

**Priorities Committee Meeting\_Oct23\_2018**

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**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE****Community Drug Strategy****Report Purpose**

To provide Priorities Committee with an update on the launch of the Community Drug Strategy, Opioid response campaign and interactive journey titled "Opioids Don't Discriminate"

**Our Prioritized Strategic Goals**

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents

Goal 5 - Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships

Goal 8 - Foster an environment for safe communities

**Report**

The opioid crisis remains at the forefront for media, government and municipalities, as well as for families, communities, frontline workers, and policy makers. Canadian provinces and municipalities are large consumers of prescription opioids and Strathcona County is no different. Data from Alberta Health (2017) show that there has been a 166% increase in the number of emergency department visits by Strathcona County residents for opioid use from 2013 to 2016 (56 cases to 149 cases). The numbers of drug overdose deaths in Strathcona County either accidental or intentional from 2013 to 2017 include 11 deaths related to fentanyl, 7 deaths due to non-fentanyl opioids and 12 deaths related to non-opioid drugs and alcohol. While factors contributing to the crisis are multi-faceted, addiction remains a core issue.

Responses to the crisis vary at the Provincial and municipal levels but have trended towards a focus on prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement. Following a regional meeting hosted by the City of Edmonton, Strathcona County Social Framework partners along with representatives from community organizations including Strathcona County Family and Community Services convened at the local level to explore how this crisis was impacting residents, their families and the community as a whole. Shortly after, an Opioid Response Committee was formed. The Committee committed to collaboratively develop a community strategy. The Committee was not established or appointed by Strathcona County Council or a Strathcona County Department.

**A New Mental Model**

In order to impact the challenge, it must first be understood, but this problem is not an easy one to understand. Substance misuse (including opioid use) is a complex issue that crosses multiple systems and facets of life. Current thinking has led to many traditional solutions with little progress. The Committee surfaced a new way of understanding the problem, grounded in brain science, evidence and local experts. This new mental model is a way to empower organizations and people to move from the assumptions of addiction to a deeper level of understanding with compassion and inclusion.

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### **The Strategy**

The Opioid Response Committee eventually became the Drug Strategy Committee as they discussed best practice, innovations and the latest evidence to address the root cause of the opioid crisis, with a recognition that drugs are continually evolving. The committee representatives and their organizations all contributed to the development of the Community Drug Strategy for Strathcona County, titled: "From Addiction to Connection".

The purpose of the Community Drug Strategy is to provide an evidence-base for comprehensive, dynamic, shared responses to key issues related to substance use in Strathcona County. The strategy is guided by the Social Framework which reflects a shift in the way we think, behave and convene as organizations, community groups and individuals to work collectively to address issues such as substance dependency/misuse at the local level.

The framework for action is based on four best-practice pillars: prevention, treatment, harm reduction and community inclusion and safety. Each participating organization has agreed to work within their respective areas of responsibility through these interconnected pillars, and to seek tangible, shared solutions to meet the needs of our community and those who struggle with substance use disorder/dependency.

The following actions, along with the lead partner organization, are listed in the Community Drug Strategy.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Organization*</b>
<b>Prevention</b>	
Implement and evaluate broad-based community education campaigns on early brain development, root causes of addiction, stigma, etc.	FCS
Support resiliency for children and families by ensuring education, arts/recreation opportunities and supports are available through an interdisciplinary approach	EICS & EIPS
Increase evidence-based alcohol and drug prevention programming for youth in the Strathcona County school systems and broader community	EICS & EIPS
Increase workplace addiction-related health and safety education and improve addiction-related supports in the workplace	All
Simplify and increase access to addiction and mental health information, including the development of a resource guide and road map	AHS
Enhance level of dialogue between sectors and institutions to access and share local substance use data	All
<b>Treatment</b>	
Deliver diverse treatment options along the continuum of treatment from outreach and community-based through to post recovery, not only for those who are addicted, but for those around them	AHS
Monitor programs and services, identify gaps and work collaboratively to address gaps	All
Support access to evidence-based, affordable residential treatment services for youth and adults	AHS

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<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Organization*</b>
Improve the way opioids are prescribed for more effective chronic pain management and reduction in misuse or overdose from these drugs	AHS
<b>Harm Reduction</b>	
Increase safety programming for people who inject, inhale or drink substances, and increase maintenance programs to help with withdrawal as people minimize their use	AHS
Increase overdose prevention and awareness programming	PCN
<b>Community Inclusion and Safety</b>	
Create welcoming and inclusive communities where citizens have the opportunity for meaningful connections and every individual is respected	All
Increase the coordinated approach between police and community stakeholders in addressing substance-use related crime	RCMP
Support connected and inclusive communities and provide appropriate supports for individuals and families impacted by substance use	FCS

\* Strathcona County Family and Community Services (FCS); Elk Island Catholic and Elk Island Public School Divisions (EICS & EIPS); Alberta Health Services (AHS), Primary Care Network Sherwood Park, Strathcona County (PCN), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

### **Opioid Journey and Awareness Campaign**

An important part of shifting mindsets is to understand the experiences of those who have struggled with substance use. As a way to bridge theory with on-the-ground practice an Opioid Journey and interactive exhibit will be open to the public from November 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> 2018 in the Strathcona County Community Centre Agora. The experience will take participants through the journeys of fictional characters "Natasha", "David" and "Max" as they deal with the impacts of opioids, navigate complex systems, make choices and seek support. The journeys of these characters are based on local, real-life experiences of Strathcona County residents and on current statistics. This journey will reduce stigma and build empathy for residents impacted by the ongoing opioid crisis. At the same time, the Community Drug Strategy will be made available publicly. An awareness campaign has been running locally since September as a precursor to the Opioid Journey.

### **Other Impacts**

**Policy:** n/a

**Legislative/Legal:** n/a

**Interdepartmental:** n/a

**Master Plan/Framework:** Social Framework

### **Communication Plan**

Communication with relevant stakeholders is being implemented according to a communication plan

### **Enclosures**

- 1 Community Drug Strategy for Strathcona County Presentation
- 2 Community Drug Strategy for Strathcona County – From Addiction to Connection