Module 1:
What is Spiritual Health Care?

Developed by:
Provincial Spiritual Health Care Management Network
## Module 1 – Session Guide

### What is Spiritual Health Care

#### Facilitators Overview/Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>An open discussion exploring the understanding of the word/concept that each participant brings to the session</td>
<td>Pages 2-4 Participants self-disclosure, page 4; Discussion questions 1-2</td>
<td>The facilitators openness and willingness to receive each person’s view without judgment will build trust in the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Facilitator presents definition what will be used in the context of this training</td>
<td>Pages 5-6 Discussion questions 3-4</td>
<td>Care needs to be taken in this section to address the tendency by some to want to “find the sin” behind each sickness</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>An open discussion contrasting spiritual health and spiritual sickness: Are these helpful categories to consider?</td>
<td>Pages 6-8 Discussion questions 5-8</td>
<td>Care needs to be taken in this section to address the tendency by some to want to “find the sin” behind each sickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Open with the question: “How do you understand the distinction between Spirituality and Religion?” Explore together the distinction</td>
<td>Pages 9-10 Discussion questions 9-12 Appendix 1 (pg 13)</td>
<td>The purpose of the distinction isn’t to create a “good/bad” dichotomy, but an understanding that there is a distinction</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Explore the place of Spiritual Health Care in the modern Health Care System</td>
<td>Pages 11-12 Appendix 2 (pg 14)</td>
<td>Review the IRHA job description as a means of identifying the role of a Spiritual Health Care Volunteer</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Manitoba’s Regional health Authorities. Provide participants with a sense of the importance of Spiritual Health Care Volunteers in Manitoba’s RHAs</td>
<td>Page 12 Appendix 3 (pg 16) Discussion question 12</td>
<td>Help volunteers understand that what they will contribute to health care is essential in this developing field.</td>
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What is Spiritual Health Care?
Larry Hirst

Objectives:
- To explore and come to an understanding of what spirituality is in the context of this course
- To wrestle with the concepts of spiritual health and spiritual sickness or “dis-ease”
- To draw distinctions between religion and spirituality
- To explore the importance of the role “Spiritual health Care Volunteer”

Introduction

Interestingly, if you do a Google search using the question “What is spiritual health care?” the first site on the list of 27,700,000 hits is our own Manitoba Health site. So, it seems that this would be a fine place to begin as we contemplate preparing to be Spiritual Health Care volunteers in the context of our own Manitoba Health system of care. From the website:

Spiritual Health

People seek meaning in order to live authentically with each other. This can become a particular set of spiritual beliefs, guiding the ultimate purpose of our life. Spirituality contributes to health in many ways. It is how a person searches for meaning, through religion and/or belief in a god, through relationships with family, or participation in naturalism, rationalism, humanism and the arts. This can affect how people who need health care as well as how health care providers understand health and illness.

In caring for the whole human being, there is a need to focus on each aspect of what makes a person human. The most visible is our body. The second aspect is that of thinking, engaging our minds. A third aspect is feeling, which emerges in emotions and forms the dynamic energy of our relationships. And the fourth aspect of self is the spiritual. Its definitions are constantly evolving as understanding of this vital area of health care changes. Healing is rooted in the concept of wholeness. A physical health care need, such as an illness, may be a symptom of a deeper and more complex need for healing the whole person. In health care, there is growing awareness that spiritual care is a vital aspect of care for the whole person.¹

¹ http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/spiritualhealth/index.html
Thinking about spirituality can be both an enthralling and daunting experience. To begin with, defining “spirituality” is not an easy task. By its very nature, spirituality is given to a myriad of definitions, many of them similar in some ways, different in others. This is not simply a modern phenomenon but from the beginning of the human experience, from the oldest of human records, many perspectives on spirituality have been offered by those who have considered this integral aspect of being human. Here are a few of literally thousands upon thousands of examples of how people are currently defining the concept of spirituality.

