

## WECOSS Prevention & Education Working Group

### Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Present:** Jennifer Bradt (WECHU), Alexis Erickson (WECHU), Ashley Kirby (WECHU), Francis Kalamba (WECHU), Amy Lofaso (WECDSB), Allyson Hallahan (VON), Kim Willis (CMHA), Karen Trotter (CSC Providence), Jodi Pearce (weCHC).

**Regrets:** Margo Cameron (CMHA), Tammy Drazilov (HDGH), Kelly Farrugia (WECHU), Melissa Major (HDGH – MHART), EMS-MHART Representative, Sean Patterson (WPS), Stacey Shepley (Essex-Windsor EMS), Chinda Kong (WECHU), Kelly Barill.

**Co-Chairs:** Kim Willis & Jenny Bradt

**Recorder:** Kelly Barill

		<i>Action Required</i>
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting called to order.</li> </ul>	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Approval of Agenda</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda approved.</li> </ul>	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Review of Action Items from November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (A. Erickson)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share any other feedback on the WECOSS PEWG partnership by completing the online partnership evaluation survey or contacting the Co-Chairs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The partnership evaluation results are now final, and they're being used to develop and implement recommendations to improve the overall strategy moving forward.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Forward any additional input on the 2025 PEWG project proposal to the Co-Chairs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No other feedback was provided, so the proposal was presented to the Leadership Committee in December 2024 as is and the PEWG received approval to move forward with it.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contact J. Bradt if interested in <a href="#">WEC Connect</a> wallet cards or posters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This is an online inventory of substance use, mental health and behavioral addiction services available in the community. Print wallet cards and posters with information about the inventory remain available for those interested.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <b>Approval of Minutes from November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (Co-Chairs)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes approved.</li> </ul>	

