



Update from Making Changes Regarding COVID-19

We hope that this message finds you healthy. In these unprecedented times, our number #1 goal for all of our staff, clients, volunteers and donors is to be safe. As a part of this safety plan, we had to temporarily close our programs as in-person offerings. However, that does not mean the need for our programs does not continue to exist.

For instance, each week we continue to receive an increasing number of requests for clothing from our closets programs. Many of the clients we serve are actually finding new employment opportunities related to essential services and need interview and work attire. Of course we did not want to delay offering our education programs. We need to keep them operating so our clients are ready for the employment opportunities that will exist post COVID-19. For instance, we know the demand for positions for the tech sector, namely e-commerce, only continues to grow the longer businesses have to move online as part of their business model.

Responding to the Needs of Women in Calgary

We are so happy to report that the Making Changes staff and volunteers have come together and created ways to respond to the need and the demand. This includes:

- Offering our Women in Technology Program (WIT), 100% online in a virtual classroom setting. On April 6, 2020, we were able to start the next program session as scheduled, to a full class of 16 students. The results to date have been very positive. All students are engaged and learning. Our program director, Rosanna, is able to use the same technology to stay in touch with each student individually.
- Our Employment & Life Skills Program has also made the pivot to an online classroom. Again, the results to date have been successful.
- We are currently in the process of taking both closets online, starting with My Best Friend's Closet. Clients will be asked to complete a simple screening process to qualify and then will be able to 'shop' for clothing online. Of course the clothing will still be at no cost and will be distributed through non-contact delivery. Perhaps the most exciting part of this program going online is the 'community' that we hope to build. The platform will include online class/workshops (think 'Creating the Perfect 5 Minute Face') and chat rooms. The Online Walk-In Closet will follow closely behind.

Starting Our 'New Normal'

In the following weeks/months we will start our 'new normal' in which we can return to operating our programs in-person. Our opening will be a staged approach, and will be over an extended period as the health and well-being of our clients, volunteers and staff remain our number one priority. We know that the in-person appointments we create for each of our clients is about more than clothes but the experience, education and consultation provided to the client that really makes the difference. Still, we are happy to have been 'pushed' to create the online version for each of our programs. Why? For multiple reasons:

- It will allow us to continue to serve clients now, even before the staged re-opening.
- The online platform will help us implement our staged re-opening, allowing us to reach the same number of clients with a variety of delivery methods.
- Post-COVID, we know that each online platform will allow us to expand our support to a client base that we are currently not serving.
- The Online platform will also create new volunteer opportunities (for example: Chat Room 'Operators', Online Fashion Merchandisers, to name just two).

So COVID-19 has become a growth opportunity for Making Changes. These changes have come with costs that we will need to recover, especially as we start to use both the in-person and online delivery. We predict this will create a record breaking year in terms of the number of clients served. So through all of the COVID-19 confusion and changes, we see a bright future.

We would love to have you continue to be a part of our journey! Please [click here](#) to indicate your interest to be a part of the new and improved Making Changes!

Cathy Coutts, Executive Director

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