“Spirituality has many different meanings all over the world. Often it is associated with religion, whilst in other cases spirituality is kept quite distinct from religion. Spirituality has also gained a certain widespread ‘reputation’ through the New Age movement. Further still, many eastern traditions are considered spiritual; Zen, Buddhism, The Sacred Tao to mention but three. There is even a spiritual side to ancient western practices such as Paganism, occult beliefs, Wiccanism etc. It seems the term spirituality can be applied to just about anything and perhaps that in-itself is very telling.

Spirituality is a deeply personal thing, in many ways this is why it fits into nearly every perspective, whether it is an established belief system or not. This broad-view on Spirituality can lead to a lot of ambiguity, so where could be a better place to begin on this than with a collection of quotes from people around the world, on the question; “What is Spirituality?” (including quotes below)²

“I think spirituality is a natural curiosity of, and a wish to seek out the higher self. The search for ones own soul.” Borgia

“My personal definition of spirituality, is the pursuit of excellence. For me what is excellent is beautiful and satisfying to the soul.” Pepe

“Spirituality is knowing God.” Smith

“That part of you, your higher self, God part, soul if you like that is disconnected from the physical body. Always seeking to learn and obtain knowledge of the other realms, astral planes and to bring that into existence. Knowledge that we are infinite immortal beings that exist.” Princess

“Spirituality is a journey in search of the unconditional essence of love.” Candle

“To me, what is “spirit” is essentially what is not ego and not physical, that subatomic “empty space” within us that connects us to the Tao, the Great

² http://www.thethoughts.co.uk/thoughts/what-is-spirituality/
Emptiness. This part of ourselves can only be reached by going beyond thought and physical reality; this pursuit or level of awareness I would term spirituality.” Angela

“As a belief, Spirituality is the conviction that something exists beyond the perception of our five natural senses. Sometimes those beliefs extend to things which *are* perceived by our natural senses, even when a complete explanation involving only those natural senses is available. It is a method of explaining experiences which the person who had the experience cannot explain in natural terms.” Mark

“At present, spirituality represents to me the superhuman effort towards becoming a recipient of the higher truth, knowing that truth can never be sought, nor determined, but revealed.” Attila Borsca

“Convergence towards being the creator. Being a conscious creator of your life and finding your own truth.” Hildegarde

“As I see it at this time, everything is spirituality. That is, if you’re able to perceive it that way.” Brad

“I don’t know if I’ve truly settled on this, but for the moment it’s what I’ve come up with because it seems to encompass what I understand: Spirituality: The quality or state of consciousness organized and focused through the awareness that all life is eternal and borne of the sacred.” Sowelu

“The authenticity of being your genuine Self, beyond the confines of the Ego. The balance of our awareness uniting us with the consciousness of all levels of reality.” Marcus

These are the voices of people who are expressing what they personally believe. Although you may not find their definitions in a dictionary, these perspectives are representative of the fact that “spirituality” is a rather fluid concept.

Questions for reflection and discussion: (Do this before you move on)

1. How would you define spirituality? As you have read the definitions given by others, some might seem good and others quite “out there”. Think about your own concept of spirituality and write a definition of your own. Don’t use a dictionary, just reflect and write from your heart.

2. As we begin to think about spirituality, is there anything within you objecting to the concept or something about the concept? Identify what the objections are and write them down. This will be helpful as we proceed.
So What is Spirituality?

For our purposes such ambiguity, although important to acknowledge, is not terribly helpful as we are considering the question, “What is spiritual health care?”

So, acknowledging that you may have a very different take on how to define spirituality, for the purposes of this training, let’s define spirituality as “our longing to live meaningful and purposeful lives, our sense of relatedness and connection, our desire to live with trust and hope in an uncertain universe, our desire to experience a sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves (Ultimate Mystery, God, the Divine, Oneness, the Unlimited, Nature, Life).”

This connectedness and a sense of the need to develop, enhance and deepen this connectedness manifests itself, regardless of time, culture, race, religion or any other distinction in the pursuit of meaning: who am I, why do I exist and what value is my existence. Answering these fundamental questions engages the intellect, the emotions and the volition of the explorer. How one pursues the answers to these primary questions, the journey one takes in this pursuit and the conclusions one arrives at are intertwined in this connectedness with one self, one’s environment, others and the Transcendent. And unlike the empiricism of much of medical science, spiritual investigations rarely result in identical, repeatable outcomes.

