

Program/Service Information Report

Harm Reduction Program Review

2024

To: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

Meeting Date: September 4, 2024

Report No.: BH.01.SEP0424.C12

Key Points

- Harm reduction (HR) is an important strategy for reducing the transmission of blood borne diseases for individuals who use substances.
- HR provides an opportunity to connect individuals who use substances and provide them with additional supports and services to improve health outcomes.
- Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) continues to expand its HR program to reach all people in our community.

Program Requirements

Compliance with OPHS and Accountability Indicators:

☒ In compliance

☐ Not in compliance. If not in compliance, provide additional information about the variance and how it will be addressed.

Highlights

HR is an evidence-based, client-centered approach that seeks to reduce the health risks associated with substance use, without necessarily requiring individuals who use substances to abstain.¹ HR acknowledges that many individuals who use substances may not be able to abstain from using substance or that they may relapse after a period of cessation. If individuals relapse HR recognizes that these individuals will then need to be provided with a variety of supports and services to maintain their health while they continue to use substances.¹ HR is a key part of the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy which also includes prevention, education, services, supports, substance controls and evidence.² (Appendix A) In keeping with the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy, WDGPH strives to make our HR program compassionate, equitable, collaborative and comprehensive.

The delivery of harm reduction supplies across the WDGP region allows individuals who use substances to access clean and safe HR supplies. The focus of HR supplies is the prevention of hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which are blood borne infections. Preventing these infections with HR supplies very cost effective for our health care system since the treatment of both infections is expensive and time consuming.¹ HR supplies also prevent serious wounds caused by either bacterial infections or burns. Providing HR supplies in our community does not lead to increased crime or substance use.¹

The HR program at WDGP orders many different types of HR supplies from the Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program (OHRDP) and then distributes these supplies across our region. Individuals who use substances in our region have access to all the necessary HR supplies that they require to keep themselves safe. The WDGP HR program closely monitors the number of supplies being distributed through our offices, through various community partners and out into the community.

The WDGP HR program, along with the City of Guelph and the municipalities, are responsible for the management of community sharps and maintain the community needle drop boxes throughout our region. The HR program staff monitor the needle drop boxes and ensure that the sharps in them are disposed of properly. WDGP partners with the city of Guelph and both Dufferin and Wellington counties to find additional appropriate locations to install additional community needle drop boxes. The WDGP HR staff also connect with all waste disposal services in our region to ensure that they are prepared to handle sharps if they receive inquiries from the community or if their staff encounter sharps during work. Information on how members of the community can safely dispose of sharps and how to seek support if they encounter sharps on either private or public property in the WDG region is available in this report. (Appendixes C and D)

Along with HR supplies, Naloxone continues to be an important part of the HR program. Naloxone is a fast-acting drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.³ Naloxone is safe for all ages, does not create dependence and cannot be used improperly. Naloxone is increasingly available throughout the WDG region through community partners, workplaces and pharmacies. (Appendix D) The chart below shows the number of both nasal and injectable Naloxone kits WDGP distributed in 2023 and so far in 2024.

Naloxone Kits Distributed:

Year	Naloxone Kit Totals
2023	3087
January to June 2024	2353

The WDGPH HR program continues to partner with multiple community agencies, like shelters, to provide HR supplies, sexual health testing and immunizations to our population. WDGPH staff make it a priority to connect meaningfully with all individuals who access care to understand what supports they require at this moment in time. By providing the right support at the right time, WDGPH staff can connect individuals with the appropriate resources that they need now to optimize their health, like HR supplies, sexual health testing, immunization or treatment. WDGPH HR program staff work to approach all clients without stigma and to provide them with care openly and honestly.

The staff of the HR program do refer individuals to treatment at their request. Multiple treatment programs are available within the Wellington Dufferin Guelph (WDG) region and more varied types of treatment have become available for individuals who use substances in recent years. Access to these treatment programs in the WDG region however may require a long wait time and can be expensive. Regardless, there are several different types of treatment programs available.

Homewood Health Centre (HHC), Stonehenge Therapeutic Community (STC), Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Portage and Pine River Institute all offer inpatient and outpatient mental health, and substance use treatment services for both youth and adults across our region. Additionally, STC and CMHA offer Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinics. STC offer RAAM clinic in Guelph, Fergus and Arthur and operate a mobile RAAM van to reach other rural locations in Wellington County. CMHA offers RAAM clinics in Orangeville. All RAAM clinics are accessible without an appointment or referral and provide treatment support for both substances and alcohol. Links to the various treatment programs within our region are provided in this report. (Appendix B)

WDGPH promotes HR awareness at multiple community events throughout the year including Pride, Hepatitis Awareness Day and Overdose Awareness Day in Guelph, Orangeville and Mount Forest. All these events allow us to connect with members of the community and educate them on the benefits of HR. Additionally, WDGPH HR program staff partner with the Guelph Community Health Centre and Royal City Mission (RCM) to operate a drop in sexual health and immunization clinic twice monthly at the RCM. The HR program plans to expand our outreach programs in 2025.

