



*an initiative brought to you by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Winnipeg*



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## PWI PROFILE

The **Parent Wellness Initiative** has been operating out of 432 Ellice for three years. Its work is intended to support single parents (with at least one child under the age of six) on Employment and Income Assistance, and who live in the Downtown, Point Douglas or Seven Oaks/Inkster areas. The service focuses on assisting participants to:

- Find a place to live and make it home
- Get employment
- Continue education (upgrading and post secondary)
- Be an effective parent

We offer skills teaching, resources and ongoing, practical support to participants, using a one on one approach. Support Workers can base their appointments in the participant's home, if needed. Our aim is to assist a single parent to identify their strengths, make changes in their life and achieve success in their chosen area(s).

If you are interested in accessing the services of PWI, please call 982-6100 or speak to your EIA Worker. ■

Dedicated team of Parent Wellness workers



### PWI by the numbers (2010-2011)

- 20 number of participants who found other housing
- 14 number of participants who continued their education
- 2 number of participants who found employment
- 0 cost of PWI services to the participant

## Interview with Juanita Pomerada, EIA Worker at 755 Portage



### What prompts you to tell your EIA clients about the PWI?

### How do you determine a fit between a client's needs and what is available through PWI?

If, in a conversation with a client I hear from them that they have few supports and are feeling overwhelmed and isolated in their role as single parents I will mention the supports available from PWI. Also, when I hear that clients are having difficulty managing their budgets and are asking for additional funds a lot, I think of PWI as an option. A more positive reason to refer someone would be a situation where they want to go back to school and need support to do so.

### How do you explain PWI to your clients to get them interested?

I share the positive aspects of PWI and use the angle of getting support to find housing or go back to school to stimulate client interest. I also share success stories of clients whom PWI has worked with in the past, with them. When clients talk about feeling over-whelmed and needing more support, I know that I probably won't have the time to do that, (even though I'd like to) so I would tell that person about PWI. Most clients who want additional supports will agree to being referred to PWI when that is offered to them.

### How can referring a client to PWI make your job easier?

I know that with a caseload of about 130 clients I can't provide additional

support to clients so I see the support available to them from PWI as a viable option. From my experience with PWI, I've seen clients get needed supports with the regular contact PWI provides. That helps me with caseload management and addressing client needs.

### What changes have you seen the clients you've referred to PWI make?

The changes I've seen happen include:

**Clients** getting into subsidized housing and qualifying for the Portable Housing Benefit.

**Clients** taking less time to find affordable, stable housing more quickly with support.

**Clients** finding a doctor and psychiatrist who will work with them.

**Clients** in some cases qualifying for the Disability EIA category and increasing their Benefit.

Some **clients** have gone on to education/training and found employment or volunteering.

Some **clients** achieve more stability with support.

**Clients** referred have expressed less shame about having difficulties and needing help.

### How would you market the PWI program to other EIA Workers?

It is easier to manage a large caseload, some of whom are very needy, knowing that the additional support needed can be provided by PWI Workers. As a result I don't get as many phone calls from needy clients.

*.Continued on page 2*

## Michelle's Success Story

Hi, my name is Michelle. I am a single parent with three children. After I heard a presentation about the Parent Wellness Initiative at Taking Charge, I applied to enter the program in May 2010 and was accepted.

Although I fully engaged in meetings with my PWI worker I experienced several obstacles that became barriers to my success. Alcohol and drug use had become a normal way for me to cope with life. As a result, I had difficulty managing the roles of being a mother, student and partner. What stood in the way were anxiety, depression, attention deficit disorder, past trauma, sleep deprivation, having few supports and low self esteem as well as limited financial resources. Because I was lonely, isolated and vulnerable I found myself part of unhealthy relationships which created even more confusion, emotional instability and crises in my life.

With few coping skills and unable to focus and concentrate for longer periods of time, I faced a tough journey to get control over my life again. When I started working with PWI I needed consistent support, encouragement, guidance and assistance with budgeting and organizing. I also needed help in exploring treatment programs and respite care for my children.

Despite the many challenges I diligently worked to overcome the barriers and pursue my goals with the support of my PWI worker.

A lot of things happened in the year I've been with PWI. I got a referral for a Psychiatry Assessment at HSC. Based on their recommendations I attended Cognitive Behavioural classes at Mood Disorders and started to take meds. on a daily basis. I began to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and enrolled in a treatment program at AFM. I started seeing a counselor at Mediation Services

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and the Aurora counseling program at the U of Winnipeg. My PWI worker helped me to apply for educational funding through the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

I've gained a lot from my experiences of attending various programs over the last year. I am a much stronger parent, student and partner now. I've completed two sessions at AFM and accessed the counseling services I needed. My children have found respite care. I've learned about boundaries and how to be part of healthier relationships.

Now I'm enrolled at the Adult Education Center and have recently applied to the Inner City Access Social Work program of the University of Manitoba. Recently I received confirmation that I've been accepted into phase one of the screening process for school.

