

Comprehensive Mental Health and Substance Use – *Focus on Opioids* – Strategy

As input to the strategy, and in advance of The Ottawa Summit, a consultation was undertaken seeking feedback from external organizations, agencies and people with lived experience to:

- Gauge the current state of mental health and substance use in Ottawa
- Assess views and ongoing relevance of the four pillar approach prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement
- Obtain feedback on a proposed thematic approach for the strategy
- Determine ways in which stakeholders could contribute to the development and implementation of the strategy
- Understand potential challenges to implementation

The consultation took place throughout December 2018 and January 2019.

Over 70 stakeholders shared their views through a combination of in depth telephone and face to face interviews, as well as self administered questionnaires.

Interviews with organizations and agencies were undertaken by The Strategic Counsel.

Moving Forward – Thoughts and Considerations

The lens through which stakeholders assess community needs and the response varies. However, consensus emerges around a number of activities which are viewed as key to achieving progress.

Work to engage at the political level. Commitment, clear and sustained leadership and funding are needed.

Improve access to treatment and counselling. Increased capacity, timely access and a holistic approach are key.

Enhance collaboration, system-wide, across the community.

Foster cross-collaboration and knowledge of available resources.

Address supply-side of the issue. As important as addressing demand.

Focus on awareness-raising and public education. Prevention, recognizing symptoms of problematic substance use, addiction, overdose, and treatment options.

Reduce stigma. Focus on harm reduction strategies and setting realistic goals.

Continue to involve people with lived experience. Those at the center of the crisis want a say – on the issues and the solutions.

Identify key metrics to evaluate progress. Set realistic targets, track and share data.

“Capacity for services is a huge issue, which is obviously related to funding ... To get access to good quality care early in the process or an early diagnosis is so difficult.”

“We have a very highly toxic drug supply and it’s unregulated. People are unable to know what they are actually taking and the potency of it.”

“We know, even from the literature, that if we invest in education and prevention it has significant long-term positive outcomes.”

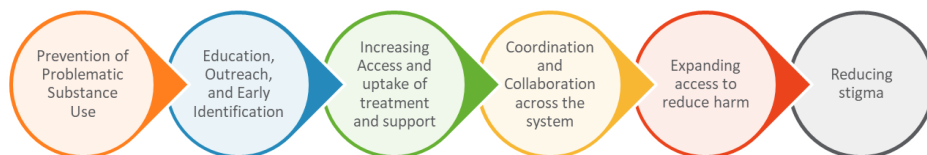
“Minimize the harm, in both mental health and substance use. I don’t think we’ll ever get rid of the challenge, but we need to try and reduce the damage it’s doing to people.”

“We have not done a good job of educating the public. People still don’t understand ... evidence-based response.”

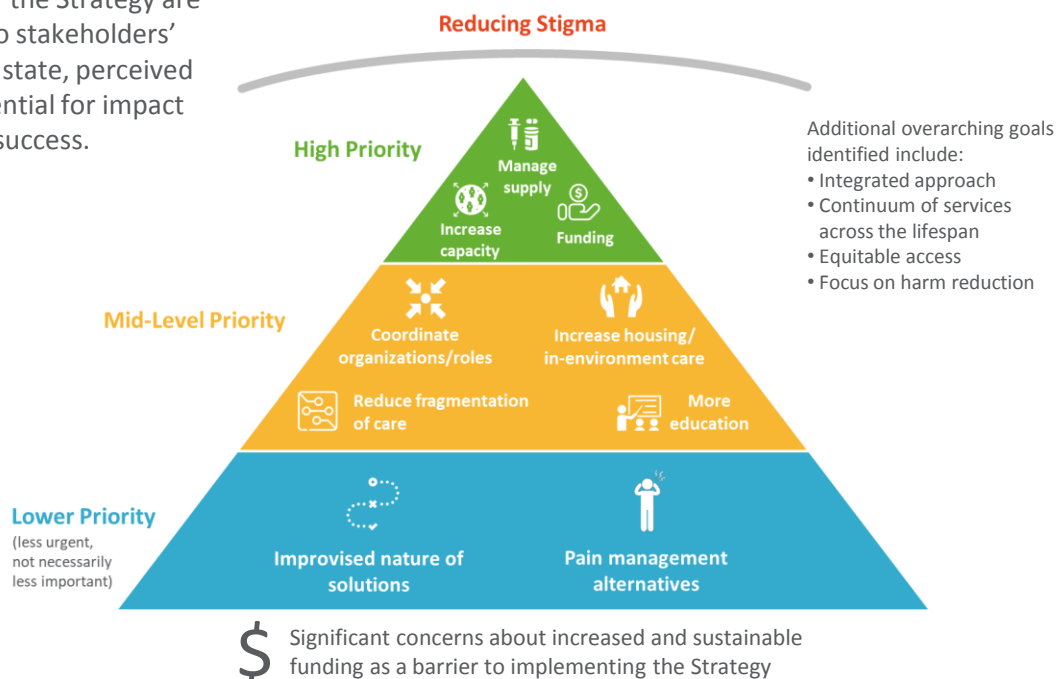
“Stigma is a massive issue for this population. There is more stigma amongst people with substance abuse problems than mental health, but if you have both ... they have compounded stigma.”

Goals for Addressing the Opioid Crisis

Stakeholders generally align with the thematic approach, but they view 'stigma' as an overarching goal for the Strategy.



Goals and activities for the Strategy are prioritized according to stakeholders' assessment of current state, perceived sense of urgency, potential for impact and opportunities for success.



Clients expressed a strong desire to provide input into the strategy and to continue the dialogue. Their views generally aligned with other stakeholders, although they emphasized a number of specific themes:

- **Addressing stigmatization** – Addiction is viewed as a character defect rather than a legitimate illness.
- **Raising awareness and educating the public** – Clients see this as key, helping the public to see a more human, 3-dimensional view of substance use, mental health and addiction, and their daily reality.
- **Collaboration between agencies** – Lack of a coordinated approach, territorialism and/or competition for funding adversely affects clients' ability to access resources in a timely and streamlined way.
- **Comprehensive, integrated care** – Problematic substance use is typically one of many issues which need to be dealt with in a more integrated fashion.
- **More Supervised Injection/Consumption Sites (SIS/SCS) and Managed Opioid Programs (MOP)** – Clients express a desire for expanded access to SIS/SCS and MOP (24/7 access, suburban locations, expanded peer program, etc.).

"The way to reach people with lived experience is with people with lived experience."

The Views
Of Those
With Lived
Experience