our nurses would be impossible.

Social Work

Thanks to the generosity of the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, we have an MSW on our team, Jey Benoit! Jey was also able to take on two Masters level social work students. Students help us increase our capacity while ensuring future providers are well informed on sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming care provision. We also expanded our social work team with a new position – Gender-Affirming Care Coordinator! A big welcome to the team to Teddie McKay! The GAC Coordinator is a blended administrative and social service position, meant to allow our gender-diverse patient population a streamlined contact. The same friendly face can address both clinical administrative needs, as well as offer direct services, such as intakes, resource referrals, and more.

Physiotherapy

At the tail end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, we started a brand new clinical service, physiotherapy! Our physiotherapist is a familiar face, Amy Prescott, who has previously worked with HSHC as a casual MOA. Amy is managing both direct physio service, as well as program development for this new innovative service. Amy is offering a combination of pelvic floor physio and gender-affirming care related physio. Physio has become a very desired service. It allows patients with and without insurance to access care with an affirming provider in a familiar, friendly location.

Physicians

We have had an incredible full roster of physicians this fiscal year. 17 physicians practiced with us over the course of this year, and we are ending with a team of 12. We'd like to wish Dr. Kimmel well with her new baby, and look forward to having her back! In addition to seeing patients, our physician team also works hard to facilitate practical learning opportunities in our specialized primary care setting. They frequently train medical residents, medical students, pharmacy students, and registered nursing students in gender affirming care and other sexual and reproductive health specialties. Learner opportunities continue to be a mainstay of HSHC. Our physicians are passionate about program development, and they lead the charge on new clinical services and procedures. A big thank you to Dr. Elisabeth Gold, who has practiced with HSHC since the 1990s! She has shifted to private practice, and we wish her all the best!

“Do You Mind?” Project

Thanks to the generous funding from the Community Based Research Centre, we were able to hire a Project Coordinator, Abbie MacPherson. You may remember her from our last CBRC project in 2023-24! HSHC is a member of this national-scale project to deliver queer youth dating prevention education. From there, Abbie will be working with participants to lead and create their own programming to prevent dating violence. Our cohort has chosen to create a zine and a zine launch event celebrating healthy relationships. Stay tuned to see the results of this amazing for-youth, by-youth program!

Health Promotion

The Health Promotion Coordinator has been a split role at HSHC. Previously split with an admin, the Executive Director is now taking over those duties. The Health Promotion Coordinator is responsible for organizing educational presentations and workshops (such as sexual education in schools and professional development sessions for allied health professionals) and developing resources for physicians, staff, and clients.

Contracts

In addition to our core team, HSHC also relies on several contracted workers to ensure our operation runs smoothly. Very special thanks to our Medical Director, Dr. Julie Gibson, who offers ongoing support and leadership of our clinical service offerings, policy, and resource development. Chey Morris is a part of the team as Financial Controller/Bookkeeper.



Tamara Smith, one of HSHC's full-time Medical Office Administrators.

Partnerships & Research

Our partnerships and networks are what make HSHC a strong player in sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming care in Nova Scotia. We love and appreciate opportunities to partner with a variety of professionals, community groups, researchers, and national organizations over the past year to continue the hard work of advancing sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health. Some of the projects we've participated in throughout the year include:

- Partnering with Sexual Health Nova Scotia and the network of rural sexual health centers on a project funded by the Government of Nova Scotia's Age-Friendly Communities grant. We have updated the infamous *Sex Over Sixty* guidebooks and workshop content. Available now!
- Partnering with a cohort of DalMed Service Learning students from the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program to collaborate on a direct referral pathway. SANE nurses are now able to send a direct, expedited referral to HSHC for the insertion of emergency contraceptive IUDs for survivors of sexual assault.
- Working with Dalhousie University and other post-secondary institutions across Canada to provide clinical residency rotations to all family doctor residents and opportunities for clinical shadowing for pharmacy students and medical students.
- Becoming an Employer Partner for the Barrier Breakers Youth Program via the Black Business Initiative. We offered a paid workplace internship to a youth who faced barriers to employment.
- Offering two student placements to students of Medical Office Administration from NSCC IT Campus and Sydney Waterfront Campus.
- Participating in Community Based Research Centre's "Do You Mind?" program. We are adapting a national program on 2SLGBTQ+ youth dating violence prevention with a local cohort of amazing youth.
- Sharing office space with Sexual Health Nova Scotia's Transformation Closet. We are also a pickup location for gender-affirming gear.
- Contributing to the continued influence of the PrEP-RX study. Since the study, pharmacists in Nova Scotia have had



Illustration from the Sex Over Sixty guidebook. Art by Shannon Long (who also painted our waiting room mural!).

