



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

WECOSS Leadership Committee Meeting

Monday, October 27th from
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
350 City Hall Square West, Room 204

Opioids and Substances Data Review (J. Bradt)

Monthly Information Bulletin: Provincial Drug Alerts

**INFORMATION BULLETIN – September 5th,
2025**
Provincial Drug Alert Update



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The Addiction and Substances Policy and Programs Unit through the Ministry of Health provided Public Health Units (PHUs) with information about drug alerts issued across the province of Ontario over the month of August 2025. Please see the summary table below for further details.

PHUs across Ontario continue to report the new variants of high-potency fentanyl. These observations highlight the continued unpredictability and toxicity of the unregulated drug supply in our communities.

SUMMARY

New Drug Alerts (August 2025)	6
Health Units Reporting	6*
Substances Reported Most	Fentanyl and other opioids

**Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, Public Health Sudbury & Districts, Durham Region Health Department, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health.*

Total Drug Alerts (January - August 2025)	49
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SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Please share this information with clients/patients using substances and continue to encourage use of harm reduction practices. Visit www.wecoss.ca/resources to find related resources and supports.

Example of Additional Data for Monthly Information Bulletin

LOCAL SUBSTANCE USE DATA FOR WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY

Emergency Department Visits by Substance	Number of cases				Substance most reported
	(Wk 31-35 2025)	(Wk 31-35 2024)	(Wk 1-35 2025)	(Wk 1-35 2024)	
Substance overdose cases (opioid)-fentanyl, heroin, other opioids	4 	5	7 	5	Fentanyl
Substance overdose cases (non-opioid drugs)-methamphetamine, other drugs	4 	5	7 	5	Other drugs
Non-overdose substance misuse cases (opioid)-fentanyl, heroin, other opioids	5 	2	9 	8	Fentanyl
Non-overdose substance misuse cases (non-opioid drugs)- methamphetamine, other drugs	5 	2	9 	8	Other drugs
Non-overdose substance misuse cases (alcohol)	4 	5	7 	5	Alcohol

WECOSS Working Group Updates

Harm Reduction (A. Adams)

Building Community for Harm Reduction: Anti-Stigma Programming

Project Purpose:

Implement policy solutions and community education interventions to reduce stigma towards substance use and 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 substance use and harm reduction.



Harm Reduction (A. Adams)

Building Community for Harm Reduction: Anti-Stigma Programming

Status Updates:

- ❖ The anti-stigma policy template for community organizations has been developed using results from the assessment survey issued to partners earlier this year.
- ❖ The policy template will be formally released to community organizations by mid-November, along with two e-learning modules:
 - **Anti-Stigma Education (*For All Staff*)** – Introduces stigma concepts, use of non-stigmatizing language, and staff roles in fostering stigma-free environments.
 - **Anti-Stigma Policy Implementation (*For Policy Leads*)** – Overview of guiding strategies to support implementation of the policy at the organizational level.
- ❖ An in-person policy implementation workshop will also be offered on **Wednesday, November 26th from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.** (location is TBD).
 - The workshop is being co-facilitated by the WECHU and the Welcome Centre Shelter.
 - It will be targeted to policy leads at community organizations.
 - Anti-stigma education, an overview of the policy template, and guidance on policy implementation will be provided.
 - Peer speakers will also be present to share their insight on stigma and its impact.

Harm Reduction (A. Adams)

Building Community for Harm Reduction: Anti-Stigma Programming

Status Updates:

The anti-stigma social media campaign has also been launched on the WECHU's channels:

WECHU Social Media Schedule for Anti-Stigma Campaign		
Post 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

Harm Reduction (A. Adams)

Building Community for Harm Reduction: Anti-Stigma Programming

Calls to Action for the WECOSS Leadership Committee:

Anti-Stigma Policy and Workshops

- Participate in the in-person policy implementation workshop or encourage other policy leads from your organization to participate.
- Consider implementing or adapting the policy for use at your agency.

Anti-Stigma Social Media Campaign

- Amplify the WECHU's social media messaging about the campaign on your organization's social media accounts.

Prevention and Education (K. Willis/J. Bradt)

Youth and Family Engagement and Outreach for Substance Use Prevention

Project Purpose:

To educate and build community capacity for substance use prevention among youth and families.