I'm now preparing for phase two which involves a reading and writing session. Last week I was contacted by a Vocational Rehabilitation worker to meet and discuss school funding for September. I hope to start training for my future career as a Social Worker in the fall of 2011. ■

## Interview with Juanita Pomerada

*Continued from page 1*

Also my experience with PWI has proved to be a good way to connect with a community agency. PWI has done an incredible job supporting the clients I have referred there. The Workers go above and beyond my expectations. It is great that this program was funded to work with EIA clients that otherwise might fall between the service cracks. The workers know a lot about mental health.

PWI is a wrap around service that is very versatile and can work in different areas with the person.

### What motivates you to support your clients, as an EIA Worker?

Being part of a client's success story motivates me. I want to change the negative face that some clients have of EIA by providing them with positive service. Seeing someone make progress and knowing that you have helped them move forward is very satisfying to me. When clients thank me for helping them that is also rewarding to me. ■

*"... clients achieve more stability with support."*



## How to Cope with Single Parent Stress

Raising children on your own is challenging and at times the stress can seem overwhelming. Here's some information you can use to help take care of both your children and yourself.

### The Challenges

It's hard enough to cope with having the emotions of being a single parent with children, but that's only one of the issues you face when you find yourself raising kids alone. Other challenges you're likely to face include;

- Getting back into the work force
- Being unable to make ends meet on Employment and Income Assistance
- Having no one to share housework and errands
- Not having enough time to spend with your children
- Finding adequate daycare or babysitting
- Loneliness and isolation
- Not having time to socialize, pursue a new relationship or just to relax.

*Continued on page 3*



### Dealing with Finances

If you're having financial problems, these suggestions may help:

- **Try putting yourself on a budget**

If you're struggling to make ends meet from one month to the next, consider working with a credit counselor. In Winnipeg, the Community Financial Credit

Service, at 989 – 1900 can assist you to develop a budget and manage debt.

- **Look for ways to cut back.**

For instance ask yourself if you really need all those premium cable TV channels. Look at how you and your kids use cell phones. Can you get a cheaper plan that will still meet your needs?

- **Avoid eating out or ordering in.** Home cooked meals are usually healthier and cost considerably less than take out food.

**Brew coffee at home** rather than purchasing your daily coffee.

### Child Care Worries

Finding child care can be a major headache for a single parent. Start by asking friends for their recommended baby sitters. Also visit day care centers before you make any decisions. Make sure the day care center has an open door policy that allows parents to visit any time.

To get information about the Manitoba Child Care Subsidy program you can call 945-0286.

To develop an alternative day care backup plan, talk to friends and family members to see if any of them can help out in a pinch.

### Sharing the Responsibilities

If you come home from a hard day's work to find dirty dishes in

the sink, an overflowing garbage can and muddy paw prints all over the house, you won't be in the best frame of mind to spend quality time with your kids. Get everyone to help. Assign each child chores and work together for 15-30 minutes to get things in order. That way you will have time to relax together without clutter and confusion getting in the way.

### Keep an eye on your own health

#### **Don't let your other obligations make you neglect your own health.**

Make sure to eat right, get enough sleep and do at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

Also remember your emotional health. Try to ease the stress in your life by remembering to:

- **Find time for yourself.** Even if just for a short time, relax with a good book, work on a hobby, or unwind by listening to your favourite music.
- **Get support.** Reach out to family members or friends who can take your kids off your hands for a while, drop off a meal or do laundry for you.
- **Reach out to other single parents.** Find a support group so that you can share ideas and thoughts with other parents who have similar problems. In Winnipeg you can attend Healthy Baby groups or visit neighbourhood family or women's centers like the West Central Women's Resource Center located at 640 Ellice Ave.
- **Socialize.** Whether your children spend alternating weekends with your ex or you need to recruit a family member to babysit, find a way to get yourself out of the house and into the company of other grownups when you can.

#### **And...don't give up! The kids will grow up and you will survive. ■**

*(based on information excerpted from: website: myoptumhealth.com)*

Visit [www.cmhawpg.mb.ca](http://www.cmhawpg.mb.ca) for more advice information .

## QUICK and EASY RECIPES TO TRY

### Easy Onion Soup

Chop: 1 medium onion

Brown in: 1 teaspoon oil or butter for 5-7 minutes until caramelized

Stir in: 1 tablespoon flour until onions are coated

Add gradually: 2 cups broth (use OXO cube)

1 cup red wine or water

Bring to a boil. Simmer for 10 minutes until steamy and fragrant.

### Oatmeal Muffins

Butter, grease or spray muffin pan

Mix: 1 cup milk  
¼ cup vegetable oil  
1 egg

Stir together:

1 cup flour  
¼ cup brown sugar  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 cup rolled oats

Gently combine all, spoon into prepared pans. Bake in 425 oven for 20-25 minutes.

### Nutmeg Cinnamon Apple Juice

4 cups apple juice

Lemon or orange slices

¼ tsp. nutmeg

½ tsp. cinnamon

If desired, heat for 10 minutes. Can also be served cold (after being heated) for a refreshing drink.

### Crispy Rice Squares

Melt: ¼ cup butter or margarine and remove from heat

Add: 32 large marshmallows (about ½ bag)

Stir in: 4 cups of Rice Krispies

Press in 8x 8 buttered or oiled pan. Cool and cut into squares.

(All recipes provided by Pat Fraser)

