

SUPPORTING WELLNESS and REDUCING HARM (SWaRH) in Abbotsford

Memorandum of Understanding

WHEREAS, Abbotsford is home to a significant population of people who use drugs; and

WHEREAS, various practices have been empirically shown to reduce illness and mortality, and increase quality of life by ensuring drug users and their professional and personal connections have and can provide information, supplies, services, and encouragement to protect and enhance their health, the health of their peers and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, Abbotsford Community Services (ACS), BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors – Abbotsford Chapter (BCYADWS), Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley (WRSFV), The 5 and 2 Ministries (5&2), and Positive Living Fraser Valley Society (PLFV) have come together to create and implement a coordinated plan to provide evidence-based harm reduction services and supplies in the City of Abbotsford; and

WHEREAS, ACS, BCYADWS, WRSFV, 5&2 and PLFV (hereafter referred to as “The Partners”) are each already engaged singly and to some extent collaboratively in some evidence-based harm reduction services; and

WHEREAS, the Partners intend to implement this plan aimed at continuing, expanding and better coordinating the provision of services and supplies that save lives and reduce the spread of life-threatening disease in our community, contingent upon funding available, even if this plan conflicts with by-laws existent in the City of Abbotsford; and

WHEREAS, the Fraser Health Authority has indicated they will provide funding to support this plan, the Partners have come together to collaborate on the development of this plan and any application for funding that might help to support the implementation of this plan; and

WHEREAS, the Partners have agreed to enter into a collaborative agreement in which ACS will be the lead agency and named applicant and the other agencies will be partners in this application; and

WHEREAS, the Partners herein desire to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding setting forth the services to be provided by the collaborative; and

WHEREAS, the application prepared and approved by the collaborative through its Partners is to be submitted to the Fraser Health Authority on or before the due date of any such application;

1) Description of Partner Agencies

- **Abbotsford Community Services (ACS):**
 - An agency that fosters community well being and social justice through positive action and leadership.

- Sponsors Abbotsford Addiction Centre (AAC), an outpatient clinic within Abbotsford Community Services, that provides counseling and prevention services that promote the well being of persons of all ages and cultures within the Abbotsford community affected by or at risk of developing problems with substance misuse. AAC operates using a Harm Reduction Philosophy, meeting clients where they are in their addiction.
- Our counsellors and administrators are trained in substance misuse assessment, education, treatment, and prevention. They are committed to professional, non-discriminatory counseling and adhere to the rules of confidentiality of information.
- Through AAC holds support recovery and educational meetings, daytime and evening meetings available.
- Through the Abbotsford Addiction Centre, stores harm reduction supplies, including clean needles and condoms, and distributes them to other community organizations (such as parties to this MOU) and clients as needed.
- Has a sharps container for collection of used supplies.
- Provides meeting space for BCYADWS, which also distributes and collects supplies at meetings.
- Provides space for Dr. Wouterlout to provide HIV/AIDS treatment and services related to Methadone.
- Participates on several community committees including:
 - Fraser East Regional Addiction Committee
 - Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Committee
 - Abbotsford Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Committee
 - Abbotsford Social Development Advisory Committee
 - Regional Community Corrections Advisory
 - Abbotsford Connect – Service Day for Abbotsford Homeless
- **BC/Yukon Association of Drug Was Survivors – Abbotsford Chapter (BCYADWS):**
 - Has a growing membership of 450+ former and current drug users, with a peer-led Steering Committee for the local chapter, and board of directors for the provincial organization.
 - Holds weekly meetings, including two general meetings per month that average 40-50 current and former drug users per meeting.
 - Distributes and collects needles, crack pipes and other harm reduction supplies at its meetings, through mobile distribution and collection, and through peer distribution channels in both Abbotsford and Mission.
 - In collaboration with the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) and others, provides training to its membership both on methods of harm reduction to implement in their own lives, and on how to support each other to reduce harm by developing a sense of community and citizenship, even in a sometimes hostile environment.
 - Utilizes a determinants-of-health perspective to support drug users to identify and define their own challenges and opportunities, devise methods and initiatives to positively and productively engage with these challenges and opportunities, and take action along these lines. These activities have taken the form of:

