

Toxic Drugs in Algoma

Interviews and Workshops with Community Partners

The purpose was to better understand the current toxic drug landscape in Algoma to help influence positive change.

What we did

2020-2022



19 community partner interviews completed

2023



Workshop with 10 community partners to validate findings

2024



Workshop with 40 participants to prioritize community actions

Who we heard from

Representatives from:

- Harm reduction
- Mental health
- Healthcare
- Public health
- Social services
- Legal and justice services
- Indigenous services
- Academic institutions
- First Nation Communities
- Municipalities

What we heard

Most common concerns among clients:



Mental Health and Trauma



Housing



Addictions



Food Insecurity

Barriers to getting people "in the door"

- Housing
- Transportation
- Anonymity
- Stage of change (readiness)
- Service Hours

Systemic Barriers

- Waitlists
- Intake process (e.g., forms and assessments)
- Staffing issues
- System navigation
- Eligibility requirements

Ways to Overcome Barriers

- Client outreach
- Housing support
- Skill development for staff
- Relationship building
- Transportation support
- Culturally appropriate services
- Person-centered approaches

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Strengths

- Person-centered care
- Building relationships
- Harm reduction
- Culturally appropriate services
- Wraparound services that meet basic needs
- Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT)

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Weaknesses

- Housing
- Waitlists
- System navigation
- Stigma
- Transportation
- Staffing issues
- Limited local services
- People without a primary care provider

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Opportunities

- Lower barrier services
- System navigation tools
- Cultural competency training
- Trauma-informed care
- Community education
- Local data collection
- Intersectoral collaboration

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Threats

- Staff burnout
- Inadequate funding
- Feelings of helplessness
- Concerns about staff and client safety
- Social media
- Stigma and social polarization
- More people without a primary care provider

High priority community actions

- Advocate to government for policies and funding that support people's basic needs
- Establish a supervised consumption site with wraparound services
- Develop universal intake/consent forms to support system connectivity
- Provide an online forum to improve communication between agencies and clients
- Identify strategies and best practices for upstream prevention
- Conferences to learn more about evidence-based prevention and harm reduction interventions