Health Equity Implications

The WDGPH HR program actively promotes equitable access to all HR supplies to individuals who use substances by supplying multiple community partners with prompt access to all the HR supplies that they request. This ready access ensures that any client has access to the HR supplies they require at various community sites, and at various hours. Additionally, WDGPH continues to offer HR supplies in self-serve cupboards at all our main sites which allow clients to discretely access whatever HR supplies they require.

WDGPH's HR program also promotes mental health and stigma reduction. By providing HR supplies in an accessible fashion at our main offices and by connecting with our community partners to further distribute HR supplies across our region, WDGPH contributes to the reduction of stigma for individuals who use drugs within community. Providing highly visible access to HR supplies, makes these HR supplies less obscure and mysterious to the public, which further decreases stigma and ultimately promotes positive mental health in our clients.

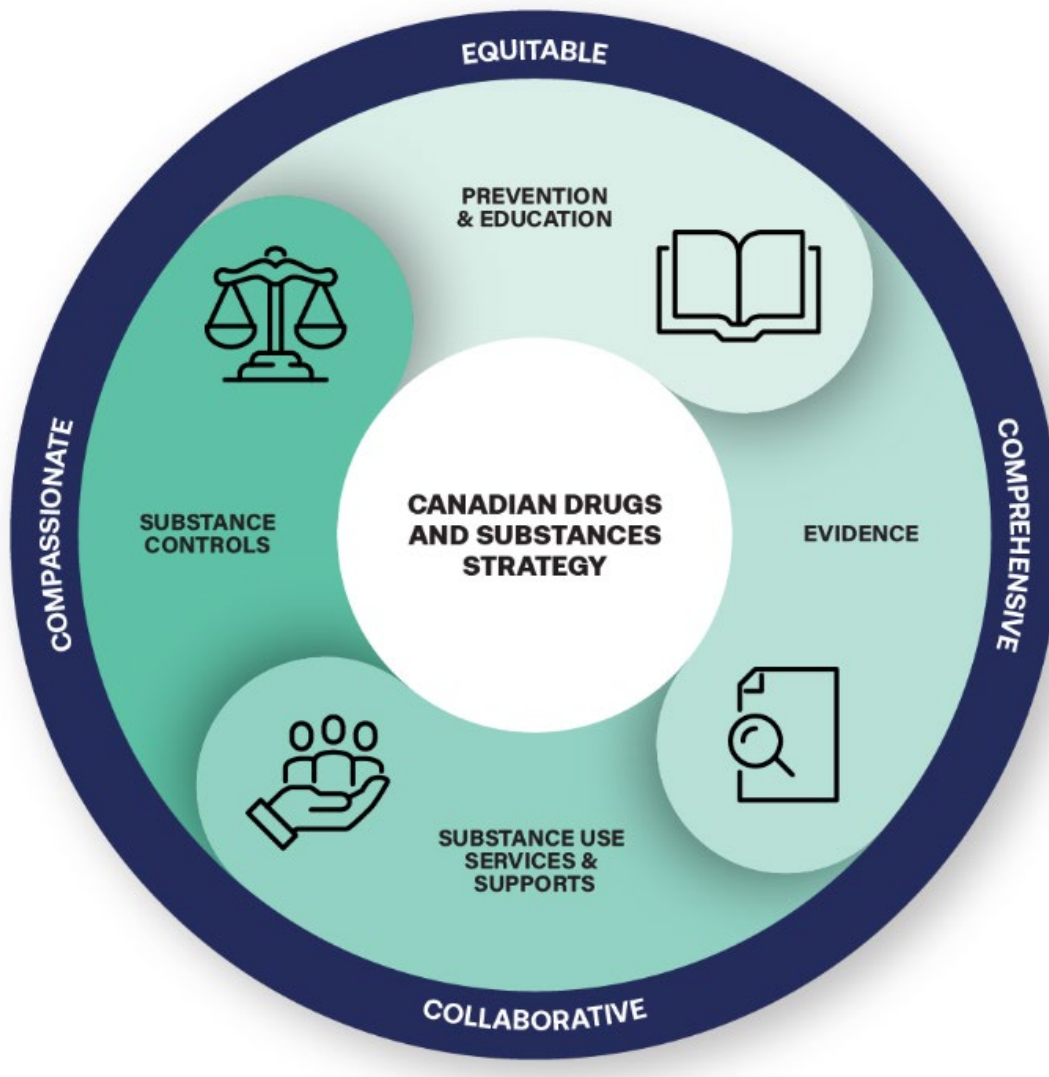
Conclusion

The WDGPH HR program supports our region by distributing HR supplies and Naloxone to all individuals who use substances and the community partners who provide care for this population. By distributing HR supplies to individuals who use substances, the HR program team can form relationships that allow us to connect individuals to the supports they need to improve their health. The HR program is looking forward to promoting and expanding our program by collaborating with new community partners to provide compassionate, comprehensive equitable access to HR supplies, Naloxone and prevention and treatment services.

Appendices

Appendix A

Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy



This strategy focuses on 4 integrated action areas related to substance use.

Prevention and Education

Prevention and education initiatives act to prevent, reduce or delay substance use related harms. They also increase awareness and knowledge about the effects and risks of substances.

Evidence

Supporting research and gathering data to help inform substance related policies and decisions.

Substance Use Services and Supports

Services that support a continuum of care, like treatment, harm reduction and recovery options for people who use drugs and alcohol. These services can help people reduce their substance use and the likelihood of related harms.

Substance Controls

Giving health inspectors, law enforcement and border control authorities the tools, like laws and regulations, to address public health and safety risks associated with the use of substances. These risks include the harms of the illegal drug market. Substance controls also allow for legitimate uses of controlled substances, like prescription drugs or in research.

Appendix B

Treatment Resources

Canadian Mental Health Association. <https://cmha.ca/>

Dufferin RAAM Clinic. <https://cmhapeeldufferin.ca/programs/rapid-access-addiction-medicine-clinic-raam/>

Homewood Health Centre. <https://homewoodhealthcentre.com/treatment-programs/>

