



WINDSOR-ESSEX  
COMMUNITY  
**OPIOID &  
SUBSTANCE**  
STRATEGY

## **WECOSS Harm Reduction Working Group Meeting**

**Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup> from  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

# **2025 HRWG Project: Building Community for Harm Reduction (Anti-Stigma Programming)**

# 2025 Project Overview

## *Building Community For Harm Reduction*

### **Project Purpose:**

Implement policy solutions and community education interventions to dispel harmful ideologies, improve knowledge/attitudes, and reduce stigma towards harm reduction.

### **Key Activities and Outputs:**



Development of an anti-stigma policy template for organizations.



Anti-stigma workshops for organizations to support integration of the policy into practice.



Anti-stigma social media campaign to promote understanding of harm reduction.



# Anti-Stigma Policy Template

- Designed to help address the **health and social disparities** linked to substance use **stigma**.
- Implementation will support the creation of person-centered, recovery-oriented, and **stigma-free environments** for people with lived and living experience (PWLLE) of substance use at community organizations.

## Policy elements

- Purpose and scope
- Definitions
- Roles and responsibilities
- Implementation
- Training
- Compliance

# Guiding Principles

---

## **Harm Reduction**

Foster an organizational culture that supports harm reduction as a valid care option, meeting people where they are at.

---

## **Trauma & Violence-Informed Practice**

Recognize the impact of trauma and create safe, empowering environments for people who use substances (PWUD).

---

## **Equity & Inclusion**

Uphold dignity and rights of all clients—center autonomy, respect diverse needs, and remove systemic barriers.

---

## **Collaboration with PWLLE**

Partner meaningfully with people with lived and living experience to shape programs, improve access, and build trust.

---

# Embedding Principles into Everyday Work



## Trauma-Informed:

- ✓ Ask: “What happened to you?” instead of “What’s wrong with you?”
- ✓ Avoid requiring disclosure to offer support.



## Equity & Inclusion:

- ✓ Offer multiple service options.
- ✓ Say: “What approach feels right for you?”
- ✓ Respect client’s right to decline or revisit choices.



## Collaboration with PWLLE:

- ✓ Involve PWLLE in program design and evaluation.
- ✓ Share how their feedback shaped decisions.



## Harm Reduction:

- ✓ Increase referrals to treatment programs and health and social services
- ✓ Use compassionate, non-judgemental language in all interactions and organizational documents.

# Changing How We Talk About Substance Use

Instead of saying...	Say... 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addicts</li><li>• Junkies</li><li>• Users</li><li>• Drug/substance abusers</li></ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People who use drugs/substances</li><li>• People living with a substance use disorder</li><li>• People with lived/living experience</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drug/substance abuse/misuse</li><li>• Problematic drug/substance use</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drug/substance use</li><li>• Substance use disorder</li></ul>

# Updates

- ❖ **Internal implementation** of the drafted policy at WECHU is underway, with external rollout to community organizations planned to follow.
- ❖ Internal implementation is expected to be completed within **1 month**; external implementation will begin in **November**.
- ❖ Supporting materials are in development, including **e-module content** to be shared, followed by **workshop** in **November (tentative Nov 18<sup>th</sup>)**

# External Implementation

## Policy Dissemination – Early Nov

- **Framework to embed the anti-stigma principles** into policy, practice, language, and service delivery
- To be shared with **WECOSS-LC & HRWG**
- E-modules to accompany policy:
  - **Module 1:** For all staff – introduces stigma concepts, language, and staff roles in fostering a stigma-free environment
  - **Module 2:** For leaders, HR, and policy staff – guides implementation strategies and integration into organizational culture



**STAFF**

Addressing Stigma –  
Creating Inclusive  
Workplaces and  
Communities

# External Implementation

## Implementation Workshop – tentative Nov 18<sup>th</sup>

- Intended for management, human resources, policy staff, and others in leadership or decision-making roles.
- Objectives
  - Provide **education of substance use stigma** and its impact
  - Understand **core principles** of the policy
  - Explore **strategies for organizational alignment** and adaptation
  - Identify opportunities for internal **training and evaluation**
- Get involved
  - Seeking **volunteers to co-facilitate** the workshop
  - Looking for **peers** willing to share **personal experiences**

# Anti-Stigma Social Media Campaign

- ❖ Content was developed and reviewed in partnership with the **Substance Use Peer Advisory Committee**, incorporating the perspectives of individuals with lived and living experience of substance use to ensure relevance and effectiveness
- ❖ The initiative consists of **8 distinct messages** designed to engage the target audience
- ❖ Scheduled to run on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter from **Oct 1<sup>st</sup> to Dec 16<sup>th</sup>**
- ❖ HRWG encouraged to **amplify the messages** on their social media channels

# Anti-Stigma Social Media Schedule

No.	Topic	Date
1	Quitting isn't the only way - different kinds of people need different kinds of help	Oct 1
2	Help end stigma by using kind words and treating everyone with care	Oct 7
3	See the whole person, not just their substance use	Oct 21
4	Substance use disorder is not someone's fault; it is an illness and should be treated like one	Nov 4
5	We can work together to keep our community safe and support people who use substances	Nov 18
6	Naloxone is like an EpiPen for opioid overdoses, it is safe, easy, and legal to use	Nov 25
7	OAT is medicine that helps people get better, just like medicine that helps other long term health problems	Dec 9
8	Services that help people who use substances can lower the number of hospital visits in our community, taking stress of the healthcare system	Dec 16

Instagram - @thewechu | Twitter/X - @TheWECHU | Facebook – Windsor-Essex County HEALTH UNIT

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation

# Background

- ❖ For the past four years, the WECOSS has been guided by an action plan from 2021 (2021 Modernization Report).
- ❖ From 2021-2025, the partnership has implemented numerous strategies to address each of the Modernization recommendations and action areas, which have been summarized and shared with the community yearly through our Annual Reports.
- ❖ Now, in 2025, the WECOSS is ready to reposition itself to identify new priorities and areas of focus for the years ahead.
- ❖ A new action plan is being created for the WECOSS, which will include fresh goals and actions for the partnership to achieve over the years to come.
- ❖ The new plan will be informed by a comprehensive community consultation conducted with WECOSS partners and other key stakeholders.