Now all this is beginning to sound terribly philosophical but if you think about it is philosophical and that is something we need to come to terms with if we are going to care for the spirit of another. Spiritual health care is about honoring the spiritual pursuit of another and being content that there are no answers to these questions of meaning that we have the right to impose on another. Spiritual health care is more about taking a walk with another, contemplating, and exploring and recognizing the importance of each person coming to his/her own heart-felt conclusions, because moving along this pathway is beneficial not only in terms of one’s spiritual health, but because spiritual health contributes to physical, mental and emotional health as well.

It is about connecting with another for the purpose of enhancing, encouraging and facilitating a deeper more satisfying connection with themselves, their environment, others and the Transcendent. Our agreement with the conclusions those you care for may reach is quite frankly, irrelevant to providing spiritual health care and if persuading another to agree with your conclusions is important to you, volunteering to provide spiritual health care is probably not a good fit for you. You would most likely be more comfortable serving in a capacity where you provided religious care in the context of your own faith tradition.

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3 Patricia Frain, “Spirituality and Ethics in Health Care”, HSC Newsletter, March 2010
What then is Spiritual Health?

Possibly before we attempt to define spiritual health, we need to address the reality of spiritual ill-health. For if we are concerned about enhancing spiritual health, we must understand that the converse of spiritual health is a common part of the human condition. World religions of every kind all embrace some concept of spiritual disease, often called “sin”.

The concept of sin in the major world religions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>A failure of mutual relations, a breach in the relationship between two parties, crookedness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Paul – sin is the ruling power in the world, John – sin is the opposite of the “Truth”, Hebrews – a disorder atoned for by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>There are ninety words in the Koran for sin all which reflect on offending God or another person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Ignorance is more so the focus in Hinduism as opposed to sin, however Hinduism does teach that there are great offences and lesser offences (killing a Brahman is a greater offence and killing an outcast is a lesser offense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Buddhism recognizes no existence of an omnipotent deity, therefore there is no such thing as contravening God’s will. However in it’s doctrine of karma it clearly distinguishes between good deeds and evil deeds.</td>
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Even non-religious spiritualities acknowledge the reality that the human spirit can be sick and in need of healing. At this juncture, it is not so important to explore exactly what any particular religious tradition believes about spiritual disease or illness as it is to accept the reality that if spiritual health can be enhanced, it is

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because we as humans are to various degrees at various times in our lives less than spiritually healthy.

Because as humans our bodies, minds and spirits are connected, often physical sickness or injury has a negative impact on the mind and the spirit. Because sickness or injury can have a disconnecting impact on our relationship to ourselves, our environment, others and the Transcendent; spiritual ill-health often accompanies or exacerbates physical sickness and injury. This reality explains why spiritual health care is part of the health care system here in Manitoba and in many other places.

Spiritual health is not so much a destination one reaches, but a movement towards greater and greater degrees of spiritual authenticity or integrity: This movement is manifested in one’s degree of connection to and comfort with 1) oneself including ones strengths, limitations, gifting, interests, passions, failures and successes, etc.; 2) one’s environment; 3) one’s relationships with significant others, family, friends, coworkers, strangers close and far away; and 4) one’s convictions about and relationship/connection with the Transcendent. This degree of connection and comfort fluctuates throughout ones life just as ones physical health fluctuates throughout ones life. Consequently, the degree to which one experiences spiritual health is not static or always progressing in a forward direction; there are fits and starts and down right disastrous falls in the spiritual condition of a person, just as there can be these realities in one’s physical health.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

5. Reflect on the fact of spiritual sickness. How have you come to understand spiritual sickness in the context of your own life and relationships? Is it a concept you are comfortable with?