Pine River Institute. <https://pineriverinstitute.com/>

Portage. <https://portage.ca/en/>

Stonehenge Therapeutic Community. <https://pineriverinstitute.com/>

Stonehenge RAAM Clinic. <https://stonehengetc.com/our-programs/addiction-medicine-withdrawal/rapid-access-addiction-clinic-raac/>

Appendix C

Contact Resources for Sharps Management in Wellington Dufferin Guelph

City of Guelph: 519-822-1260: <https://guelph.ca/living/environment/garbage-and-recycling/>

Dufferin County: 519-941-2816: <https://www.dufferincounty.ca/waste-services/>

Health Products Stewardship Program: Pharmacies who provide free sharps containers:
<https://healthsteward.ca/>

Town of Orangeville: 519-941-2816: <https://www.orangeville.ca/en/index.aspx>

Wellington County: 519-837-2600: <https://www.wellington.ca/>

Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health: 1-800-2657293 ex 7006: <https://wdgpublichealth.ca/>

Appendix D

What to do if you encounter a needle, crack pipe, or any other drug paraphernalia

If you choose to pick up a needle, crack pipe, or other drug paraphernalia, handle them with care and ensure to:

- Treat all needles, crack pipes, and other drug paraphernalia (cookers, blades, etc.) as contaminated.
- Wear gloves (i.e. latex, rubber, or puncture proof). Note: Gloves are meant to protect against fluid contamination, not punctures or cuts.
- Use tongs, pliers, or tweezers to pick up the needle, crack pipe, or other drug paraphernalia. Be sure to clean and disinfect the pickup instrument afterwards.
- Pick up the needle by the plastic end (barrel).
- Point the needle tip away from your body. Be very careful not to poke yourself with the needle.
- Put the sharps disposal container on a stable surface next to the needle. Do not hold the container in your hand or between your knees or feet while placing the needle inside.
- Place the needle point down into the container. Do not force the needle into the container.



- If you do not have a specialized sharps container, put the needle into a non-breakable, puncture-proof container with a lid. (i.e., thick plastic bottle).



- Close the container securely.
- Find the nearest designated needle disposal location by visiting WDGPublicHealth.ca Do not flush needles down the toilet or put them in the garbage or recycling bin.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after removal of gloves.



If a needle injury occurs wash the area well, let the wound bleed, do not apply pressure to the wound and seek immediate medical attention. For more information, visit WDGPublicHealth.ca

Always follow your organization's sharps disposal policies and procedures. If your organization has a contract with a licensed biomedical waste disposal company, properly secure the sharps and contact your contractor for final pickup and disposal.

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Appendix E

Contact Resources for Naloxone in Wellington Dufferin Guelph

Where to get a free Naloxone kit. Province of Ontario. 2023 April 6. Available from:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/where-get-free-naloxone-kit>

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