

TORONTO SHELTER BULLETIN

Bulletin No.: 2022-07

Date Issued: July 11, 2022

Bulletin Type: **General Update**

Subject: **Harm Reduction Training for Shelters**

Bulletin: Hello Shelter Providers,

In June 2021, SSHA released a directive to the homelessness sector providing updated overdose prevention and response strategies and additional measures to be implemented in response to the opioid crisis. The directive requires that all staff be trained in harm reduction and overdose recognition, prevention and response. To support the implementation of this directive, the Shelter Harm Reduction Implementation Working Group (SHRIWG) was formed.

In November 2021, a harm reduction self-assessment checklist was sent out to all shelters, respites and 24 hour drop-ins to gain a baseline understanding of the current level of harm reduction resources and supports already in place. Using the data from this self-assessment, 5 key priority areas for the SHRIWG were identified for 2022, which included the development of a harm reduction training plan. The purpose of this plan is to ensure that harm reduction knowledge and understanding across the system is standardized in order to provide service users with a baseline level of care and expectation of harm reduction support/understanding, regardless of the shelter they attend.

A critical piece of feedback received from service providers was that the harm reduction trainings needed to be available and accessible for all staff working in homelessness settings.

SSHA is recommending the following harm reduction trainings for shelter providers:

TORONTO SHELTER BULLETIN

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- 1. Harm Reduction Training for the Homelessness Sector-On Line Training**
 - Offered for free on-line by The Homeless Hub
 - Recommended for all staff working in shelters
 - The training covers: Benefits of harm reduction approach, principles of harm reduction, harm reduction practices and policies for shelters and housing programs. This training will prepare staff to use a rights-based and equity-oriented approach. Includes many practical resources, strategies and techniques.
 - Takes approximately 6 hours to complete, but gives staff the ability to stop and go back to the training at any time and complete at their own pace. Link is provided below
 - [Harm Reduction for the Homelessness Sector - Homelessness Learning Hub](#)

- 2. Overdose Prevention & Response-On Line Training**
 - Free training offered on-line by Toronto Public Health-The Works
 - Recommended for all staff working in a shelter
 - Learn 3 basic drug types, overdose signs and symptoms, basic overdose prevention strategies, 5 step protocol of opioid response and how to administer naloxone
 - Take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Link is provided below
 - [Overdose Prevention, Recognition and Response Training \(toronto.ca\)](#)

- 3. Enhanced Overdose Response Using Bag Valve Masks**
 - Recommended for all front-line shelter workers who respond to overdoses
 - Training covers overdose scenarios incorporating pulse check, use of BVM, two-rescuer CPR and nasal naloxone simulations, as well as practicing overdose response skills while wearing PPE
 - Training can be provided by your current CPR/First Aid provider to include bag valve mask response
 - Heart 2 Heart-is one agency that provides training. Link is provided below
 - [First Aid Training in Toronto & CPR/AED Courses | Canadian Red Cross Training Partner \(heart2heartcpr.com\)](#)

TORONTO SHELTER BULLETIN

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4. Toronto Public Health-The Works Harm Reduction Supplies and Substance Use Training

- Required for all agencies developing a partnership with Toronto Public Health-The Works to distribute harm reduction supplies. Link is provided below
- [Become a Harm Reduction Partner Agency – City of Toronto](#)

We hope that you use the training resources provided to further develop the skills of your staff team. We will continue to share other harm reduction and overdose prevention and response training opportunities. We highly recommend the above trainings for all frontline staff, however we encourage all Shelter Providers to encourage all staff working in shelters, as well as third parties providers working on site (e.g. housekeeping, security staff) to take the above trainings to build broader awareness and understanding of the importance of working from a harm reduction approach in order to better support people who use drugs, which may include our friends, families and colleagues, as well as our clients.

Please contact Karen Tizzard, SSHA-Harm Reduction Coordinator Karen.Tizzard@toronto.ca if you have any questions or need harm reduction support.

Please ensure that this Bulletin is cascaded to all relevant staff as soon as possible, and a hard copy of this document posted in a conspicuous place for ongoing reference.

Resources: [City of Toronto - Funding Submissions, Directives & Bulletins](#)

Contact Information: For more information about this Bulletin, please contact your Agency Review Officer (ARO) or Manager.