



## **Plans for new harm reduction services at Casey House**

One of our ongoing objectives at Casey House is to identify and then mitigate potential issues that may cause further harm to our clients. One such risk is when clients use drugs that may have any number of negative impacts to their current health or ongoing care.

As such, Casey House is working towards adding supervised consumption services exclusively for registered clients. It will be a safe, strictly limited, and medically-supervised program that will act as an extension of our existing hospital services. In contrast to most consumption sites, which are open to the public and can exist as a stand-alone service, the Casey House program will serve as part of a client's comprehensive care plan.

### **What are supervised consumption services?**

**Supervised consumption services (SCS)** are health services that provide a hygienic space for people to use their pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained staff. In addition to supervised use, individuals are provided with sterile equipment (needles, syringes, cotton, cooker, water etc.), education on safer use, overdose prevention and intervention.

The goals of offering supervised consumption services are to:

- Reduce overdose deaths and other drug-related harms;
- Reduce public drug use in the community;
- Build a trusting foundation for honest conversations about drug use that can be critical to care planning;
- Connect clients – who are typically marginalized and/or unable to access mainstream services – with health and social services equipped to manage their specific needs.

Offering a supervised space inside the hospital will also provide post-use observation and indoor disposal facilities.

### **Why is Casey House looking to make this change?**

Casey House clients typically face a number of complex physical and mental health conditions. Among those is drug use – it is estimated that over 80% of Casey House clients use drugs. Our mandate urges us to address this health issue head-on. Evidenced-based harm reduction programming has the potential to improve the health and well-being of clients, reduce overdose and other drug-related harms, and save lives.

Our hospital's ongoing harm reduction work mirrors and supports the work we do with vulnerable members of the community who frequently experience barriers to safe living, whether because of stigma, precarious housing or access to health care.

### **Why is this important for the community?**

We are committed to doing everything we can to support our neighbours' concerns. While this program will involve few participants at any one time, it is a part of our overall work to limit public use and discarded drug paraphernalia. Supervised

consumption services within the hospital will direct clients' use into a supervised space, with adequate disposal facilities.

## **Where are we in the process?**

Casey House is in the process of acquiring the required supervised consumption services exemption from the federal government.

## **Responding to community feedback**

We welcome questions and feedback as we continue to plan and implement further harm reduction services within the hospital. In accordance with Casey House's client relations policy, issues or feedback from the community should be directed to [info@caseyhouse.ca](mailto:info@caseyhouse.ca). Questions and comments are acknowledged within 48 hours, and responded to in a timely manner.

## **Definitions**

### **Harm reduction philosophy**

Harm reduction refers to policies, programs and practices that aim to minimize the negative impacts of potentially harmful behaviour, such as the use of drugs. Harm reduction is built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs. A harm reduction approach works with people without discrimination, judgement, coercion, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support. Harm reduction incorporates a spectrum of strategies from safer use, to managed use, to abstinence. (Definition adapted from International Harm Reduction Association and Harm Reduction Coalition)

### **Harm reduction kit distribution**

Casey House has a proud history of harm reduction programming that includes assembling and providing Toronto Public Health's safer inhalation and safer injection kits to clients and community members since 2014.

The free kits provide safe, sterile supplies (e.g., needles, syringes, cotton, cooker, water, glass stem, condoms, etc.). The goal of kit distribution is to reduce infectious disease transmission, health complications, and other injuries associated with drug use. Many community health centres, public health units and other organizations that serve people who use drugs distribute harm reduction kits.

Distributing harm reduction kits is an essential health service whether recipients are current, future or past clients. Despite progress in HIV prevention, the number of people living with HIV and AIDS continues to increase and people who inject drugs have incidence rates 59 times higher than those who do not. HIV prevention and safe drug use are inextricably linked and managing this complex relationship is at the heart of what helps differentiate Casey House.