MEDIA RELEASE

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Hamilton Drug Strategy urges residents to take action to stop stigma

HAMILTON, ON – The Hamilton Drug Strategy is raising awareness about the harmful effects of substance use-related stigma by encouraging residents to learn how to stop stigma. The month-long #SeeThePerson campaign begins today, ahead of National Addictions Awareness Week taking place November 25 to December 1.

Stigma impacts people who use substances, their families, and the community. Many people who use substances face barriers in getting the support and services they need and in sustaining recovery because of the stigma that surrounds addiction.

A series of eight videos featuring stories from community members who have been affected by substance use-related stigma, including persons in recovery, their loved ones, and the perspectives of a doctor and a pharmacist, is available at www.hamilton.ca/SeeThePerson.

The webpage also features information about stigma as well as steps people can take to stop stigma: choose compassion, choose words carefully, and choose to get involved.

Quick Facts

- One in 10 Canadians from all walks of life struggle with addiction, according to the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction report: Life in Recovery from Addiction in Canada, May 2017.
- A substance use disorder is a medical condition diagnosed under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
- In 2018, Hamilton’s opioid-related death rate was 21.3 per 100,000, more than double the provincial rate of 10.2. A total of 123 residents died as a result of an opioid overdose in Hamilton. Of these deaths, 88 per cent were accidental.
- Every year, there are more than 3,000 emergency department visits and 100 deaths in Hamilton related to alcohol use.
- The rate of emergency department visits in Hamilton for substance use disorders related to stimulants (amphetamines, such as crystal meth) is 12 times higher
compared to seven years ago. Emergency department visits for stimulants climbed from 39 in 2012 to 504 in 2018.

- Among people with substance use disorders, substance use-related stigma contributes significantly to feelings of social isolation and shame, poor mental health outcomes, and continued, harmful use of substances (Government of Canada, 2018).

- The Hamilton Drug Strategy is a community collaboration that addresses the harms associated with substance use experienced by individuals, families and the community. It involves more than 150 community partners across a range of sectors.

Additional Resources

www.hamilton.ca/SeeThePerson

www.hamilton.ca/drugstrategy

Quotes

“We know all too well the harmful effects stigma can have on the people who use our services and share their stories of shame and discrimination they have faced. By stopping stigma, we can make a positive difference in people’s lives.”

TimMcClemont
Chair, Harm Reduction Working Group, Hamilton Drug Strategy, and Executive Director, The AIDS Network

“We substance use and addiction continue to be significant areas of concern in Hamilton. Addressing stigma is key to helping people with substance use disorders access the services they need. Together, we can support better health outcomes and quality of life for individuals and families affected by substance use and contribute to a healthier community overall.”

Dr. Elizabeth Richardson
Chair, Hamilton Drug Strategy Steering Committee, and Medical Officer of Health, City of Hamilton

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