

Harm Reduction and Housing Community of Practice

Provincial Addiction and Mental Health

Q4 Update / 2020-2021

Goals

Formed in December 2018, the Alberta Harm Reduction and Housing Community of Practice (CoP) is a monthly interactive collaborative learning and discussion forum for agencies and organizations who provide harm reduction housing across the province. This Community of Practice was created to provide more support and networking for participants, considering the vast range of harm reduction approaches and applications within different residential and housing settings. Prior to this CoP's start up, harm reduction housing providers across Alberta did not have a provincial network to regularly communicate their innovative and creative approaches to delivering programs and services. The CoP provides relevant and practice-based conversation through regular meetings between organizations, community-based agencies, and Alberta Health Services zone and provincial programs.

Outcome, Value, Evaluation and / or Deliverables

- The Harm Reduction and Housing CoP promotes collaboration and information-sharing between programs and agencies, including discussion of best practices, program and policy design perspectives, and site-specific opportunities and challenges in providing harm reduction housing programs
- This group also provides recommendations for systemic service delivery improvements and provincial advocacy to better meet the needs of populations receiving care through harm reduction housing
- The CoP membership discusses collaborative training and professional development opportunities, to build capacity in agencies and staff providing harm reduction housing services

In February 2020, a membership evaluation was completed which provided feedback about the value and impact of this group. Benefits reported by CoP participants included: strengthened social and professional connections with colleagues; a safe venue to explore issues and ideas; opportunity for knowledge exchange and skill-building; source of information about best practices and innovative approaches; connection to harm reduction housing updates; and, up-to-date information on available resources and programs.

Highlights and Progress to Date

Past meeting topics have included: Harm reduction research and case studies; harm reduction training opportunities and staff development; awareness of traumatic stress in teams who work within housing and homelessness; harm reduction within the continuum of recovery-oriented practice, as well as other effective responses and interventions for populations served in harm reduction housing settings. Regular opportunity for sharing of program and resource information leads to further collaboration and networking. Participants include AHS managers, leads, and operational staff from zone and provincial programs; and managers and frontline staff from community agencies and partners. At present, the distribution list for this CoP exceeds 170 members. Monthly calls have 30-40 participants on average.

Next Steps

This group meets online monthly; members and facilitators decide on content and topic areas based on emerging issues and needs.

Provincial Planning and Capacity Management Supportive Housing staff continue to facilitate partnerships and encourage project opportunities within the membership.

PPCM staff are investigating the potential of using an online project management and communications tool to coordinate this group more effectively, share and save resources, and help improve member interactions between monthly meetings.

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