

PROGRAM INNOVATION

Supportive Outreach Program (SOS)

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We are in a mental health, addictions and homelessness storm that continues to gain speed and strength. SOS (Supportive Outreach Services) is a mobile, multidisciplinary team in Grey County (southwestern Ontario) serving folks who are living these struggles every day.

Born from work at our fixed sites, the mobile team has been providing outreach for almost two years. Our team includes a nurse practitioner, harm reduction counsellors, social navigator and paramedic. We work 4 days/wk attending regularly-scheduled fixed locations and providing street outreach. Our diverse team is able to provide medical, social and mental health services to individuals. Clients call or text us directly; we make a plan to meet wherever they feel most comfortable and safe - such as our fixed sites, their residence (could be a tent), a park bench, or the back of an ambulance in a parking lot.

Being able to go to our clients instead of requiring them to come to us has had a major impact on the care SOS can provide, and is accomplishing the following:

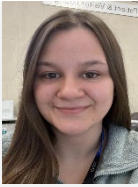
- Rebuilding trust in medical and social systems by meeting people where they're at with no judgement, open communication and honesty.
- Reducing risk of death by providing OAT with same day starts and regular follow ups.
- Reducing risks associated with substance use by providing safe use supplies.
- Providing medical care including testing and treatment of infections, wounds and minor complaints, referrals to primary care and specialists.
- Providing mental health supports for brief counselling, referrals for psychiatry and completing applications for residential treatment centres.
- Supplying necessities of life (e.g. tents, sleeping bags, water, food, bug spray, sunscreen, socks, hygiene supplies), life skills training, and obtaining ID.

Our team's foundation and success is built on the many relationships we have fostered with partner agencies, such as housing and social services, [Safe'N Sound](#) (drop-in centre), public health, court support, women's shelters, food security resources, and peer support. These partnerships are what set us apart from other similar services. We don't work in silos; we communicate regularly and work together to meet the needs of this unique population. Our team continually stretches the boundaries and asks "why can't we" when faced with a challenge. We treat each person with the dignity and respect they deserve. This is perhaps why many of our new clients are referred by past or current SOS clients. Each day brings its rewards and challenges, but we always begin and end reflecting on these reminders (author unknown): RE-SET. RE-ADJUST. RE-START. RE-FOCUS. As many times as you need to. Just don't quit.

FACES IN THE FIELD

Jordyn Ethier

Peer Support Worker, Pathway to Peers Program
Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto



The RBC Pathway to Peers (P2P) program is led by Sinai Health's Schwartz/Reisman Emergency Medicine Institute (SREMI), a not-for-profit research, education and health policy institute in Toronto. The P2P program focuses on supporting young adults aged 16 to 29 years who seek care at Mount Sinai Hospital's emergency department (ED) for mental health and/or substance use and chronic health issues. The ED is an emotionally challenging place for young people seeking mental health care, and peer supporters have an important role to play as part of the clinical team in offering empathetic and supportive care. The program's peer support workers are available up to 10 hours per day, seven days a week. They provide in-person 'in the moment' emotional support, advocacy, and coping strategies. As well, they connect patients with community-based resources to enhance long-term health potential.

I am one of four Pathway to Peers (P2P) peer support workers at Mount Sinai's emergency department. I utilize my lived experience in an intentional way to provide support to the youth who present with mental health and/or substance use concerns. While peer support exists across many disciplines, as a P2P peer support worker, I work within an interdisciplinary team of clinical providers to offer a real-time, collaborative approach to care, fostering a sense of mutuality and trust in youth who identify a need for support.

As someone with lived experience of mental health and/or substance use, motivation to do this work lies within recognizing that this role is something I would have benefitted greatly from during my own struggles with mental health and substance use. I want to ensure that youth who present to our ED do not feel alone the way many of us did during our own experiences. Working in this role has pushed me to complete a Community Worker diploma at George Brown College, and to enroll in Sociology at Toronto Metropolitan University. During my time working at Mount Sinai, I have become increasingly passionate about mental health and substance use care, as well as equitable healthcare in general. Aside from my personal growth within this role, the most rewarding aspect is being able to support patients in some of their most difficult moments, having a space to be transparent, and let them know that we have been there too and that as people with lived experience, we see them and we are here to support them.

EVENTS

RAAM Monthly Videoconferences

Provider	Nov 1	12 pm
Counsellors	Nov 10	9 am
Addictions NP	Nov 29	12 pm

Did you miss META:PHI's 2023 Conference?

Recorded sessions and slides now available on our website!

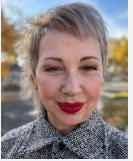
<https://www.metaphi.ca/events/conferences/>

PERSPECTIVES

Do No Harm in Harm Reduction

Star Fiorotto

Harm Reduction Peer Support Coordinator at PARN
(Peterborough Aids Resource Network)



The KT6 C.R.E.W. is a justice-oriented, peer-led, non-abstinence-based, harm reduction advisory group in Peterborough who works alongside [PARN](#) (Peterborough Aids Resource Network). 'KT6' is a war-time aviation term, meaning to keep an eye on someone while they enter a situation to protect them from harm. Members of our group know that we all have

each others' backs, no matter what. C.R.E.W. stands for Compassion, Respect, Educate and Welcome - all traits we strive to demonstrate while we carry out vital harm reduction work to support our community.

I formed KT6 just under a year ago through funding from a much-appreciated SUAP (Substance Use and Addictions Program) grant. What started as a few community members has grown to a group of 25 people – all with lived or living experience with drug use, from marginalized communities, Indigenous, and/or precariously housed/unhoused. We meet twice a week to discuss events, issues and actions affecting our community. Our gatherings always start with listening to one another's 'Rose' (something beautiful), 'Bud' (something we are looking forward to, and 'Thorn' (something that hurts).

On October 5, 2023, the Peterborough Police Services Board made an announcement that is having a profound effect on KT6's work: Police Chief Stuart Betts declared a zero-tolerance approach to open-air illicit drug use in public spaces. This means that police are now empowered to move drug users out of the public sphere to more 'appropriate places'. Consequences for those who don't comply include search, arrest and drug seizures. This new approach, based on a similar model launched in Edmonton, will not only push people off the streets, but into hiding, making it difficult for those on the front lines like the KT6 Crew to help them.

Harm reduction approaches flow from a full-board commitment to the philosophies and practices developed by drug users, descended from the harm reduction practices initially created by the AIDS activism movement. At their core, these approaches recognize the individual as the expert in their own lives. They seek to provide the tools and support necessary for that individual to use substances as best they see fit, survive, and thrive in a world that rarely holds space. The new policy may satiate business and home-owners, but at the expense of marginalized people. The money would be better spent on things like detox beds, housing, and 24-hour treatment services rather than adding to the policy budget in this way. Our leaders would be better off learning from harm reduction models that actually work, and consult with front line people and others invested in harm reduction to save lives and make our communities safer.

Our goals are to promote the inclusion and union of people who use drugs into community life, leading to an improved quality of life, and to work alongside PARN Peer workers to "Do No Harm in Harm Reduction." Harm reduction workers like the KT6 CREW will continue to 'keep the six' of the people we serve.

IN THE NEWS/OPINION

[Two Arrested for Distributing Illegal Drugs](#) (CBC Vancouver)

[Zero Tolerance Approach](#) (Peterborough Examiner)

META:PHI CLINICAL RESOURCES

[A New Framework for Methadone Carries](#)

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