

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) sites?

CTS 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 trained staff, including healthcare providers. They offer services that connect clients to doctors, treatment and other health and social services.

Why provide Consumption and Treatment Services sites?

Consumption and Treatment Services sites 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 CTS sites?

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

Do we need a site like this in Barrie?

- Deaths due to opioid toxicity in the City of Barrie remain about double what was observed prior to the pandemic, with 60 deaths in Barrie in 2022. In comparison there were 27 lives lost in the year 2019 and 215 lives lost in total since 2018.
- There were 1,499 emergency department (ED) visits related to opioid poisoning in Barrie between January 2018 and September 2022. A Consumption and Treatment Services site can alleviate pressure on the health care system.
- The central area of Barrie (which includes downtown) had nearly 10 times the rate of opioid poisoning ED visits in 2021 than the provincial average, and approximately four times the overall Barrie average. NB: the 162 visits among those identifying as homeless in Barrie were assigned to the central area of Barrie.

Do Consumption and Treatment Services sites encourage people to experiment with and use drugs?

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

Are CTS sites working effectively in other parts of Ontario?

CTS sites in other communities are proven to reduce harms and save lives. Since the opening of a CTS site in Guelph the community has reported seeing fewer discarded needles, decreased emergency department visits and the prevention of overdoses due to opioid poisoning.

Will the site increase crime and drug use?

Consistent, high-quality evidence suggests CTS sites have no impact on crime and actually improve public order and safety by reducing the presence of discarded needles, drug paraphernalia and public drug use. This is in fact one of the key objectives of a CTS, which is why CTS sites are located in areas where public drug use already occurs.

The applicant, Community Mental Health Association-Simcoe County Branch, is deeply committed to maintaining a safe environment for those using the site and for those living close to and doing business around the site. Strategies to maintain safety could include (but are not limited to):

- Continual engagement with community stakeholders and the public.
- Having a designated CTS contact person and/or outreach staff person.
- CTS design provisions including designated waiting area and post-injection/consumption room.
- Working collaboratively with our local police department.
- Having defined codes of conduct for clients.
- Regular monitoring of street and surrounding areas (by staff and mounted security cameras).
- Regular checks for discarded needles and other debris around the CTS.

How will the CTS site affect property values in our neighbourhood?

We are not aware of any research that looks specifically at CTS's potential impact on property value. However, research conducted in Toronto examined neighbourhood impact of supportive housing programs (including for those with substance use issues) and found evidence that these programs have no impact on property values. Clients using the CTS would have access to a variety of social services such as housing, mental health, and employment services.