6. Would you be able to identify a way in which you yourself have experienced spiritual sickness?

7. Have you experiences spiritual healing?

In the last few hundred years in Western societies, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the body and the mind. Lesser emphasis has been placed on the emotion and even less on the spirit. Even among devoutly religious people, the focus has so often been on adherence to a set of doctrines and the adherence to a set of behavioral standards. Consequently, at some point in their personal development, those who developed within Western societies often experience a
strange internal uneasiness. This uneasiness is hard to describe but it may be thought of as an awareness of personal imbalance: more energy, time, and resources are being invested in the body and mind and often lesser and sometimes little being invested in the emotional and spiritual self. This uneasiness is more intuitive than conscious and sometimes leads a person to a point of spiritual crisis which can be transformative.

It is becoming commonly understood that such imbalances create a problem: a lack of authenticity, integrity or inner congruence. It is also understood that this imbalance creates stress and stress is responsible for a majority of physical ailments.

**Stress Facts**
- Forty-three percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress.
- 75 to 90 percent of all physician office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints.
- Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death--heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide.

**Spiritual health then has to do with the consciousness of a need for authenticity, integrity or inner congruence and the energy focused on bringing authenticity, integrity or inner congruence to one’s life.**

Spiritual health is approached and achieved as one develops a consciousness of the need for authenticity, integrity or inner congruence and then engages resources to address the areas where balance is lacking. When this work is productive, stress is reduced; integrity is approached as are balance and inner congruence; all of which lead us towards greater spiritual health.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

8. In what ways have you become aware of the inner imbalance or the lack of internal integrity in your own life? What clues, symptoms, and indicators have you been able to identify that point toward something being out of kilter spiritually in your life?

**What is Spiritual Health Care?**

Spiritual health care is the attention given to the spirituality and spiritual health of another for the purpose of assisting the other in taking steps to move towards

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5 http://www.symptoms-of-stress.com/
balance and greater personal authenticity, integrity or inner congruence. As this assistance is offered and received, as the stress caused by the dissonance is moderated and diminished, as movement towards balance is made – the result is enhanced Spiritual Health.

**BREAK**

**Spirituality and Religion**

Most of us, at one time or another, experience confusion in our minds related to the distinction between spirituality and religion. The confusion need not be dismaying, it is quite logical that the confusion should exist. The vast majority of humans are taught from their earliest years that religion is the accepted mode that should be used to understand and express one’s spirituality. It seems that part of the human condition propels us to formalize important realities that give our lives shape and meaning. Because no one develops apart from some form of society and because every society naturally has both leaders and followers, the leaders are invested with the responsibility to formalize and maintain the structures that give the society structure and order.

In the vast majority of societies, these structures come in the form of civil laws: directions that dictate how people are to get along and what happens when they fail to get along. But they also come in the form of religion. Like civil laws, religion formalizes rites and ceremonies, defines morality and generally attempts to give order to the way the spirituality of its members is lived out. One way of conceiving of the difference between spirituality and religion is that: *Spirituality is an essential aspect of our humanity, possessed by every person, giving them both the capacity for connectedness and the desire for connection with oneself, one’s environment, others and the Transcendent.* Whereas *religion is the attempts human societies or sub-societies have made to define, codify and sacramentalize an understanding of and appreciation for the mysteries of life and existence.*

So, every person is a spiritual being and possesses spirituality. Some people have embraced consciously and intentionally, or by some degree of conditioning one of many forms of religion to define and direct their spirituality while others (a growing trend) have syncretized numerous aspects of various religions creating, in effect designer expressions of spirituality that are very personal.

It is in the context of all of this that Spiritual Health Care is being offered in the Manitoba Health system. Consequently, one of the highest values of a spiritual health care provider, whether that be a Spiritual Health Care professional or volunteer or for that matter any member of the health care team is **RESPECT**.
Attempts to categorize and count the various religions that exist in the world are difficult and result in many varied categories and answers. Suffice it to say human being over the history of the races existence on this earth have developed many religious structures. These structures tend to evolve over time as societies change and knowledge increases. One website in its attempt to identify the number of religions provides the following list: (see Appendix 1)

Of course we know that the top eight categories themselves could be subdivided into thousands of clear and distinct groups that identify themselves as distinct from others within the category. The point: because human spirituality often finds its expression through religion, to care for the spiritual needs of another requires that we respect the religious convictions the individual has chosen to express and live out their spirituality, regardless of how we personally evaluate or feel about that religion.