Key Activities and Outputs:



Host in-person and virtual education sessions on substance use prevention for parents, caregivers, and families.



Collaborate with school boards to provide resources and lesson plans to support schools.



Launch a mass communication campaign on supporting the family environment for youth substance use prevention.



Participate as guest speakers at community events.



Prevention and Education (K. Willis/J. Bradt)

Youth and Family Engagement and Outreach for Substance Use Prevention

Status Updates:

- ❖ **Delivered seven (7) workshops** on youth substance use prevention topics (*January 2025 to October 2025*):
 - ❖ Workshops have been delivered to youth/students, educators, parents/caregivers, and families.
 - ❖ Topics covered include substance use, its health effects for youth, supporting conversations with and among youth about substance use, and youth substance use services/supports.
 - ❖ **88.2% (75/85)** reported improved understanding of workshop topics.
- ❖ Attended **eleven (11)** community events to distribute youth substance use prevention information (*January 2025 to October 2025*).
 - ❖ **100% (64/64)** reported improved awareness of the topics presented.
- ❖ Created updated policy recommendations for schools and school boards on addressing tobacco, vaping, and nicotine use at school.
- ❖ Developing an e-learning module that can be completed by youth caught smoking/vaping at school as an alternative to punitive measures (progressive enforcement approach).

Prevention and Education (K. Willis/J. Bradt)

Youth and Family Engagement and Outreach for Substance Use Prevention

Call to Action for the WECOSS Leadership Committee

Connect with Jenny and Kim if interested in coordinating a youth/family substance use prevention workshop with clients or staff at your organization.

Connect with Jenny and Kim if your agency is organizing any upcoming events for youth/families that the PEWG can support.

Treatment and Recovery (A. Erickson)

Expanding Access to Opioid Agonist Therapy

Project Purpose:

Support improved access to opioid agonist therapy (OAT) for individuals living with opioid use disorder in the community.

Key Activities and Outputs:



Deliver training sessions for health and social service providers on facilitating conversations and supporting connections to OAT.



Improve navigability of OAT on WEC Connect.



Develop provider and client resources to support understanding of OAT treatment options.



Treatment and Recovery (A. Erickson)

Expanding Access of Opioid Agonist Therapy

Status Updates:

- ❖ Issued a needs assessment survey to community partners to understand knowledge gaps and learning needs of frontline providers as it relates to OAT.
- ❖ Key learning needs identified through the survey were as follows:
 - ❖ Baseline information about OAT (i.e., what it is, how it works)
 - ❖ OAT options available in the community and how they differ
 - ❖ Initiating conversations with clients/patients about OAT
 - ❖ When and how to connect clients to OAT treatment
 - ❖ Navigating the OAT service system
 - ❖ Anti-stigma education about OAT
 - ❖ Person-centered and trauma-informed lens to supporting individuals accessing, looking to access, or may benefit from OAT.
- ❖ OAT training materials and resources are currently being developed for frontline providers and their clients/patients based on the needs assessment results.

Treatment and Recovery (A. Erickson)

Expanding Access of Opioid Agonist Therapy

Status Updates:

- ❖ OAT training webinar for frontline providers is tentatively scheduled for **Friday, November 28th**. The session will be recorded for those who cannot attend the live session.
- ❖ The webinar will be co-facilitated by Jennifer Burton (*Nurse Practitioner/Program Manager of VON Chronic Pain Program*) and Dr. Bob McKay (*Addictions Medicine Physician*).
- ❖ A peer speaker will also be present to share their lived experiences with OAT.
- ❖ To supplement the training, a list of OAT services is also being integrated onto WEC Connect to support service navigation and access.

Call to Action for the WECOSS Leadership Committee:

Encourage frontline providers at your community organization to attend the upcoming OAT webinar. Further details will follow by email over the coming weeks.