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation

## Purpose:

Gather input from the community that will inform the development of a renewed, community-informed action plan for the WECOSS.

## Goals:

Identify the most pressing issues and concerns impacting the WEC community as it relates to various forms of substance use.

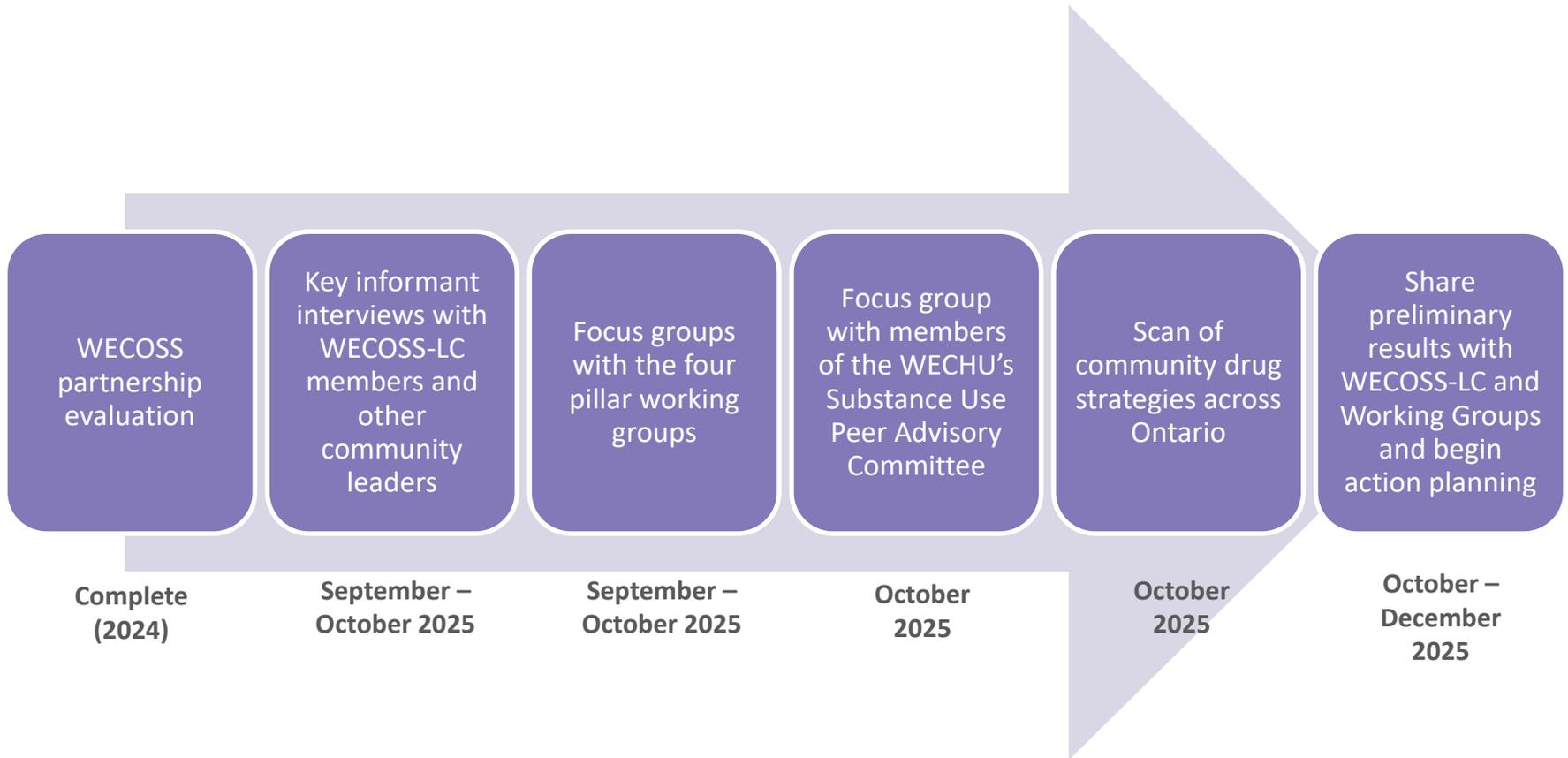
Confirm existing strengths, capacities, and resources currently available to address these concerns at the community level.

Solidify community needs, gaps, and priorities for the WECOSS to address in its future work with community partners.

Define the WECOSS' role in the community by identifying strategies to improve coordination and reduce duplication between the WECOSS and other emerging community initiatives.

Use results from the consultation to generate recommendations guiding the strategic direction for the WECOSS in 2026 and beyond.

# Key Activities & Timelines



# Harm Reduction Working Group

## *Focus Group*

- ❖ During today's meeting, a focus group will be held with HRWG members as part of the action plan consultation.
- ❖ The focus group will allow us to explore the future direction and potential areas of focus for this specific pillar over the years to come.
- ❖ Your feedback is important to us and will help to shape the goals, actions, and recommendations proposed within the new action plan.