When we interact with another about spiritual realities, we must develop the capacity of authentic curiosity which seeks to know and understand the spirituality of another for no other reason than to be able to connect effectively and care for the other. For this reason we may need to develop a more inclusive language, a way of talking about God that reaches beyond the structures of our own spirituality and which may be defined by our religious convictions and affiliations. We need to consider the use of “gendered” language when referring to the Transcendent. We will also have to be conscious of the attribution of certain characteristics to the Transcendent. Although the God of Christianity may be an infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent being, this may not be the case in the thinking of the one you care for. The point of spiritual care again is not the imposition of my understanding of God on another but the understanding of the other’s concept of spirituality. Spiritual health care is not about “conversion” or “evangelism” but about understanding, supporting and facilitating another’s spiritual healing.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

9. Do you have any strong convictions related to religion that might hinder you from respecting the religious convictions of another? Are you able to put that conviction into words?

10. If you personally believe in a Transcendent being, what is your belief about that being’s respect for the choices of people?
11. Does your personal spirituality call you to be concerned about conversion and evangelism? If it does, how do you deal with the fact that Spiritual Health Care within the Health Care system of Manitoba Health is not about those things? Do you believe that failing to make Spiritual Health Care about conversion and evangelism would be wrong?

**Interprofessional Sensitivity**

The health care system in our province, as in any jurisdiction, requires the training and skills of many health care professionals. Typically in any health care facility whether tertiary, acute or long term care, there are members of the following disciplines:

1. doctors
2. nurses
3. health care aides
4. housekeeping
5. laundry
6. dietary
7. physiotherapists
8. occupational therapists
9. respiratory therapists
10. chaplains
11. lab technicians
12. diagnostic technicians (x-ray, ultra sound, etc.)
13. pharmacists
14. and many more

What this means is that many people will interface with a patient in a day’s stay in a health care facility. Many will be very focused on their own particular duties of care; some will be person focused, others will not. Because we are all spiritual beings, some have integrated their spirituality and a concern for spiritual care as they provide their particular service to the patient; others will not believe that to be appropriate and will maintain a strict separation between their professional duties and their spiritual selves.

Spiritual care professionals and volunteers exist for that singular purpose: to provide spiritual health care to patients. The need will always be greater than those responsible to meet the need and in this work one must develop a certain tolerance for the fact that no matter how much one gives, much more spiritual health care is needed.
In many facilities, especially those that have no professional spiritual health care providers, spiritual health care will be misunderstood, will be seen by some as “not belonging” and by others it will be marginalized. A few will recognize its importance and honor it as an equal and full partner with all the other disciplines needed to provide holistic care for the patient. This reality requires spiritual health care volunteers to have a “not so easily offended” attitude and a willingness to work in, around and many times after the other professionals do their duties. Most of the time the expectation will be that spiritual health care volunteers yield to any and all other professionals as they come and go and do their work.

**Role Expectations**

Your role is defined primarily by your position description. Although your particular position description may differ a bit, a position description for a spiritual health volunteer may look something like this one, developed by the folks in the Interlake Regional Health Authority. (Appendix 2)

In most rural regions, further definition regarding roles will be defined by the Regional Spiritual Care Coordinator (titles may vary from region to region). In facilities that have professional chaplains, further definition related to the volunteer’s role will be defined by the volunteer’s supervisor.

**RHA Structures**

In 1998, Manitoba Health moved to a regional approach to the provision of health care. The Province was divided into 11 Regions and each region was given the responsibility to direct and deliver health care services under the general directives, mandates, policies and procedures of Manitoba Health, an arm of the Government of Manitoba responsible for health care services to the citizens of the province. In May 2012 the 11 RHAs were amalgamated into five. The map (Appendix 3) shows the five regions with their names.

