



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

## **WECOSS Prevention and Education Working Group Meeting**

**Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup> from  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

# Youth and Family Engagement and Outreach for Substance Use Prevention Project *Closing Updates*

# Recap of 2025 Project

## Project Purpose:

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

## Key Activities and Outputs:



Collaborate with community partners to implement the Icelandic Prevention Model (*Planet Youth*) locally.



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.



Participate as guest speakers at community events.



# Icelandic Prevention Model

## *(Planet Youth)*

- ❖ In early 2025, CMHA-WECEB, in partnership with multiple community partners, submitted a grant application for Health Canada's Youth Mental Health Fund to support implementation of Planet Youth locally.
- ❖ As of November 2025, this grant has not been received.
- ❖ Community partners are exploring other options to build community capacity for Planet Youth implementation.
- ❖ In 2026, the WECHU plans to identify and collate youth substance use data sources across Windsor-Essex County to inform future prevention strategies, such as Planet Youth (which is a data-driven community model).
- ❖ This will involve collaboration with school boards and other community partners serving youth to enhance data collection and sharing across organizations.

# Substance Use Prevention Workshops

In 2025, seven (7) workshops were delivered on youth substance use prevention topics.

Date	Event/Workshop Title	Description
April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Empowering Voices – Youth Leading Change (County Youth Symposium)	Workshop and resources delivered by WECHU on youth vaping.
May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Clear the Air – Vaping Information for Parents of Youth (French Session)	Webinar organized by WECHU, in collaboration with CSC Providence.
May 21 <sup>st</sup>	Clear the Air – Vaping Information for Parents of Youth (English Session)	Webinar organized by WECHU, in collaboration with CSC Providence.
July 17 <sup>th</sup>	Family and Youth Substance Use Prevention Workshop	Workshop delivered by WECHU to newcomer audience, in collaboration with the Unemployed Help Centre.
August 14 <sup>th</sup>	Substance Use and Harm Reduction Workshop	Workshop organized by WECHU with Student Resident Advisors at St. Clair College.
August 21 <sup>st</sup>	Nicotine, Vaping, and Digital Dependency Workshop	Co-led workshop by WECHU and HDGH with parents and families from a local public school.
September 16 <sup>th</sup>	Helping with Substance Use in Windsor-Essex County	Workshop organized by WECHU with parents of youth at the Welcome Centre Shelter for Women and Families.

**88.2% (75/85) of evaluation respondents reported improved understanding of the topics presented.**

# Community Events for Substance Use Prevention

In 2025, eleven (11) community events were attended to distribute youth substance use prevention resources and information:

Empowering Voices –  
Youth Leading Change  
(City Youth Symposium)  
(February 26<sup>th</sup>)

Sandwich Teen Action  
Group Health Fair  
(March 13<sup>th</sup>)

Lassaline Reginald Health  
Fair  
(April 10<sup>th</sup>)

Viamonde Health Fair  
(May 8<sup>th</sup>)

Amherstburg Health Fair  
(June 19<sup>th</sup>)

CHC Youth Wellness  
Event at Crowley Park  
(July 3<sup>rd</sup>)

CHC Youth Wellness  
Event at Pykes Park  
(July 8<sup>th</sup>)

Windsor-Essex Pride Fest  
(August 10<sup>th</sup>)

Neighbourhood  
Celebration School  
Readiness Event in  
Windsor (August 15<sup>th</sup>)

Neighbourhood  
Celebration School  
Readiness Event in  
Leamington (August 29<sup>th</sup>)

Glengarry Friendsgiving  
Community Health Fair  
(October 9<sup>th</sup>)

100% (64/64) of evaluation respondents reported improved awareness of the topics presented.

# School Supports for Tobacco, Vaping, and Nicotine Use

- ❖ The WECHU is creating updated policy recommendations for schools and school boards on addressing tobacco, vaping, and nicotine use at school, in alignment with PPM 128 requirements.
- ❖ Policy recommendations include resources to support prevention/education, cessation, and progressive enforcement approaches with students and at school.
- ❖ To support adoption of the policy recommendations, an e-learning module is also being developed that can be taken by students caught smoking/vaping at school as an alternative to punitive measures (a progressive enforcement approach) .
- ❖ The policy recommendations and e-learning module will be finalized and released to the school boards before the end of 2025.

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation

## *Results and Discussion*

# Recap of WECOSS Action Plan Renewal

## Why a New Action Plan for the WECOSS?

✓ It has been almost four years since the WECOSS' action plan was last updated.

✓ The last action plan from 2021 has been addressed through many projects and initiatives.

✓ Community issues and concerns surrounding substance use have greatly evolved since 2021.

✓ Community capacity to address substance use issues has grown significantly over the years.

✓ A new action plan will allow the WECOSS to adapt its plans to meet new needs and address current gaps in the community.

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation

Over the months of September and October, a community consultation was conducted with community partners to guide the development of the new WECOSS Action Plan. Community partners were consulted on the following topics:

## Community Strengths

- What is our community and/or the WECOSS currently doing well to address substance use at the community level?
- Where are there existing resources and capacity to support this work?

## Community Issues and Concerns

- What are the most pressing issues and concerns currently impacting our community as it relates to substance use?

