

# YORK REGION OPIOID ACTION PLAN

## Executive summary

Communities across Ontario and Canada have come together to address opioid harms with a commitment to joint action. In York Region, the **Opioid Education and Response Workgroup (OERW)**, co-chaired by York Region Public Health and York Regional Police, lead these efforts. The Workgroup and its partners have developed the Opioid Action Plan with feedback from those who have lived experience with opioid use. The Plan is based on, and contains recommendations that speak to, four distinct pillars: prevention, harm reduction, treatment and first response and enforcement. Implementing the following recommendations will require the input and involvement of the whole community, including people with lived experience.

## Prevention recommendations

- Identify and support awareness of programs for health-care providers around opioid safety and options for pain management
- Develop, promote or support access to a range of stigma-free messaging, programs and services to address substance use, pain management, mental health, resiliency and well-being for those at risk and at different life stages
- Increase awareness and knowledge of substance use, resiliency, mental health and student well-being in schools and in the community

## Harm reduction recommendations

- Create a campaign to increase understanding of harm reduction
- Increase community partnerships to enhance harm reduction services
  - Explore and support expansion of harm reduction services (e.g., needle exchange sites, safer inhalation supplies, drug testing kits, naloxone) based on community need and input
  - Review the need and feasibility of Consumption and Treatment Services or Supervised Consumption Sites
- Address stigma and barriers to accessing harm reduction services
- Build connections between groups providing services or supports to people at different stages of substance use

## Treatment recommendations

- Support access to local, urgent and compassionate opioid treatment
  - Increase awareness of existing resources for effective opioid dependence and addiction treatment
  - Support implementation and awareness of Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinics

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- Provide addiction support (including aftercare or follow-up care) at places where people are receiving services in the community
- Support addiction services (including aftercare or follow-up care) in primary health care
- Engage the Indigenous community to support culturally-appropriate opioid treatment
- Increase awareness of and advocate for universal coverage of non-opioid alternatives to manage chronic pain
- Increase awareness of addiction and treatment options in the recovery journey

## First response and enforcement recommendations

- Strengthen partnerships between first responders and other agencies to increase awareness and skills of first responders on key issues related to the opioid crisis:
  - The *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act*
  - Mental health and addictions
  - Treatment and/or other community supports for those who have experienced an opioid overdose or suspected opioid overdose
- Identify and respond to evolving risks to the community related to drug trafficking, overdose deaths and monitoring emerging substances that may pose a public safety risk

To support actions under the four pillars, additional recommendations include monitoring and early warning activities and common themes identified across the pillars.

## Surveillance and early warning recommendations

- Develop and evaluate an early warning system that includes the ongoing and prompt sharing of information with community partners and the public about overdoses and other opioid concerns
- Collect data which includes qualitative and quantitative information on the impact of opioids in York Region
- Develop and launch a tool to assess risks and inform communication and action
- Identify trigger points of action, including how to respond to an overdose crisis
- Collect and deliver opioid-related information and messaging using different formats

## Supporting recommendations

- Reduce stigma around substance use and support people with lived experience to share stories
- Support information sharing between community agencies about opioid-related issues
- Increase collaboration and communication among service providers to support access to services and interventions that:
  - Promote well-being
  - Prevent the misuse of opioids
  - Reduce harm from opioid use
  - Connect individuals to opioid dependence and addiction treatment
  - Maintain client privacy and confidentiality, and support client needs

Through this Action Plan, the OERW invites service providers and the York Region community to learn about opioid concerns to make York Region a healthy and safe place for everyone.

Download the full report from [York.ca/opioids](https://york.ca/opioids). Contact [substance@york.ca](mailto:substance@york.ca) to learn more.