Question for reflection and discussion:

12. Do you have specific questions about the qualifications, responsibilities and role of a Spiritual health Care volunteer? Please write out your questions so that you can interact with your trainer / supervisor about those questions.
Religions of the World with approximate numbers of adherents

1. Christianity: 2.1 billion
2. Islam: 1.5 billion
3. Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist: 1.1 billion
4. Hinduism: 900 million
5. Chinese traditional religion: 394 million
6. Buddhism: 376 million
7. primal-indigenous: 300 million
8. African Traditional & Diasporic: 100 million
9. Sikhism: 23 million
10. Juche (The official religion of North Korea) 19 million
11. Spiritism: 15 million
12. Judaism: 14 million
13. Baha’i: 7 million
14. Jainism: 4.2 million
15. Shinto: 4 million
16. Cao Dai: 4 million
17. Zoroastrianism: 2.6 million
18. Tenrikyo: 2 million
19. Neo-Paganism: 1 million
20. Unitarian-Universalism: 800 thousand
21. Rastafarianism: 600 thousand
22. Scientology: 500 thousand

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6 http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html
SPIRITUAL HEALTH VOLUNTEER - POSITION DESCRIPTION

SPIRITUAL HEALTH VOLUNTEERS HAVE SPECIAL SKILLS AND WORK CLOSELY WITH THE HEALTH CARE TEAM TO PROVIDE SPIRITUAL HEALTH VISITATION: INITIAL AND FOLLOW-UP VISITS AND REFERRALS WITH DOCUMENTATION OF THEIR INTERACTIONS. THEY WORK UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE COORDINATOR OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH SERVICES

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Makes initial and ongoing visitation with person on behalf of Spiritual Health Services.
- Completes required record keeping of each visit.
- Makes prompt referral to faith/religious Community representative if requested by the person.
- Consults with the Spiritual Health Services coordinator as appropriate and necessary.
- Communicates with other volunteers and health care staff to optimize benefits for person.
- Must be available to participate in required in-service sessions.
- Participates in other activities as agreed upon e.g. rituals, ceremonies, sharing circle, etc.

QUALIFICATIONS & SKILLS:

A Spiritual Health Volunteer shall be:

- Grounded in the belief that our shared humanity is sacred and beneficent regardless of our cultural, religious, traditional or existential beliefs.
- Respectful of and comfortable working with people of diverse cultures and traditions.
- Self-reflective.
- Open and flexible.
- Reliable and possess integrity
- A good listener
- Have well-developed interpersonal skills
- Able to instill calm, confidence, and lessen anxiety and stress.
- Understanding of professional conduct (tact, diplomacy, confidentiality) and respects boundaries.
- Good writing skills.
- A team player.
- Willing and able to meet with other volunteers and coordinator for sharing and further education.
- Committed to a healthy lifestyle and spiritual practice.

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7 Otto Christensen, Interlake RHA Regional Spiritual health Care Coordinator
• Able to accept direction and work within the parameters of the position description

ADDITIONAL ASSETS:

• Fluent in another language such as Ojibway, Ukrainian, French, Icelandic,
• Education from an accredited program in spirituality/religion/palliative care or similar.
• Professional Health Care training with complementary discipline (RN with Reflexology, LPN with Reconnective Therapy)

COMMITMENT:

Minimum of 6 months initially.
Preferably one weekly shift (3-4 hours) or available to do “on-call” services.
Participate in initial education program (unless advance qualification i.e. CPE basic unit)

BENEFITS:

An opportunity to grow personally and spiritually
Gain volunteer experience in health care/medical setting
Learn new skills
Provide service to others
Make a personal contribution to improvement in health care

PROCESS:

Applicants will be guided through:

• RHA’s standard volunteer screening program.
• Reference check and interview to ensure that the applicant’s belief system is compatible with the RHA’s Spiritual Health Services’ philosophy and purpose.

Obtain photo ID and sign the PHIA pledge of confidentiality
Appendix 3

Map of Manitoba's Regional Health Authorities June 2012