- Setting up distribution operations, especially in locations and at times when supplies are not otherwise available in Abbotsford.
 - Creating consultation reports about issues relevant to the expertise of the membership, such as about the availability of harm reduction supplies, and barriers and gaps in shelter services.
 - Participating in regional and municipal committees and organizations, including:
 - City of Abbotsford
 - Fraser Health Authority
 - BC Centre for Disease Control
 - Vancouver Area Network of Drug War Survivors (VANDU)
 - Pacific Hepatitis-C Network
 - Fraser Region HIV/AIDS Hep-C Advisory Committee
 - Abbotsford Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Committee
 - Initiating, coordinating and participating in actions that have brought significant media and public attention to issues relevant to supporting health and reducing harm for Drug War Survivors and the community as a whole.
 - Supports and encourages a sense of community and citizenship among former and current drug users in Abbotsford and the general population, with the goal of improving the overall health, vibrancy, and appreciation for diversity, efficiency, effectiveness, social justice, due process and transparency in the City of Abbotsford.
 - Connects with experts and leaders in the field of harm reduction and substance use treatment in the city, region, province, nation and internationally in order to ensure that the most up-to-date knowledge and evidence on supporting wellness and reducing harm, particularly in the population of drug users, is available to local policy makers and organizations.
- **Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley (WRSFV):**
 - Through the Warm zone, provides a fixed harm reduction supply distribution and collection site;
 - Supports peer distribution and collection of harm reduction supplies by providing supplies and to-go sharps containers, resulting in the collection of dirty needles and clean supplies getting out into the community every day that the Warm Zone is open;
 - Provides general and addiction specific counseling, education and outreach supports to women
 - Supports a peer initiated “Sisters in Support” drug user group for women
 - Works with a wide diversity of community partners in order to educate and increase community capacity to better support vulnerable women
 - Provides everyday services to support the lives of vulnerable and marginalized women in the community, including providing a phone, laundry, shower, and a safe place to socialize, eat, have down time, receive outreach and counseling support, or take a nap.
- **The 5 and 2 Ministries (5&2):**

- Operates diverse daily programs for the vulnerable and marginalized members of our community. The following is a partial list of activities:
 - Coffee Fellowship – three nights a week
 - Community Dinner – every Wednesday night
 - Sunday Community Dinner – once a month
 - Homeless Camp Visit Bike Patrol – once or more a week
 - Community Connection Outreach – twice a week
 - Sex Trade Outreach and Downtown Bike patrol – twice a week or more
 - Sandwich Patrol – twice a month
 - Abbotsford Streets – weekly radio show on 101.7FM discussing social justice issues locally and beyond
- Participates on several boards, organizations and working groups including:
 - Abbotsford Christian Leaders Network
 - Abbotsford Social Development Advisory Committee working groups
 - Vibrant Abbotsford
 - Extreme Weather Program
 - Abbotsford Connect Planning Committee
 - Abbotsford Central Table for Women
- Has strong relationships and rapport with most of Abbotsford’s most marginalized and vulnerable citizens and uses this rapport to support and advocate on behalf of these citizens, where needed and possible.
- Coordinates with multiple and diverse organizations to improve access to services, raise community awareness, and encourage participation in community issues on all levels.
- Supports peer distribution and collection of harm reduction supplies by providing supplies at all scheduled events.
- Provides a fixed harm reduction supply distribution and collection site at all scheduled events.
- Provides mobile harm reduction supply distribution and collection site during all outreach activities.
- Additional Harm Reduction materials are currently distributed as well which include condoms and other available materials.
- **Positive Living Fraser Valley Society (PLFV):**
 - Distributes condoms.
 - Selective mobile distribution and collection of needles.
 - Operates a community centre for HIV and HEP-C positive residents of the Fraser Valley who are members of PLFV, which includes scheduled workshops, activities and a weekly lunch.
 - Provides support workers to help people who are HIV or HEP-C positive get access to food, harm reduction supplies, medical appointments, and other critical services.
 - Conducts public awareness campaigns and events, and trains and coordinates opportunities for a speaker’s bureau.
 - Is a member of the Fraser Health HIV/AIDS Hep C Advisory Committee.

II) History of Relationship

- Of most importance, the Partners engage, work with, and advocate on behalf of a cohort of citizens of Abbotsford – those who use or have used drugs.
- Each Partner has a fundamental commitment to respecting and valuing people, and particularly those who use or have used drugs – and to “meeting people where they are at” in a way that supports dignity, integrity and safety without placing conditions or limits on available services and supplies to support wellness and reduce exposure to harm.
- The Partners believe in due process and transparency and each has in place the capacity and a practice for addressing and resolving grievances.
- The Partners have worked together on numerous projects and initiatives since 2009, including, most recently:
 - Abbotsford Connect – an annual event held during National Homeless Week that brings together a wide range of service providers and services to support those who are sleeping rough, staying with friends, living on the edge, can’t make ends meet or just need help.
 - Fraser Valley homeless counts.
 - The Abbotsford Social Development Advisory Committee’s (ASDAC) Shelter Working Group, which delivered its recommendations to ASDAC in April 2012.
 - Fraser Health’s Harm Reduction Implementation Plan for Abbotsford, submitted to the City in May 2012.
- The on-going goal of the collaboration is to ensure that evidence-based practices for supporting wellness and reducing harm are available in Abbotsford in a coordinated, integrated, cost-effective and continually-evaluated and improved manner.

