

# EVERY BUSINESS IS MY BUSINESS:

## How to Support Local Businesses in Creating Safer Spaces for People Who Use Drugs

The opioid poisoning crisis is increasing in Toronto, and across the country. Preliminary data from 2020 found 521 confirmed opioid-related deaths, up significantly from 293 deaths during 2019.\*

Local businesses in your area may encounter someone who is overdosing or is otherwise in distress. As a result, they are in a good position to help someone or even save a life. Below are suggestions of how you can engage your local businesses in creating safer, more welcoming spaces for people who use drugs. These ideas come from community-based organizations who have had success in building these important relationships.

### TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES:

- Reach out and get to know the owners and staff of businesses in your area. Tell them about the services that your agency offers, and the people you serve.
- Reach out and get to know your local Business Improvement Area (BIA). Offer to speak at a one of their meetings about the services your agency provides, and the people you serve.
- Let them know how your agency can help them (e.g. outreach support, overdose recognition and response training).
- Be responsive when businesses ask for you for help with individuals and issues.
- Explore possible partnerships with local businesses (e.g. joint initiatives or advocacy efforts on issues of mutual concern).
- Organize community clean ups.
- Ask supportive businesses to help promote your work/issues.
- Talk with them about overdose and other issues affecting community members in the area.
- Share with them actions that your agency and others are taking to help reduce harms for people who use drugs, and which benefit the whole community.
- Share with them examples of other businesses in the neighbourhood that have taken action to create safer spaces.
- Share the Safe for You, Safe for Me: How Businesses Can Help during the Overdose Crisis resource, which has tips on what they can do as businesses to create safe spaces.



\*Source: Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2021.