Treatment and Recovery

WEC Connect Update

(J. Bradt)

WEC Connect Update

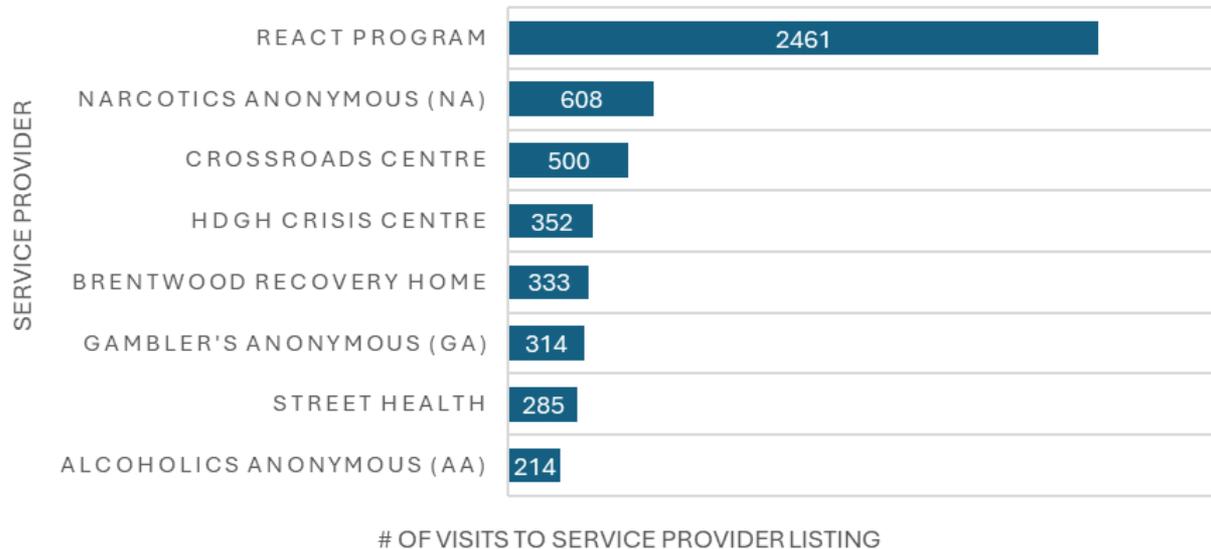
Status Updates:

- ❖ There have been **8** new organizations added to the inventory since its launch in October 2024.
- ❖ The most recent update to the listings was completed from April – June 2025.
- ❖ Total active listings is now **116** services.
- ❖ Next update is scheduled to occur from November – December 2025.
- ❖ WEC Connect trainings and live demonstrations of the inventory have been provided to **110+** community members, service providers, and health care professionals, across **12** outreach events and **24** drop-ins to various community locations.
 - ❖ **98.2%** had a better understanding of where and how to access substance use treatment and prevention services following these sessions.

WEC Connect Update

Web Visits

TOP LISTINGS ACCESSED THROUGH WEC CONNECT



October 2024 – September 2025

Total visits = 22, 271

WEC Connect Update

Upcoming Media Campaign

 **Goal** - Raise awareness of WEC Connect as the go-to hub for substance use, mental health and behavioral health services.

A second, expanded media campaign through:

- Social media (both paid + organic posts)
- Radio ads + bus transit advertising (bus interiors & shelters)*
- Community partners*

* Will focus on reaching priority populations across Windsor-Essex

 **Call to Action** - Visit https://wecoss.ca/wec_connect to explore services.

**Copies of the WEC Connect poster and wallet card are included in your agenda package. Extra copies are available at the coffee table, if you'd like to take more for your agency before you leave!*

Enforcement and Justice (D. Connor)

Strengthening Community Safety and Well-Being

Project Purpose:

Sustain and expand the neighbourhood safety planning project initiated by the Substance Supports in Neighbourhoods Accessed through Police Partnerships (SSNAPP) team.

Key Activities and Outputs:



Attend community housing events to educate residents about the existing neighbourhood safety plans developed for the City of Windsor.



Conduct a community consultation to examine neighbourhood safety issues/needs of Leamington and Essex.



Create neighbourhood safety plans for Leamington and Essex.



