

PANEL & WORKSHOP DETAILS

9:30 AM-10:45 AM: PANEL DISCUSSION

Working with sex workers using harm reduction approaches [Location: Hall 1]

This moderated panel discussion will highlight why it is important for social and community service agencies to work with sex worker populations, address the barriers faced by sex workers in accessing services in their communities, demonstrate the case for using harm reduction approaches in service delivery, and offer recommendations and best practices for service providers.

Speakers: Casandra Diamond (BridgeNorth); Jennifer Leung (Agincourt Community Services Association – Massage Parlour/Micro-Brothel Outreach Project); Betty Williams (Peel HIV/AIDS Network - Sex Worker Drop-In Program)

Facilitator: Deborah Waddington (Sexual Health Promoter)

11:00 AM-12:30 PM & 1:00 PM-2:30 PM: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

SESSION #1: Stigma and harm reduction: Creating supportive environments for service users

[Location: Hall 3]

People who use drugs face a variety of stigmas linked to their drug use and other social and health factors. For service providers, acknowledging and addressing stigma is critical to building relationships with people who use drugs. Service providers are not immune to cultural messages that stigmatize drug use and people who use drugs, and being aware of our biases is necessary to begin the process of meeting service users with empathy. In this workshop attendees will explore personal and societal attitudes towards drugs and people who use them, and hear from local harm reduction-based service providers about how they work to create an affirming space for clients who use drugs.

Speakers: Natasha Darko (AIDS Committee of York Region); Ingie Mehmet (Addiction Services of York Region); Ashley Leggett (Addiction Services of York Region); Michelle Ball (LOFT Crosslinks); Susan Dobson (Krasman Centre); Sarah Cooper (York Region Public Health)

Facilitator: Nick Boyce (Ontario HIV & Substance Use Training Program)

SESSION #2: The intersection of harm reduction and homelessness [Location: Hall 1]

Have you ever asked yourself or wondered: How is harm reduction relevant to those experiencing homelessness? How do services that support those experiencing homelessness view and implement harm reduction? How is harm reduction developing in York Region to support those experiencing homelessness? What is the future of harm reduction within this sector? Answer all these questions and more with LOFT Crosslinks Street Outreach, Blue Doors Shelters, Yellowbrick House, Sandgate Women's Shelter and Salvation Army's Belinda's Place.

Speakers: Chandra Newman (Coordinator of LOFT Crosslinks Street Outreach); Alex Cheng (Client Services Director of Blue Doors Shelters); Joanne Borris (Manager of Direct Services of Yellowbrick House); Sally Gyton (Residential Programs Manager of Sandgate Women's Shelter); Theresa McLeod-Treadwell (Director of Program Services of Salvation Army's Belinda's Place)

SESSION #3: Building a trauma-informed service to enhance sexual health outcomes for women experiencing violence [Location: Hall 4]

In June 2016, the AIDS Committee of York Region (ACYR) and York Region Centre for Community Safety (YRCCS) undertook a collaborative project with funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Their goal is to develop an innovative trauma-informed model of service delivery for low to moderate income women who have experienced violence and are at-risk of or impacted by HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs). Speakers from both agencies will share information on the progression of the project and lessons learned through an organizational self-assessment using a trauma-informed care lens. The project aims to build capacity of diverse family violence and social service providers currently housed at the YRCCS hub on the intersections between trauma and STBBIs, knowledge about trauma-informed care, intervention and prevention approaches, and linkages to community resources.

Speakers: Meccana Ali (York Region Centre for Community Safety); Sarah Crawford (AIDS Committee of York Region)

2:30 PM-3:30 PM: CLOSING PLENARY

Moving forward harm reduction in York Region – From ideas to action [Location: Hall 1]

Counterpoint Harm Reduction Services has been one of Ontario's leaders in harm reduction services, providing a full suite of services for people who use drugs including needle exchange, street and mobile outreach, and education on safer injection practices. Counterpoint is also poised to launch the first safer injection site in Canada outside of a major urban area. Director Sonja Burke will speak to the history of developing Counterpoint's programs through work with the community and engage the audience in dialogue about how service providers in York Region can continue to build our harm reduction services.

Speakers: Sonja Buke (Director of Counterpoint Harm Reduction Services, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, London); Vibhuti Mehra (AIDS Committee of York Region)