III) Roles and Responsibilities

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby agreed by and between the partners as follows:

- **Abbotsford Community Services (ACS):**
 - Roles and responsibilities:
 - Administration of any funds as agreed upon by the Partners.
 - Ensuring proper oversight, due process, privacy and transparency in line with best practices.
 - Serve as a fixed site for distribution and collection of harm reduction supplies, including, but not limited to, needles (in all quantities – including in bulk for other organizations and peer distribution purposes). To be provided in such a manner that optimizes accessibility while balancing the needs of other ACS programs that may be impacted.
 - Contribution of resources:
 - Limited space for storage of supplies.
 - Meeting space, as available.
 - Representatives:

- Executive Director, or designate
 - Coordinator of Abbotsford Addiction Centre
 - Commitment:
 - Recognizing the seriousness and potential social, political, ethical, and interpersonal complexity of the collaboration – a willingness to work through challenges in good faith with partners who demonstrate good faith and a desire to build and strengthen trust, rapport and open communication.
 - Recognizing and supporting the fact that there are many roles to play and that not all Partners will play all roles.
 - Willingness to be transformed as a result of this collaboration.
- **BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors – Abbotsford Chapter (BCYADWS):**
 - Roles and responsibilities:
 - Coordinate peer-led meetings, consultations, focus groups and activities with and among the local population of former and current drug users to continually highlight both internally and to the community:
 - The strengths, vitality, creativity, love, concern, community, contributions and citizenship of former and current drug users.
 - Gaps and barriers to accessing services and supplies that support wellness and reduce harm in the population of people who use drugs.
 - Provide a peer-based process to work through any issues that might arise among and between drug users, former drug users, service providers and volunteers – ensuring that those who need support receive it in such a way that minimizes further marginalization, stigmatization or trauma.
 - Contribution of resources:
 - Passion for what is right and good and true.
 - Transparent accounting of use of all funds.
 - Representatives:
 - Fraser Region Directors of the BCYADWS.
 - Members of the Abbotsford Chapter Steering Committee.
 - Commitment:
 - To never overlook injustice, hypocrisy, discrimination, inequality, marginalization, empty gestures, the waste of precious resources, human rights violations, and other assaults on human dignity that damn the most vulnerable among us into hopelessness, isolation, and paralysis.
 - To keep its eyes on the prize of evidence-based practices, taking full advantage of every opportunity to push forward this agenda without regard to political considerations – for the sake of Drug War Survivors everywhere, and everyone whose life has been touched by the tragedy of this senseless war on ourselves, our children, and our future.
- **Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley (WRSFV):**
 - Roles and responsibilities:

- Participate in ensuring the full spectrum of services to marginalized and vulnerable women, including harm reduction supplies and services, are available.
 - Support women to access peer support, education, creative expression and to promote camaraderie and community inclusion.
 - Foster community capacity building and networking with organizations to support the health and safety of marginalized women.
 - Contribution of resources:
 - A proven record of assisting women who face multiple barriers to navigate social and governmental systems, including criminal justice, healthcare, community services, housing, etc.
 - Experience in the process of ensuring those who need supplies and services that support wellness and reduce harm have such access.
 - Representatives:
 - Executive Director, or designate.
 - Coordinator of the Warm Zone.
 - Commitment:
 - To advocate for the unique needs of women.
 - To continue to work collaboratively with individuals and organizations in the community to provide opportunities to give and receive help when, where and how it is needed.
- **The 5 and 2 Ministries (5&2):**
 - Roles and responsibilities:
 - Minister to the social, emotional, spiritual and physical needs of the community in a way that recognizes and celebrates the sanctity of every human being, and focuses on supporting wellness and reducing harm.
 - Continue to interface with the faith-based community to raise awareness and deepen discussion around issues related to substance use and evidence-based strategies for supporting wellness and reducing harm in a way that is congruent with religious teachings.
 - Ensure that marginalized and vulnerable populations have dependable access to services and supplies that convey a profound respect for the value of their being and health, and a desire to recognize, support, and encourage their unique gifts.
 - Gain and maintain knowledge of locations where people regularly gather to use drugs (such as “shooting galleries”) and ensure these locations have access to safe supplies, safety education, and pathways to services.
 - Contribution of resources:
 - A large and growing ministry of diverse, passionate and committed volunteers who see ministering to the most vulnerable and marginalized among us not just as something they do, but as what they are on this earth to do.
 - Use of The 5 and 2 Ministries’ vehicle for mobile distribution and collection of supplies and services that support wellness and reduce harm.

- Capacity to provide mobile outreach 24-7 by motor vehicle, bicycle, on foot and from a fixed site, dependent upon the resources (gas, maintenance, rent, etc.) necessary to do so.
 - Representatives:
 - Pastor Ward Draper, Executive Director
 - Associate Pastor Jesse Wegenast, Community Service coordinator
 - Commitment:
 - To stay just far enough ahead to be seen as a leader, but not so far ahead as to be mistaken for an enemy.
 - To pro-actively and consistently engage in and encourage the faith-based community to engage in dialogue around substance use and reducing harm, in a manner inspired by the Gospel and its unconditional love and acceptance.
- **Positive Living Fraser Valley Society (PLFV):**
 - Roles and responsibilities:
 - Fixed site distribution and collection of supplies (upon approval by Board of Directors and landlord).
 - Contribution of resources:
 - Public awareness and education around measures proven to reduce the risk of HIV and Hep-C transmission.
 - Individual supports for those with of at risk of HIV and/or Hep-C.
 - On-going participation to determine where and when and how further contributions may be possible.
 - Representatives:
 - Executive Director or designate.
 - Commitment:
 - To assist those with or at risk of HIV and/or Hep-C to stay healthy and be able to access needed information, supports, services and supplies to do so.

For information about this Memorandum of Understanding, please contact:

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