Enforcement and Justice (D. Connor)

Strengthening Community Safety and Well-Being

Status Updates:

- ❖ Attended **19** community events to educate residents about the existing neighbourhood safety plans developed for the City of Windsor (*January 2025 – October 2025*):
 - **1,690** safety plans distributed at events.
 - **98.6% (287/291)** of community members indicated that they felt more confident supporting community safety after reviewing the plans.
- ❖ Applied for and obtained a second Community Safety and Policing (CSP) Grant (*first CSP grant funded SSNAPP*) in partnership with the OPP and the Windsor-Essex Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. The second grant will support the following activities:
 - Expansion of the neighbourhood safety plans to Leamington and Essex.
 - Mental health and substance use training workshops for first responders and service providers in Essex-County

Enforcement and Justice (D. Connor)

Strengthening Community Safety and Well-Being

Status Updates:

- ❖ A community consultation for the Leamington and Essex safety plans has been launched.
 - The purpose of the consultation is to gather input from those who live, work, or frequent these areas on strategies needed to strengthen community safety.
 - A public survey has been released and will remain open for participation until October 31st. As of October 27th, **94** responses have been received.
 - Focus groups (**4**) are also being held with community organizations who service the Leamington and Essex areas.
 - Results from the consultation will be used to inform the development of the safety plans.
- ❖ Planning is underway for the mental health and substance use workshops.
 - **Six (6)** workshops will be held over late 2025/early 2026.
 - Tentative topics include De-Escalating Potentially Violent Situations, Trauma-Informed Care, and Substance Use and Mental Health.
 - The goal is to host the first workshop before the end of the year (details to follow).

Enforcement and Justice (D. Connor)

Strengthening Community Safety and Well-Being

Calls to Action for the WECOSS Leadership Committee:

If your organization serves the Leamington and/or Essex areas and you haven't had a chance to participate in the safety plan consultation, we welcome you to participate in the public survey.

Encourage your staff and clients in Leamington and/or Essex to complete the public survey.

**A post card with a QR code to the survey is available in your agenda package. The survey link is also available here: <https://survey.wechu.org/index.php/714116?lang=en>.*

WECOSS Action Plan Consultation

Preliminary Results and Discussion

(J. Bradt)

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.

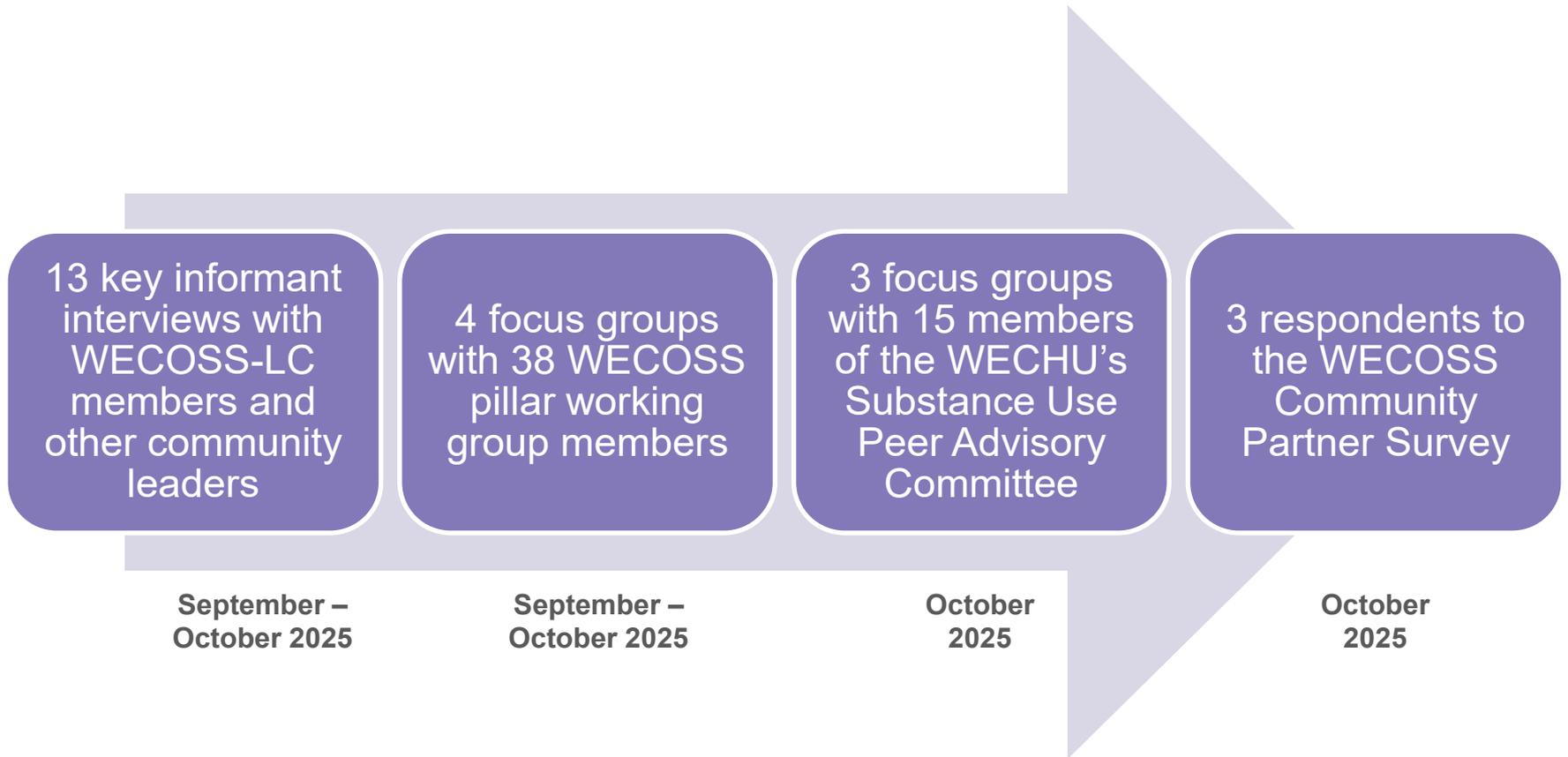
Confirm existing strengths, capacities, and resources currently available to address these concerns at the community level.

