Top 5 Issues Facing HIV Long-Term Survivors in Manitoba

Long-term survivors of HIV, often defined as people living with HIV for 10+ years, face unique challenges that differ from those of more recently diagnosed individuals. **The Manitoba HIV-STBBI Collective Impact Network (CINetwork) hosted an HIV Long-Term Survivors Action Group three-hour engagement session on October 15, 2025**, at the Bill and Helen Norrie Library in Winnipeg, MB, where 15 people from Winnipeg and parts of rural Manitoba participated in a facilitated conversation. The following are 5 key results from this session:

1 Persistent Stigma and Discrimination

- Stigma continues in health care, families, and dating contexts.
- Survivors face judgment when accessing urgent care or disclosing their status.
- Fear of mistreatment in personal care homes contributes to anxiety about aging.
- Aging amplifies challenges — "**I am not HIV, I live with HIV**," but healthcare systems still define people by the HIV diagnosis

2 Isolation and Mental Health

- Many survivors live alone and struggle to form new social connections.
- Survivor guilt, depression, and addiction remain prevalent.
- Need for more peer and family support to reduce loneliness and isolation.

3 Inadequate and Inaccessible Supports

- Manitoba lags behind other provinces in drug coverage and survivor-specific programs.
- Navigating supports remains confusing, especially for newcomers who don't know where to go for HIV care or community connection when first residing in Manitoba
- Access to housing and care and support is limited in rural areas.

4 Disclosure, Safety, and Legal Barriers

- Disclosure remains traumatic; people fear rejection or partner abuse after revealing their status.
- Laws around HIV non-disclosure and criminalization create fear and inhibit openness.
- Survivors stressed the need for safe spaces and clear rights in relationships and health care.

5 Lack of Education and Public Awareness

- The general public, youth, and even healthcare workers lack accurate knowledge about HIV today.
- Persistent misconceptions reinforce stigma and isolation.
- Manitoba lacks visible education campaigns outside Winnipeg, particularly in rural areas

The Time for Action is Now

Manitoba's long-term HIV survivors echo national calls for action on stigma, isolation, and the lack of tailored supports—and they also shine light on local realities of criminalization, disclosure, limited access to care and peer support in rural areas, and the urgent need for survivor-informed research. Their voices call for education, legal reform, survivor-led peer programs, and sustained advocacy to uphold dignity, inclusion, and quality care across every stage of life.

Though these insights emerged from a single gathering, they carry a powerful message: change is both necessary and possible. The HIV Long-Term Survivor Action Group invites all changemakers—policymakers, organizations, and individuals—to act on these priorities and help build a future where long-term survivors not only live but thrive. As an added benefit, these changes will, in turn, create a stronger foundation of care for people newly diagnosed with HIV.

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