**Walk-in Counselling Overview**

## What is single-session walk-in counselling?

At Foundry, walk-in counselling (WiC) is a core service that allows young people to access counselling one session at a time, on an as-needed basis. WiC is offered using the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) approach: a strengths-based therapeutic approach that focuses on the client’s existing skills, resources and strengths to formulate solutions to work towards their goals.

WiC does not require a prior assessment of the young person, but they may be offered additional services if their presenting concerns suggest that a more intensive intervention is needed. In such a case, a counsellor will recommend an in-depth assessment as the next course of action.

Each WiC session is offered as a complete course of therapy and typically lasts 45 to 50 minutes. Although each session is intended to be a complete therapy, subsequent walk-in sessions may build on previous sessions. These subsequent sessions focus on moving from goal formation to co-creating a therapeutic plan as an ongoing process.

Walk-in counselling is delivered at Foundry centres, as well as virtually, through the Foundry BC app or web portal. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Foundry centres changed to virtual service delivery, and the Foundry Virtual BC program launched quickly to offer virtual “walk-in” services across the province. Walk-in counselling is offered in person and/or virtually, depending on each Foundry centre’s local COVID-19 restrictions and community needs, and Foundry Virtual BC continues to provide virtual services.

## Why is Foundry using single-session walk-in counselling?

Foundry’s vision is to provide low-barrier, easily accessible services for young people. By offering walk-in counselling, young people can get help when they need it or at a time of their choosing. Compared to being waitlisted or given an appointment in the future, walk-in clients tend to be highly motivated to receive help and make changes.[[1]](#footnote-2)

WiC is the entry point for many young people to a Foundry centre, including the Integrated Stepped Care Model (ISCM). Improving access to services by providing same-day support, WiC addresses a variety of needs and can be successful as an intervention across a wide range of presenting concerns. It is a goal-focused and complete intervention with no specific requirement for follow-up visits. It is also youth driven, as the young person determines the focus for each visit and if and when to return for subsequent visits.

In all therapy models, evidence has shown that one session is the most frequent number of sessions for a course of therapy. This finding aligns with research indicating that most people want to experience positive outcomes in a single session. Additionally, researchers have found that improvements are typically made in the first few sessions of counselling.[[2]](#footnote-3)

## What will be the impact on young people and families?

WiC allows young people to get help when they first ask for it, without scheduling an appointment. This responsive approach supports early intervention for mental health and substance use concerns and does not require a young person to be placed on a waitlist for services. In fact, as a result of changing their services to a walk-in model, many programs, like What’s Up Walk-In clinics in Toronto, have eliminated waitlists for more intensive counselling services.1

Foundry recognizes that it takes a community to support our young people. To this end, caregivers of a young person may also access WiC to support their youth and, if appropriate, may participate in their youth’s walk-in session. In some instances, caregivers may also be referred to their centre’s Family Peer Supporter or Navigator.

No matter which Foundry centre a young person and their caregiver access, they can expect a consistent approach to service delivery. Counsellors work in collaboration with other service providers at the centre, sharing the goal of creating a seamless care experience for young people and their caregivers. Clear processes are in place to ensure that those accessing services are aware of information sharing practices and their rights and responsibilities when it comes to shaping the course of their wellness journey.

## What will be the impact on Foundry centre team members?

All Foundry centres offer WiC services delivered by counsellors trained in SFBT. Some centres may also offer WiC provided by students or interns who have had an SFBT orientation course and on-site training and are mentored and supervised.

Counsellors are responsible for documenting the service delivered in Toolbox, Foundry’s electronic data platform. Counsellors also need to work in partnership with young people — and their caregivers, when applicable — to determine which service best meets their needs.

Foundry Central Office (FCO) recommends having at least two counsellors and a clinical supervisor available during the hours that WiC is offered, to allow for team collaboration and clinical consultation. It is the Lead Agency’s responsibility to ensure that on-site clinical supervision is delivered by a Master’s-level clinician and available to all counsellors delivering walk-in services.

If a young person returns for more walk-in sessions, they will usually see the first available counsellor. They cannot count on seeing the same counsellor in future walk-in visits and will be oriented to this process at each walk-in session. WiC times should be run concurrently with other Foundry walk-in services such as medical services and peer support and should be offered for a minimum of 20 hours a week.

Foundry provides training for walk-in counsellors and their supervisors on SFBT within the specific Foundry context of single-session. This training is 1.5 days and is co-led by two Foundry SFBT trainers. Additionally, walk-in counsellors and supervisors are encouraged to participate in the Foundry province-wide SFBT Community of Practice, a facilitated teleconference hosted by FCO.

WiC complements other psychotherapeutic services provided at Foundry centres and can offer support while young people are waitlisted for other community resources. To promote continuity of care, all service providers have access to screening tools through Toolbox, allowing for shared communication about the young person’s presenting concern, level of distress and services accessed at the Foundry centre.

As with any shift in practice or service delivery, walk-in services may present changes in processes and the way counsellors and teams do their work. It may take time for the team to adapt to the WiC model and to adjust to a new way of working. Literature on supporting teams and individuals through the process of change indicates that a combination of factors such as desire, knowledge and abilities lead to a successful change. For more information on how FCO can support teams on change management, please contact your FCO Manager, Service Implementation and Integration (MSII).

## What will be the practice change for counsellors?

There are a few specific elements that are part of the Foundry WiC model that may require a practice change for the counsellor. The most common practice changes are:

1. Engaging with the Toolbox screeners and End of Visit Forms;
2. Providing a counselling session without conducting a comprehensive assessment prior; and
3. Containing the therapeutic intervention to a single session (unless therapeutically indicated).

Many counsellors and clinicians who provide WiC at Foundry have previous experience in counselling and therapy models that include assessment as the first point of contact. WiC at a Foundry centre does not include a comprehensive assessment, and the premise of this single-session model is that the entire counseling session is a complete therapeutic intervention. Clinicians still use their training and experience to recognize when a walk-in counselling session is not appropriate, based on presenting indicators and results from the Toolbox Health Survey, and clinicians will conduct an assessment and other clinical interventions accordingly. Questions related to safety and risk are included as part of the Health Survey and will be responded to in a clinically appropriate manner.

## How will single-session walk-in counselling be implemented at Foundry centres?

WiC service implementation begins at the design and development phase of a Foundry centre, in partnership with the Lead Agency and community partners. As WiC is typically a new service in BC communities, early planning focuses on identifying existing resources that could contribute to the walk-in model. FCO team members are available to assist in this process and to support conversations around service delivery. Service partners are encouraged to offer services within Foundry’s age mandate so that a counsellor providing WiC sees any young person ages 12–24.

As with other services, WiC requires access to adequate staffing, supervision, space and technology. For more information on the specific resources, space and operational considerations needed to implement WiC, please refer to Foundry’s Walk-in Counselling Standards and Walk-in Counselling Practice Profile included as appendices in Foundry’s Service Model Guide.

Training in SFBT for WiC is offered shortly before a Foundry centre opens. Once a Foundry centre is established and there is a need for more training due to factors such as hiring new staff, Foundry’s Knowledge Exchange and Mobilization Manager will work with centres to determine how and when the training can be provided.

## Still have questions regarding walk-in counselling?

The Foundry Central Office team is available to support the implementation of WiC at each Foundry centre and support with any additional questions or challenges related to WiC. For further information, contact your MSII.

1. Slive A, Bobele M, editors. When one hour is all you have*.* Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen; 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Green K, Correia T, Bobele M, Slive A. The research case for walk-in single sessions. In: Slive A, Bobele M, editors. When one hour is all you have. Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen; 2011. p. 23-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)