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 Data Sources



WEC's Strengths in Addressing Substance Use at the Community Level



Harm reduction initiatives



Integrated health and social supports



Strong collaboration and partnerships



Established outreach culture



Peer involvement and capacity building

Groups Working in the Substance Use Space

Mental Health
and Addictions
Sector Table

ED High
Utilisation Table

Primary Care
Network

Providers of
Addiction
Treatment
Group

Director's Forum

PAT Committee

International
Overdose
Awareness
Committee

Elder Abuse
Network

Human Services
and Justice
Coordinating
Committee

Interprofessional
Lead Outreach
Teams (ILOT)
Initiative

Police Hospital
Committee

Areas of WECOSS' Work that Overlaps with Existing Community Groups

Enforcement and Justice

Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, Windsor Crime Prevention sub committee on substance & Police Hospital Committee

Treatment and Recovery

The Mental Health and Addictions Sector Table, Providers of Addiction Treatment Group & Primary Care Network

Key Strengths & Future Opportunities



**Sustained
collaboration and
diverse partnerships**



**Data sharing and
communication**



**Harm reduction and
anti-stigma efforts**



**Education and
prevention**



**Accessible and
transparent
information**



**Community & peer
engagement and
outreach**



Community Safety

Service Gaps, Challenges, & Barriers

Service Gaps

- Specialized services
- Utilization of best practice for managing substance use
- Programming of interest to the entire family unit
- School-aged programming
- Timeliness of response
- Aftercare/follow-up
- Geographical location of services

Social Challenges

- Integrating trauma-informed practices across services
- Public perception of the substance use crisis and why individuals use substances
- Lack of services addressing the cultural component of substance use
- Understanding individual client needs and motivations

Systemic Barriers

- Growing stigma and discrimination towards substance use
- Fragmented system of care
- Substance use services segregated from primary care
- Regulatory requirements
- Funding
- Organizational capacity

