

Guelph-Wellington Community Health Van



November 2023



Sanguen Health Centre provides health and social care for people who face barriers to accessing traditional supports, including people who experience homelessness, use drugs, and are living with Hepatitis C.



About the Community Health Van

We provide access to health and social services in **7 rural communities** and **5 urban stops in Guelph**

Currently our Van program is funded through a 3-Year **Health Canada** Substance Use and Addictions Grant

Our Team

- Team Lead/Social Support
- Van Coordinator
- Peer Leader
- Peers
- Registered Nurse



What is Harm Reduction?

Harm reduction can be defined as a set of practical strategies with the goal of meeting people 'where they are at' to help them to reduce harm associated with engaging in everyday activities.

Harm reduction is a continuum. We provide different options for people to choose what is safest for them. Whether it is abstinence, new drug use equipment, or condoms etc.

Why is Harm Reduction Important Now?



- Fentanyl and its analogues are contributing to opioid poisonings
- Across Canada, it is estimated there are 21 opioid-poisoning-related deaths per day.
- Of all accidental opioid poisoning deaths, 81% involved fentanyl.*
- Locally, there were 7 suspected drug poisoning deaths in September alone.

The risks of opioid poisonings can be reduced through harm reduction interventions (safer supply, naloxone, Consumption & Treatment Services, needle syringe programs etc.)

*taken from Opioid and Stimulant Related Harms in Canada

Harm reduction and Outreach services provided from the Van include:



- overdose prevention training
- Naloxone distribution
- Needle exchange
- Safer drug use information (peer-based)
- Pathways to detox and treatment services
- Nursing care (wound care)
- COVID-19 support
- Sexually transmitted or blood borne infection (STBBI) testing and treatment
- Immunization
- Peer-to-peer support
- Basic needs enhancement (hygiene, food, supplies)
- Mental health crisis support & intervention; access to emergency psychiatric consultations
- Warm referrals for shelter navigation, social and health supports

By the numbers...



From July 1st- September 30th 2023

- **4,302** total interventions provided on van
- **2,209** unique individuals seen
- **120** individuals seen for the first time
- **188** patients received medical attention or treatment.
- **113** total number of referrals made to other services
- **367** naloxone kits were distributed
- **927** harm reduction education encounters occurred
- **1125** harm reduction education interactions



What have we learned about the people and communities the Van supports?

As part of funding received from Health Canada, Sanguen has worked with **Roots & Rivers Consulting** to evaluate our program.

“Other services are harder to come forth with problems. More comfortable here. Around the common folk here. Hospitals treat addicts horrible. When you see someone out in the community that you know, you know their face, more approachable.”

-Van service user



“This is great. Makes you feel welcome here. The [staff person at the] back of the van is so nice, she was so nice and made me feel comfortable. Didn’t make me feel judged about drug use or stopping.”

-Van service user



Partners

- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
- HIV/AIDS Resource and Community Health (ARCH)
- Legal Clinic
- Guelph Midwives Community Access Midwifery Program
- The Hub/Guelph Community Health Centre
- The SEED
- East Wellington Community Support Services
- Centre Wellington Food Bank
- U of G Ontario Veterinary College
- Humane Society
- Royal City Mission
- The Guelph Food Bank
- Mission Thrift Store



“The Van team is doing great work bringing much needed services into [our community] and to City residents who would otherwise not access services. The Van staff are a great team. The peer-based nature of the service, with the addition of a nurse, is a combo that meets clients need for safe and accessible services.”

-Van partner





We are working to meet the needs in the City of Guelph and rural Wellington

- New drug use supply distribution and education (including collection of used supplies)
- Nutritional support in transitional/supportive housing
- Creating pathways to services and care (primary care)
- Advocacy
- Hygiene and clothing, survival gear
- Provide consistent, warm connections with individuals

Bringing a Harm Reduction Lens to all we do:

- Low Barrier Service
- Diverting from more expensive services (emergency rooms, police)
- Keeping people healthy and supported in their housing and community
- Avoiding further stigmatization of people living on low-income, or using drugs
- Addressing 'invisible homelessness' in the community



Sustaining the Community Health Van

- Health Canada funding up until March 2024
- Increasing our advocacy efforts over the past year
- We have seen the demand for our services grow
- Working towards the continuation and sustainability of our service



“The Van team has always been responsive and they are leading key work in the County of Wellington to meet the needs of people who use drugs.”

Thank you! Questions?

“When I was coming off drugs, I got help at the back of the van. I got a lot of things that helped with expenses. I got help getting off drugs cleanly. “

“...The van is always so welcoming and the staff are trusted and loyal and our community has bonds with our community members that can't happen in a clinical, facility setting.”

“Yes. I use mouthpieces now, I know how they work and I show people. I help others now.”

“Yes, you are here to talk to us, help us, understand. It is more helpful because you understand + don't judge.”