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CORPORATION OF THE COUNTY OF HURON
Health Unit

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health
FROM: Michelle Carter, Public Health Nurse and Tanya Sangster, Public Health Manager
DATE: September 14, 2017
SUBJECT: Opioid Response Strategy and Needle Exchange Program

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Health accept this report of September 7th, 2017 as presented for information.

BACKGROUND

In March 2017 a report was presented by Dr. Bokhout to the Huron County Board of Health regarding the Opioid strategy that was proposed by Ontario's Health Minister Eric Hoskins, working with Chief MOH David Williams to come up with an Ontario Provincial Strategy. At that time, BC had declared a provincial emergency in regards to opiate overdoses, prompting the call to action at the Ontario provincial and local levels.

This report outlines actions since March 2017 by the Huron County Health Unit.

The Harm Reduction Program: We ensure that priority populations have access to harm reduction services to reduce the transmission of blood-borne infections, educate and dispense opioid overdose related resources, as well as opportunity for screening for existing disease.

Why we provide harm reduction:

The Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program (**OHRDP**) states;

Harm reduction is a range of practical strategies and ideas focused on reducing the harmful consequences associated with drug use and other risky health behaviours. The principle of harm reduction is grounded in social justice and emphasizes respecting the rights of an individual to choice and addressing the inequalities of health and wellbeing in the drug using community.

Harm reduction strategies, surrounding drug use, recognize that abstaining from drugs may not be realistic or even desirable for everyone. Harm reduction strategies are community-based, user-driven, non-judgmental and address systems that isolate and marginalize individuals.

The Opioid Drug Strategy

Provincial response:

March 2017, a new unit of the Ministry of Health was created: Addictions and Substance Policy and Programming Unit. It is part of the Health Protection Branch at the Ministry. Chris Harold is the manager.

Reporting requirements and timelines in regards to opiate related emergency room visits/deaths was instituted, in turn allowing local PHUs access to real time data. Weekly, since April 2016, data pertaining to drug overdose emergency room visits have been circulated to provincial health units and partnering agencies.

Action at the provincial and professional college level, engaging physicians and dentists in regards to prescription guidelines of opiates. (See attached Narcotics Atlas infographic). Increased MOHLTC engagement with pharmacies, to ensure stricter dispensing of opioid prescriptions; as well as allocation of naloxone to participating pharmacies increasing public access to free injectable naloxone without prescription.

Local response:

In response to overdose deaths and increased drug related activity in nearby communities, a regional group of community partners gathered to discuss services offered and formed a localized steering committee in South Huron starting in the autumn of 2016. At the June meeting, it was agreed upon unanimously by the membership, that this type of focus and intervention is required throughout Huron County, therefore plans to form a larger county level committee began.

March 2017 – a survey of all Huron pharmacies was conducted to assess adherence to the “Patch for Patch” program implemented by the College of Pharmacists in efforts to decrease the black market availability of Fentanyl patches on the streets for sale and use. Telephone and in person interviewing found that all Huron pharmacies adhere to this Fentanyl dispensing protocol. In addition, the pharmacies were asked about dispensing Naloxone. At that time 6 out of 18 pharmacies provided the injectable Naloxone kits free to requesting clients.

June 12, 2017, Health Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins reported that funding will be offered to local health units to hire frontline staff, as well as increased distribution of naloxone kits throughout the province.

June 27 2017, Tanya Sangster, Public Health Manager and Dr. Maarten Bokhout Medical Officer of Health, presented to the Emergency Managers of Huron; the current opioid drug situation, unintended overdoses related to opioid drug use across the province and currently known situations in Huron.

July 17, 2017, a follow up community partner teleconference co-hosted by Tanya Sangster HCHU and Inspector Jason Younan OPP. The teleconference was a forum to discuss “what is being seen” in communities by front line workers and services.

The needs and risks in Huron related to drugs and overdoses are difficult to evaluate because of limited surveillance and databases. Anecdotal sharing between local service partners allows a brief peek at the current drug landscape and related needs in the county.

A four-pillar approach was outlined and accepted by the group to streamline the drafting of a Huron County opioid response plan. The pillars are consistent with other Ontario region's planning approach. The four-pillars of approach: health promotion, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement. (See definitions and template.) An inventory of current community services is a first step in assessing strong areas of support and potential gaps for clients and communities.