4.0	<p><b>Meeting Goals (Co-Chairs)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide closing updates on 2024 PEWG projects.</li> <li>2. Discuss strategies and next steps for 2025 project implementation.</li> <li>3. Review 2025 membership for the PEWG.</li> </ol>	
5.0	<p><b>Conclusion of 2024 PEWG Projects</b></p> <p><b>WECOSS Continuous Communication (A. Erickson)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing updates on the continuous communication project from 2024 were provided.</li> <li>• The overall purpose of this project was to promote shared messaging about substance use and the WECOSS to the community.</li> <li>• A shared communication toolkit and social media calendar were developed and shared with the WECOSS partnership.</li> <li>• The WECHU used the social media calendar to post 24 messages on WECHU accounts during the campaign period.</li> <li>• Four of these messages were boosted to expand our reach through paid advertising.</li> <li>• In the Fall, the WECHU also issued Google Display and transit advertisements on downtown buses that encouraged community members to subscribe to WECOSS alerts.</li> <li>• An evaluation report with metrics from the campaign will be circulated with the minutes.</li> <li>• Social media messaging will continue through several other WECOSS Working Group projects this year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Medicine Cabinet Clean Out (A. Erickson)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2024, the PEWG was able to coordinate two events in partnership with police services to collect unused or expired medication from community members for safe disposal at the pharmacy.</li> <li>• The first event took place in April on Earth Day at Malden Park. A booth was held at the event for medicine cabinet clean out.</li> <li>• The second event was held during Crime Prevention Week at Devonshire Mall.</li> <li>• The populations in attendance at the Earth Day event were mostly youth and/or families, so the booth focused primarily on educating individuals on the WECOSS and substance use. Some medication was also collected.</li> <li>• At the Devonshire Mall event, there was an older population in attendance. Two large Ziploc bags of medication were collected.</li> <li>• The WECHU will keep the group informed of any future medicine cabinet clean out opportunities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Break the Vape (A. Kirby)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2024, the Break the Vape project used videos to increase awareness of youth vaping. Google and Facebook ads geared towards parents/caregivers were also issued.</li> <li>• Overall, the campaign was a great success and well-received.</li> </ul>	<p>Circulate evaluation report from the 2024 continuous communication campaign with the minutes (Alexis Erickson).</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A similar campaign will be implemented in 2025 called, “Connected not Controlled”. It will focus on digital technology use and the impact on mental health and wellbeing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is a live website: <a href="https://www.wechu.org/cnc">https://www.wechu.org/cnc</a></li> <li>○ It will operate the same as Break the Vape with challenges and prizes and asking youth to create videos.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
6.0	<p><b>2025 Project Implementation – Community Engagement for Substance Use Prevention and Health Promotion</b></p> <p><b>Project Overview and Current Status (F. Kalamba)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A presentation on the 2025 project, Youth and Family Engagement and Outreach for Substance Use Prevention, was presented.</li> <li>• CMHA-WECB has submitted a grant application to the Youth Mental Health fund to implement the Icelandic Prevention Model, Planet Youth, within Windsor-Essex County.</li> <li>• While awaiting a response, the 2025 project will focus on other activities to educate families and youth and build community capacity for substance use prevention among youth.</li> <li>• Key activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hosting in-person and virtual education sessions for parents/caregivers and families identified as high priority.</li> <li>○ Collaborate with the school boards and provide support for schools with resources and lesson plans.</li> <li>○ Deliver mass communication campaign targeting parents/caregivers and families with messages related to improving family environments relating to youth substance use prevention.</li> <li>○ Participate as guest speakers in community events, such as youth symposiums.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies and Next Steps for Project Implementation (All)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of polls were issued to the group on Microsoft Teams to gather input on strategies and next steps for project implementation.</li> <li>• <b>Poll Question: What is the most effective medium to share information about substance use prevention with high priority groups?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Majority said in-person engagements, followed by social media and webinars.</li> <li>○ Discussion on the difficulties associated with reaching high priority groups.</li> <li>○ Age may also play a part on the medium.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Poll Question: In what settings could we effectively offer substance use prevention education sessions for parents and youth?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In general, remote is a great option, as it eliminates barriers like transportation and mobility issues.</li> <li>○ Youth/parents may not want to attend in-person sessions to avoid being labeled as high priority.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Offering a general information session in high needs schools will be better received.</li> <li>● <b>Poll Question: What priority topics should be highlighted in substance use prevention, education, and outreach activities?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Vaping, cannabis, alcohol, and other drugs are all priorities.</li> <li>○ Alcohol is the top cause of death.</li> <li>○ Need better awareness of how cannabis impacts brain development for adolescents.</li> <li>○ The WECOSS/WECHU is partnering with CMHA and Community Housing to attend community housing events about once a month, so there is an opportunity to provide education and presentations within the higher need areas.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The polls were followed by other open discussion questions.</li> <li>● <b>What unique challenges do high priority groups face when it comes to substance use prevention?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cultural norms and language barriers.</li> <li>○ The WECDSB offers parent and student orientations to newcomers to come into the school to discuss any school related issues or questions. Supports are offered to both students and parents and provide information on RCC, Maryvale, and Triple P.</li> <li>○ Issue of parents using cannabis or consuming alcohol in front of their kids, with lack of concern of exposing their kids to their use or setting an example.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>How can we ensure the information shared with the high priority groups is relevant to their needs?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ At the WECDSB, School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees have representatives from every school community, and they come together for meetings four times a year. Past session presentations have focused on mental health, substance use, and behavioural addictions. These are also brought to the school level by their representative.</li> <li>○ Through the Pick grant, every school can apply for a grant of up to \$1000 to have a session that invites their immediate community in to discuss relevant topics.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Are there any gaps in the existing resources that are available in the community?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mixed messaging about the safety of cannabis use, especially in treatment.</li> <li>○ Lack of coping skills when youth are faced with stress, leading to substance use.</li> <li>○ Suggested having educational circles to focus on resiliency, healthy coping mechanisms, and looking for outlets and activities to keep youth engaged.</li> <li>○ Substance use can also be attributed to loneliness.</li> <li>○ Safety training for youth.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>What strategies can we use to promote positive family communication about substance use?</b></li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Destigmatize and normalize discussions on substance use. “It can happen to anyone.”</li> <li>○ Use platforms like social media, family counselling, and workshops – all may be helpful.</li> <li>○ Use natural entry points like Grade 9 orientation (including parents). This used to talk about transition to school, what to expect, how to prepare, and how to communicate with the school. It's never too early to have these conversations.</li> <li>○ JK Registration – could start talking about bullying, coping skills, etc.</li> <li>○ Younger audience will respond more to hearing a story. Asking open ended questions like, “how’s it going in school?”, “who are you hanging around with?”, “what did you do during recess?”.</li> <li>○ Engaging those with real life experience as a teaching tool.</li> <li>○ Sometimes parents don’t know how to talk to their children about substance use, so giving them some examples of how to begin those conversations early on would be helpful.</li> <li>● <b>Are there any other program services that we should be aware of that we could potentially refer families to?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New Beginnings</li> <li>○ John Howard Society</li> <li>○ WECHU – Has the Decider program offered to grade 4 students in high needs schools.</li> <li>○ Newcomer Youth Matrix – Supports up to age 30 with language, skills training, mental health, counselling, etc.: <a href="https://www.workforcewindsorsex.com/">https://www.workforcewindsorsex.com/</a></li> <li>○ Manager of the Youth Wellness Hub informed Kim Willis that the Regional Children’s Centre and New Beginnings are exploring some educational segments for parents called, “Not My Kid”.</li> <li>○ Lori Kempe from Children First mentioned in the last WECOSS Leadership Committee meeting that her agency is working on mapping child and youth substance use prevention services across the community.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Follow-up with Lori Kempe about service mapping for child and youth substance use prevention (Jenny Bradt).</p> <p>Build on the 2025 project plan based on the feedback gathered from the group (Francis Kalamba).</p>
7.0	<p><b>2025 Working Group Membership</b> (A. Erickson)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Over the last couple of weeks, Jenny Bradt and Alexis Erickson reached out to all members to confirm membership and participation in this year’s project.</li> <li>● Thank you to those who have responded thus far. A friendly reminder to please confirm 2025 membership by next Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup> if you haven’t already.</li> <li>● Reviewed 2024 membership list with the group.</li> <li>● Suggestions for new potential partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New Beginnings</li> <li>○ Youth Diversion</li> <li>○ Public School Board</li> <li>○ Lori Kempe from Children First</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Send contact information for New Beginnings and Youth Diversion to Alexis Erickson (Kim Willis).</p> <p>Send contact information for the Public School Board to Alexis Erickson (Amy Lofaso).</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2025 Membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Send contact information for New Beginnings and Youth Diversion to Alexis Erickson (Kim Willis).</li> <li>○ Send contact information for the Public School Board to Alexis Erickson (Amy Lofaso).</li> <li>○ Reach out to Jenny Bradt and Alexis Erickson if you have any other suggestions on 2025 group membership (All).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>11.0</b>	<p><b>Meeting Wrap-Up</b> (Co-Chairs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjourned: 2:18 p.m.</li> </ul> <p><b>Next Meeting:</b> Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.</p>	