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mind!**



their scope expanded to allow them to prescribe and manage PrEP, including labs and STI panels! The study paper has officially been published by the *Canadian Pharmacists Journal*.

- Becoming a new referral partner for Shelter Movers, an organization that offers free moving services for those escaping violence and abuse.
- Maintaining our membership in Access Now Nova Scotia, a coalition advocating for barrier free, universal access to contraception in consideration of gender equity, best medical practices, and smart economics.
- Being a member of the Community Based Research Centre's HPV Community Champion Network, to contribute to developing programming and resources regarding HPV and HPV-related cancers.
- Being a community partner for the Dalhousie Medical School Service Learning program.
- Offering two student placements for the Dalhousie University Masters of Social Work programs.
- Offering a student placement for the Dalhousie University Health Promotion program.
- Offering a preceptorship to a student of Nursing at Beal University.
- Collaborating with Dr. Austin Oswald, Dr. Thabani Nyoni, and Dr. OmiSoore Dryden on separate STBBI and 2SLGBTQ+ related research projects funded by Research Nova Scotia.
- Providing feedback and consultation support to a variety of projects relevant to sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming care.
- Participating in the Halifax Queer Health Programmers networking group. We meet monthly and discuss ongoing initiatives and partnership opportunities. The group is comprised of organizational leaders from various local non-profits (e.g. HEAL NS, prideHealth, CBRC).
- Providing Safer Sex Supplies to several community groups and events, including the Elizabeth Fry Society, NSCC Ivany Campus, YWCA Supportive Housing for Young Mothers, Tea Hive Music Festival Support, Veith House Queer Youth Prom, SMU Monster Fest, Dalhousie Nursing, Furry+Pup Dance, Consent Kitties, Coverdale Justice Society, Direction 180, Community Living Centre, Anchor Youth Space, Alice House, and the Rainbow Refugee Association of Nova Scotia. Free safer sex supplies are also given out at every in-person Health Promotion workshop.
- Providing letters of support for various research projects and grant proposals that would support the development of sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health knowledge and resources in Nova Scotia.



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Our Funders

HSHC derives its revenue from a variety of sources (overhead from MSI billings, fundraising, private donations, etc.) but without support from government, small grants, and community partners, we would not be able to sustain our operations.

HSHC would like to thank several departments in the Province of Nova Scotia, in particular the Department of Health and Wellness and the Department of Opportunities and Social Development. Thanks to collaborations with the Department of Health and Wellness, our sessional compensation package for our physicians providing gender-affirming care continued for this year, expiring March 31, 2026.

Special thanks to the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia DAWN Fund, Sexual Health Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Age Friendly Communities Grant (via Sexual Health Nova Scotia), the Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC), The Plum Foundation, and United Way for supporting HSHC.



Fundraising & Donations

We are thrilled to announce HSHC has raised **\$22,900** in support of our programs and services! The majority of these funds came directly from individual donors and those making a donation in turn for our Health Promotion program delivery, which is incredibly meaningful.

We were the beneficiaries of several generous fundraisers, including the Book of Love Singles Mixer, The Board Room Game Café's Drag Race Trivia, and the Atlantic Sex Show's raffle basket. We also spent this year planning a wonderful fundraising event for the 2026-2027 fiscal year... stay tuned!

We'd like to thank our Political Science intern, Shea, for her hard work on upgrading our fundraising tools and communications during her 2024-2025 placement with us.

Huge thanks to our private donors for your many contributions, big and small, that have an equally important impact. While grants come and go, it is the support of our community members that sustains HSHC's long-term, operational endeavors. Especially so, donations trusted in a will or otherwise made in memory of people dedicated to sexual, reproductive, and gender-affirming health and rights are so meaningful to HSHC as an organization, and to our staff who continue to work hard to put trusted dollars to good use in their honour. We are so grateful to our community of donors, we would not be able to offer the same services and level of care without your support.