Local Access:

Harm reduction equipment can be accessed (anonymously) in the following ways:

- The Huron County Health Unit
 - Needles and supplies
 - Safe Inhalation kits – implemented late 2016
 - Opioid overdose training and Naloxone to drug users and their support network – Implemented August 2017
- Choices for Change in Goderich
- Dr. Datema's Methadone clinic in Seaforth.
- Royal Oaks Pharmacy in Wingham – a new collaboration since May 2017

Naloxone dispensing pharmacies are located in the following towns across Huron:

- Wingham
- Seaforth
- Goderich
- Hensall
- Exeter
- Clinton site is the Huron County Health Unit. (There are no Clinton pharmacies at this time dispensing naloxone).

Statistics for the Needle Exchange Program in Huron County (from all sites)

January 2017 to June 2017

Client Demographics	Male	Female
Number of clients	69	64
Number of new clients	5	8
Average age of clients	38	33

Crack kits provided	7
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By location	Seaforth	Goderich	HCHU
Site visits	47	37	50
Needles provided by location	4,970	6,540	15,500
	18%	24%	57%

Needle Exchange Statistics

Approximate number of needles taken in	17,100
Total number of needles given out	27,010
Return rate: $\frac{\text{total \# taken in}}{\text{total x given out x 100}}$	63%

Note: Best Practice of a NEP does not require a true exchange (needle for needle).

Disposal

The Huron County Health Unit and our NEP partnership sites have a strong relationship with our local pharmacies. Clients are encouraged to bring sharps containers back to the NEP site for disposal or to one of their local pharmacies. Free sharps containers are available at pharmacies throughout the county, provided through Stericycle.

Central Huron Landfill accepts hazardous waste for free year round.
Surrounding counties NEP programs also receive Huron resident's used needles.

A disposal drop box is accessible 24 hours a day for safe disposal located outside the Health and Library complex building.

Again this spring and summer season, there has been support from the Harm Reduction Program to provide education materials, sharps containers, tongs etc. for volunteers and park department staff conducting the clean-up with Bluewater and Goderich beaches.

Ongoing communication with the town of Goderich and the municipalities of South Huron and Bluewater continues regarding parks and beaches that have been sites of discarded syringes in recent months.

Library Branches of Huron have requested installation of secure sharps containers to meet the needs of library patrons and safety measures for all using the washroom facilities. Since the libraries are situated in municipal owned buildings, the request has been forwarded to the municipal level. Ongoing discussion and problem solving has taken place since late 2016.

Education sessions have taken place with library staff in the instance of a sharp being found over the past months by Harm Reduction program staff.

The Next Steps:

Opioid Action Plan

August 2017, Michelle Carter PHN, was assigned the opioid drug strategy portfolio in addition to the harm reduction program, in response to the enhanced funding provided by the MOHLTC to increase community agency response, surveillance, as well as program and policy development.

September 11, 2017: A county level opioid response meeting is scheduled. A cross section of service providers have been invited to discuss a response plan for Huron residents with opioid addictions. In addition, the meeting will foster an environment of a support network and resources for community agencies who work closely with this population.

NEP and Naloxone

There has been an increase in NEP supplies accessed. The Harm reduction program continues to receive requests from community agencies to assist residents accessing harm reduction supplies.

Naloxone training, staff and community partner educational training and policy development requests have increased significantly with the increased presence of drugs and availability of naloxone in the past year. With dedicated funding to support a local opioid drug strategy, these requests will become priority in the upcoming weeks and months.

Disposal

Cost has been identified as a deterrent for the installation and maintenance of sharps containers in arenas, libraries and all public buildings in Huron. In response to this, a recommendation of bulk purchase by the Health Unit of sharps containers and wall mount units at a lower cost, for municipality purchase for installation in all public buildings. Secondly, investigation into multi-site pick up by SteriCycle, the sharps disposal company, can be explored to assist in reducing logistics of maintenance.

In response to public and municipal staff concerns, a webpage on the Huron County Health Unit website was created to guide parents and adults in the instance of a found syringe or sharp in parks or beach settings.

CONCLUSION

Expansion of the Harm Reduction Program, as well as the new provincial and local opioid strategies has required increased dedication and timely responses from program staff and management. Ongoing support from community partners, municipalities and Board of Health will

be essential. Recent movement and expansion within a program that serves some of Huron's most vulnerable population, creates an optimistic outlook moving forward into 2017 and beyond

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