Types of Substances Used

1. Opioids and stimulants

2. Alcohol and tobacco/nicotine

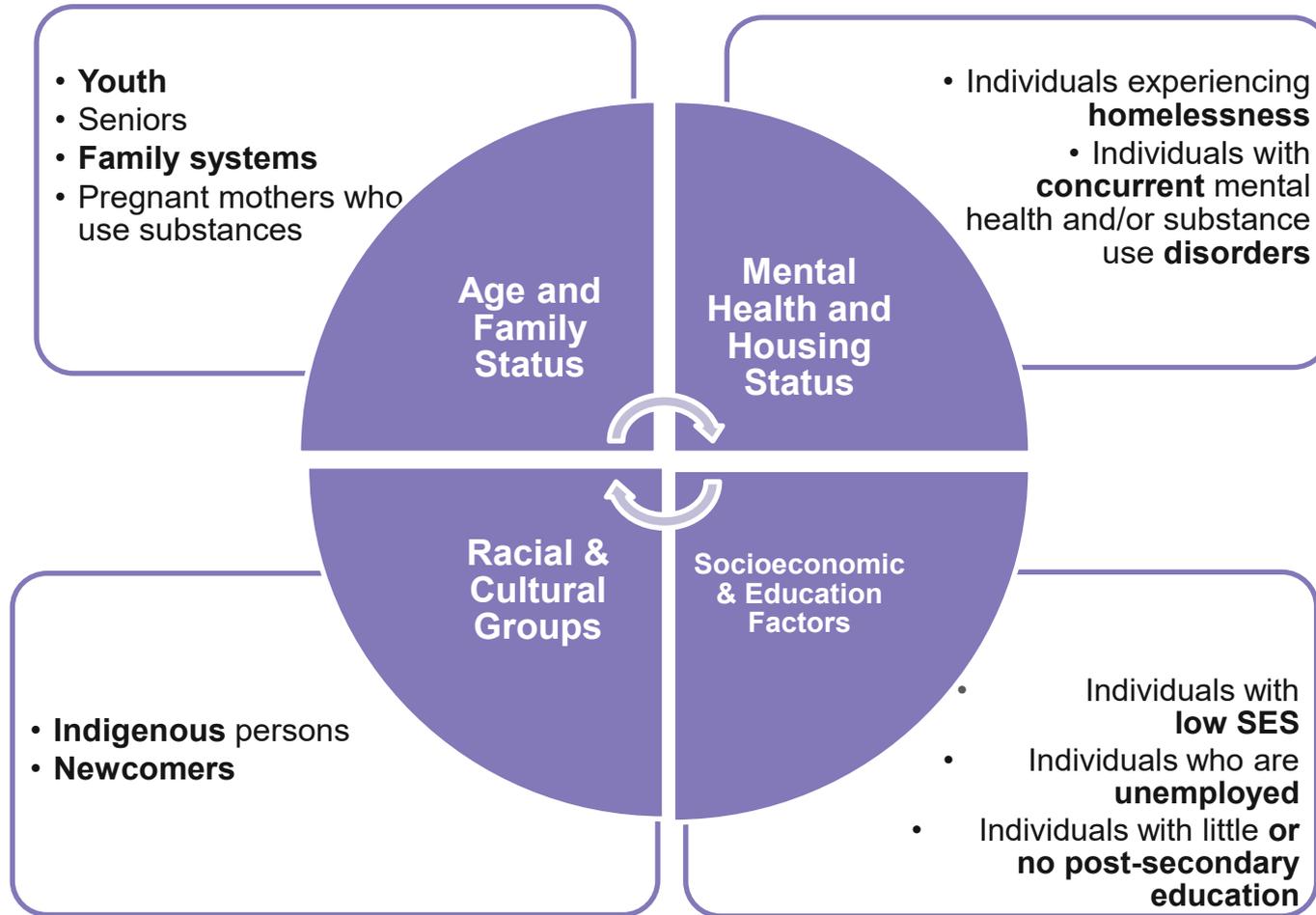
3. Benzodiazepines and other drugs

4. Cannabis

Geographic Locations of Use



Disproportionately Impacted and Underserved Groups



Ranking of Peer Priorities

1. Improve availability and access to treatment and recovery

2. Improve availability and access to harm reduction services

3. Focus on system navigation supports

4. Educate the community about substance use as a health issue

5. Reduce stigma towards substance use

6. Improve policies and laws to address substance use

7. Help people avoid or delay issues with substance use

8. Increase supports to meet the different needs of people from various backgrounds

9. Improve availability of up-to-date research, studies, and data

Summary of Key Priority Areas Identified

Harm Reduction

- Standardize harm reduction practices
- Expand harm reduction efforts to county areas
- Address stigma
- Prioritize trauma and violence-informed care

Prevention & Education

- Early school intervention
- Incorporate voices of youth
- Professional development for service providers
- Public awareness campaigns

Data & Accountability

- Increase data and surveillance efforts
- Transparent data sharing
- Increased accountability of organizations

Advocacy & Policy

- Advocate for healthy public policy
- Justice-involved support
- Workforce inclusion for PWLLE
- Streamlining resources