

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health / CEO

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**SAVING LIVES. CHANGING LIVES.
FINDINGS FROM THE TEMPORARY OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE (TOPS)
EVALUATION**

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 038-19 re: “Saving Lives. Changing Lives. Findings from the Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS) Evaluation” be received for information.

Key Points

- In 2018, the Program Planning and Evaluation Team evaluated the Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS) located at the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC) to report on lessons gleaned from the first six months of operation and assess how well the site is meeting its intended outcomes.
- Findings reveal that the Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (now called a Consumption and treatment Services site), provides an essential service to reduce harms associated with drug use, including opioid-related overdoses. Through caring, compassionate, and stigma-free service delivery, TOPS has created a welcoming and non-judgmental environment that has allowed clients to feel accepted and cared for.
- There is also data indicating that activities at the site are promoting safer drug use practices and increasing linkages to health and social services for clients.

Evaluation Overview

In 2018, the Program Planning and Evaluation Team conducted a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation of London’s Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS) to report on lessons gleaned from the first six months of operation and to document progress in meeting the intended outcomes.

The purposes of the evaluation were:

1. To conduct process and outcome evaluations of the impact and effectiveness of TOPS in Middlesex-London, Ontario.
2. To help inform the development and implementation of a Supervised Consumption Facility (SCF) in Middlesex-London, Ontario.

The evaluation used a concurrent mixed-methods design, collecting qualitative and quantitative data, to answer the evaluation questions. Primary data was collected using the following surveys and interviews:

- Customer satisfaction survey for clients (n=105)
- Survey of community residents and business owners within 120 metres of TOPS (n=15)
- Key informant interviews with clients (n=26), TOPS staff/leads (n=17), and key stakeholders providing services in the Aftercare Room at TOPS (n=9)

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) Overdose Prevention Site Monthly Reporting Form was used as a secondary data source to understand usage statistics at TOPS.

Findings

The Temporary Overdose Prevention Site in London, Ontario, provides an essential service to reduce harms associated with drug use, including opioid-related overdoses. Findings from the first six months of operation of the site provide evidence that the site is making a positive impact on many clients' lives. The site is not only saving lives, but also changing them.

The evaluation findings reveal that the site creates a safe, clean, and secure space for members of our community who use drugs. Services are delivered as intended and have exceeded Ministry service delivery expectations by offering on-site medical supports, wrap-around services, and Indigenous supports.

Given the exceptional value placed by clients, staff, and stakeholders on providing this set of services, many respondents offered suggestions to enhance service delivery. Suggestions for improvement included enhancements to hours of operation, space design, staff resources, operational policies, data collection processes, location, and the provision of additional services.

Through caring, compassionate, and stigma-free service delivery, TOPS has created a welcoming, safe, and non-judgmental environment that has allowed people to feel accepted. Building trusting relationships and creating a culture of trust at the site were identified as critical factors in providing opportunities to promote safer drug use and increase connections to health and social services for clients.

The findings also demonstrate the progress being made to reduce opioid-related deaths by directly responding to overdoses at the site (to date, no deaths have occurred on the site). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that some public order outcomes have been positively affected, as clients reported less public drug use and less disposal of gear in public spaces. However, greater effort will be needed to monitor and address other public order outcomes, such as loitering, garbage, drug selling/purchasing, and criminal activity within the vicinity of the site to ensure the safety of clients, residents, and businesses.

The site has transitioned from the Overdose Prevention Site model to become the city's interim Consumption and Treatment Service. It is recognized that the site is just one harm reduction strategy and cannot be expected to solve all of the interconnected and complex issues associated with the drug crisis. Ongoing efforts by many key stakeholders in the community will be required to address the crisis.

A Summary Report of the key findings can be found in [Appendix A](#). The Comprehensive Report can be found in [Appendix B](#). A virtual tour of the site was also developed by the Evaluation Team to help visualize the site's main spaces and illustrate how people access the services provided there (<https://www.healthunit.com/temporary-overdose-prevention-site>).

Next Steps

The evaluation findings will be used to improve service delivery at the interim site and future sites, as well as facilitate dialogue with persons who use drugs, key stakeholders, government, policymakers, and the broader community. The suggestions from the evaluation have been reviewed by the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection and MLHU Leadership. Some of the suggested improvements have already been made and action planning is underway for remaining suggestions that are feasible at the site.

This report was prepared by the Program Planning and Evaluation Team, Healthy Organization Division.



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