

July 2007

The Toronto Drug Strategy

What is the Toronto Drug Strategy?

The Toronto Drug Strategy (TDS), adopted by City Council in December 2005, is a comprehensive drug strategy for the City of Toronto based on four components: prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement. All four components are needed to effectively reduce the harms of alcohol and other drug use.

Why does Toronto need a drug strategy?

We are a drug using society. Throughout history people of all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have used alcohol and other drugs and this is not likely to change. Most use is harmless and accepted as part of everyday social interaction. But not everyone uses safely or without causing harm. The drugs of most concern in Toronto are alcohol and crack cocaine. Toronto has many substance use programs, services and responses but no unifying strategy to guide these efforts. The TDS will, for the first time, enable a comprehensive and co-ordinated response to alcohol and other drug issues in Toronto.

How was the strategy developed?

The approach was to build on the existing expertise in Toronto while also integrating research and best practice from elsewhere in Canada and around the world to develop “made-in-Toronto” solutions. An environmental scan was prepared, which profiles substance use in Toronto, identifies issues and impacts, and documents current research and best practices. It is the evidence-base upon which the TDS is built. Draft drug strategy materials were also developed to disseminate for broader public discussion. Fourteen public consultation sessions were held across Toronto in the spring of 2005 including a mix of focus groups and town halls; over 350 people participated.

What is included in the Toronto Drug Strategy?

The strategy includes a policy approach, a vision statement, guiding principles, and recommendations organized by seven key themes that emerged from the public consultations.

1. Leadership & Co-ordination
2. Children & Families
3. Youth
4. People who use substances
5. Neighbourhoods & Communities
6. Awareness, Education & Training
7. Research & Evaluation

While all of the TDS recommendations are needed to ensure a comprehensive response, many require time to implement and some are contingent upon the willingness of other governments and parties to act. However, 17 actions are designated as priorities for implementation.

Visit our Web site at www.toronto.ca/health/drugstrategy

Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel

The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel is a diverse group of municipal, institutional and community representatives whose mandate is to oversee implementation of the drug strategy and to foster the intersectoral co-operation needed to improve the response to substance use issues in Toronto. Panel members are as follows:

- Mayor's Designate, Toronto City Council
- Medical Officer of Health's Designate, Toronto Public Health
- Deputy City Manager
- Deputy Chief of Police
- Executive Vice President, Centre for Addiction & Mental Health
- President, Toronto Harm Reduction Task Force
- Social Worker, Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Co-Chair, Addiction Treatment Implementation Committee of Toronto
- Executive Director, Parent Action on Drugs
- Executive Director, John Howard Society of Toronto
- Co-ordinator and youth volunteer, Toronto Ravers Information Project
- Peer representative, Finally Understanding Narcotics
- Peer representative, Toronto Harm Reduction Task Force
- Resident Association Representative, 51 Division Community Police Liaison Committee
- Program Director, Inner City Health Program, St. Michael's Hospital

Working Groups

The Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel has struck several working groups, with broad community representation, to implement specific priority recommendations. The chairperson of each working group sits as a member of the Panel for the duration of their term.

- The **Prevention Working Group** is expanding comprehensive prevention programming for children, families and youth.
- The **Crisis Model Working Group** is developing a service model for a 24-hour crisis service for people who use alcohol and other drugs.
- The **Neighbourhood Strategies Working Group** is developing local strategies to address drug-related disorder and crime.
- The **Supervised Consumption Site Reference Group** is a community reference group to the external research team conducting the needs assessment and feasibility study for supervised consumption site(s) in Toronto.

Staff Support

The **Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat**, situated in Toronto Public Health, provides dedicated staff support to implement the Toronto Drug Strategy.

Contact Information

For more information on the Toronto Drug Strategy, please visit www.toronto.ca/health/drugstrategy or email drugstrategy@toronto.ca.

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