## Community Needs

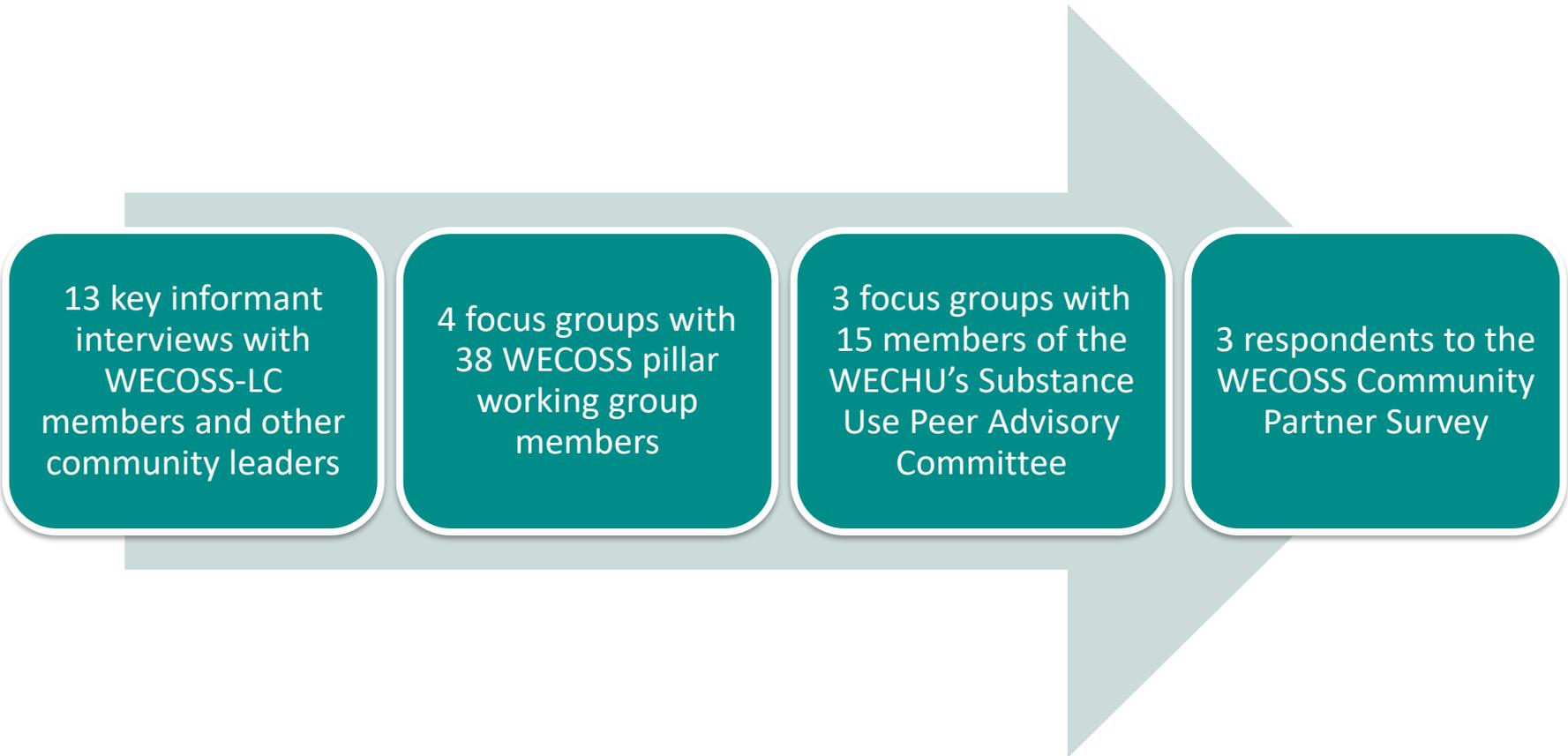
- What community-level actions need to be taken to address substance use in the future?
- What unique gaps in services and supports can the WECOSS help to address?

## Community Coordination

- What strategies can be used to improve coordination between the WECOSS and other community groups with similar goals?

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation

## *Methods*



13 key informant interviews with WECOSS-LC members and other community leaders

4 focus groups with 38 WECOSS pillar working group members

3 focus groups with 15 members of the WECHU's Substance Use Peer Advisory Committee

3 respondents to the WECOSS Community Partner Survey

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation Results

## *Key Community Strengths*



**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**

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation Results

## *Pressing Issues, Concerns, and Needs*

### Stigma and Discrimination

- Service delivery approaches and practices
- Lack of community understanding and misconceptions about substance use and harm reduction

### Systems and Policies

- Current legislative frameworks
- Funding and capacity challenges
- Lack of investment in social determinants of health
- Fragmented service systems

### Barriers to Access Existing Services

- Wait times
- Transportation barriers
- Geographical gaps in rural communities and outside of downtown core
- Utilization of best practices in service delivery

### Service Gaps

- Treatment for youth and justice-involved individuals
- System navigation
- Substance use support in primary care
- Follow-up and aftercare services
- Safer consumption options
- School-aged and family systems supports
- Culturally sensitive and trauma-informed services

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation Results

## *Summary of Key Priority Areas Identified for WECOSS*

### 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 and family intervention
- Incorporate voices of youth
- Professional development opportunities
- 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

# WECOSS Action Plan Consultation Results

## *Potential Collaboration Opportunities for WECOSS*

### **Community Safety & Well-Being**

*Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan*

### **Treatment & Recovery**

*The Mental Health and Addictions Sector Table & Providers of Addiction Treatment Committee*

# Group Discussion

1. What is your level of agreement with the four priority areas that were identified for the WECOSS?
2. In reviewing the results, is there anything you felt was missed or requires deeper exploration?

# Group Discussion

## *Identifying the Pathway(s) Forward for Prevention and Education*

### Individual Level

- Resilience and emotional skill-building
- Substance use education

### Family Level

- Parent/family education and engagement
- ACES prevention
- Pre- and post-natal supports
- Medication storage and disposal

### Community Level

- Supportive school environments
- Community connection programs
- Peer engagement and support
- Community capacity-building (data-sharing, public/professional education)

### Societal Level

- Stigma reduction
- Healthy public policy (access, availability, and affordability of substances)
- Advocacy for substance use prevention services/resources