

Supervised Consumption Sites

What are supervised consumption sites (SCS?)

Supervised consumption sites help save lives and build safer communities. They provide a safe and clean space for people to use their own drugs under the care of nursing staff. They offer services that connect clients to doctors, treatment and other health and social services.

Why provide supervised consumption sites?

SCS are part of a harm reduction approach that aims to provide:

- Overdose prevention (naloxone, oxygen)
- Harm reduction supplies including needles, and other safer drug use equipment
- Client education
- Connection to a variety of services including: addictions treatment, primary care, mental health, housing and/or social supports

What are the proven benefits of a SCS?

- They help prevent deaths and hospital visits due to drug overdose
- They help reduce unsafe injection practices which can lead to the transmission of blood borne infections
- They increase uptake of addiction treatment & other health and social services
- They are cost effective health care
- They bring stability to the community by improving public order and reducing the number of injections taking place on the street

Do we need a site like this in Barrie?

- Barrie ranks the third highest among large municipalities in Ontario for opioid overdose emergency department (ED) visit rates, behind Brantford and Oshawa.
- Data from January to December 2017 indicate that overall rates per 100,000 people of ED visits for an opioid overdose were significantly higher in Barrie than the average for either Ontario or Simcoe Muskoka.
- In 2017, there were 81 opioid-related deaths in Simcoe Muskoka, with 36 of those deaths in Barrie.
- The central north area of Barrie (which includes downtown) had 10 times the rate of opioid overdose ED visits in 2017 than the provincial average, and four times the overall Barrie average. This includes 34 visits among those identifying themselves as homeless.

Do supervised consumption sites encourage people to experiment with and use drugs?

SCS are designed for clients that already use drugs and who may have been using drugs for a long time. It is unlikely that people new to drug use, or experimenting with drugs, would use this site. However even for people who are new to using drugs, it is safer to use in a supervised site than alone.

Why are we not putting more effort into getting people to stop using drugs?

A SCS can be the first step into treatment for some people. People who are likely to use a SCS may struggle with poverty, homelessness, social isolation, employment, mental health, and trauma. A SCS is a health service where people who use drugs know they will be treated with respect. Staff in a SCS

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provide a human connection so that a trusting relationship can be developed. With trust, those who want to take steps out of addiction or receive other supports will feel safe enough to ask for help. In the meantime, they will have health care staff on hand who will respond if signs of overdose appear.

What are we doing to promote prevention and treatment?

Locally the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS), a community collaborative aimed at reducing opioid harms in Simcoe and Muskoka, is taking a multi-pillar approach to address this complex issue. The pillars include prevention, harm reduction, treatment, enforcement and emergency management. The treatment pillar was involved in recent increases in local treatment options. In June 2018, Simcoe County's first of three Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinics opened in Barrie. These clinics serve people with substance use disorders and their families. Also, funding has been received recently for additional community addictions counsellors. The prevention pillar has been working with community partners to hold educational events, share resources, provide support to local school boards and collaborate on the implementation of evidence-based initiatives that address the root causes of opioid misuse.

Will the site increase crime and drug use?

Consistent, high-quality evidence suggests SCS's:

- Have no impact on crime
- Improve public order & safety
- Reduce the presence of discarded needles and drug paraphernalia
- Reduce overdose-related harms
- Have no impact on community drug use patterns.

Are SCS working effectively in other parts of Ontario?

Yes, there is recent evidence from Ontario, specifically sites run in Ottawa, London, and Toronto. This recent evidence shows that the sites are:

- Preventing overdoses and saving lives
- Connecting people to treatment, providing education and referrals to health and social services
- Improving community safety and reducing public use
- Preventing the spread of infectious disease

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