



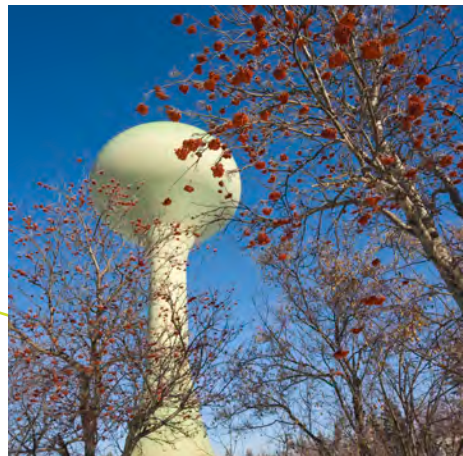
OUR VISION: A HEALTHY AND VIBRANT RED DEER WHERE PEOPLE ARE THE PRIORITY

THE RED DEER

ALCOHOL & DRUG **STRATEGY SUMMARY**



INTRODUCTION



The Red Deer Alcohol and Drug Strategy Summary provides a brief overview of *Red Deer's Alcohol and Drug Strategy*, a made-in-Red Deer response to the impacts of substance use in our community.

Our approach is based on four best-practice pillars: prevention, treatment, harm reduction and community safety. Through these pillars, we will achieve tangible solutions that will meet the needs of our community and those struggling with substance use.

Without a doubt, we are all responsible for co-creating an ever-safer, ever-healthier Red Deer. The complexity of this issue shows the need for comprehensive, community-based and evidence-informed strategies that include actionable recommendations.

Our Guiding Principles will help our community implement these recommendations and address the harmful effects of alcohol and drug use in the community.



Guiding Principles

Relationships

Community connections not only nurture broad and comprehensive understandings of an issue, but also ensure that a community's assets and services are integrated, seamless and operating as efficiently as possible for the benefit of individuals and the community as a whole.

Pragmatism

Supports to individuals and families must recognize that change is a process, and the process of addiction is complex. Approaches must be sufficiently flexible to empower those affected by alcohol and drugs toward positive behavioral changes by meeting them where they are at, and doing what works for them.

Respect

Respectful client-centered service provision is vital, as is the need to ensure that all perspectives on issues related to alcohol and drug use are heard. There are a wide array of beliefs and perspectives regarding services and policies related to substance use, and the respectful exchange of ideas should be valued.

Cultural Relevance

Approaches, programs and services must take cultural realities, customs and other factors into consideration in order to be effective and impactful.

Well-being

Approaches, strategies and services must enhance the holistic well-being of individuals, families and the community at large. Holistic well-being includes physical, socioeconomic, mental/emotional and inter-relational health, as well as the broader environmental, economic and social well-being of the community.

Evidence-Informed Practice

Research and evidence-informed approaches that will achieve positive outcomes for individuals and communities will be supported and used. The results of programs and services will be measured to ensure shared learning and enable reproduction of successful strategies.

Innovation and Creativity

Our ability to effectively respond to issues related to substance use will depend on our ability to think 'outside the box' and develop creative approaches that work for our community.

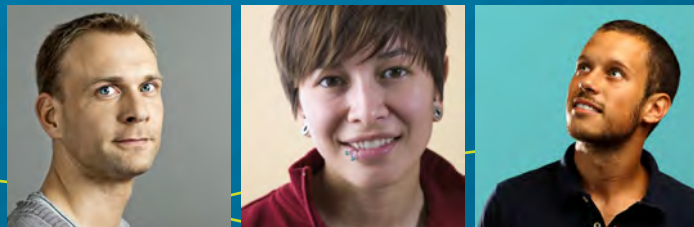


The Central Alberta Addictions Consortium is a Red Deer-based coalition made up of representatives from the RCMP, Alberta Health Services, The City of Red Deer, not-for-profit organizations and involved citizens. The Consortium supports coordinated and collaborative approaches to the delivery of services in the region and advocating for education, awareness and evidence-informed practices in meeting community needs.

THE CURRENT SCIENCE OF ADDICTION

Like all behaviours, addiction is influenced by brain architecture. The environments we are exposed to as children, particularly exposure to toxic stress, even prenatally, can cause brain architecture to develop in ways that shape how vulnerable we are to addiction.

While significant advancements have been made to understand the nature of addiction, a good deal of work remains to be done.



In 2010, the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (AFWI) of the Norlien Foundation partnered with Alberta Health Services and the Government of Alberta to better understand the link between early brain development and addiction. The AFWI's Sharing the Brain Story report shows the challenges of developing substance use policies:



[R]esearch, policy, and practice depend upon public awareness, perception, and support. But while scientific knowledge about early childhood development, child mental health, and addiction has advanced dramatically in recent years, very little of this knowledge has percolated into public discourse. The public still has foggy, often misguided, notions of how the brain develops; what, if anything, can be done to promote healthy development; and who is responsible for doing it. Likewise, underdeveloped notions about the nature of addiction and what causes it restrict how the public and policy makers think about what can be done to address the problem and who is responsible for doing it.¹

In addition to understanding early brain development and its influence on mental health and substance use outcomes, we must support holistic approaches to truly make progress on this front. Dr. Gabor Mate illustrates this point concisely:



We need to avoid the trap of believing that addiction can be reduced to the action of brain chemicals or nerve circuits or any other neurobiological, psychological or sociological data. A multileveled exploration is necessary because it's impossible to understand addiction fully from any one perspective, no matter how accurate. Addiction is a complex condition, a complex interaction between human beings and their environment. Addiction has biological, chemical, neurological, psychological, medical, emotional, social, political, economic and spiritual underpinnings. Addiction is "all about" many things.²

Red Deer needs widespread education on the underlying factors surrounding substance use to avoid reenacting the same responses that have slowed progress on this issue historically – approaches that address the symptoms of mental health and addiction problems, but fail to address the root contributors to such issues.

Red Deer's Alcohol and Drug Strategy supports these evidence-based practices and acts as a foundation that builds a comprehensive view of addictions and mental health issues in the community.

¹ Walters. Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. *Sharing the Brain Story: Knowledge Mobilization Strategy -Transforming Research, Policy, and Practice in Alberta* (2013). Calgary, AB, Canada: Norlien Foundation. Pg 8.

² Mate, Gabor. *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2008), 129.

For more information about the current science of addiction and early brain development, please visit the following links:

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative "How Brains are Built": <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/how-brains-are-built-core-story-brain-development>

KidCare Canada Society, Dr. Gabor Mate: "The Roots of Addiction": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCzXbsGAXil>

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative – "Knowledge Mobilization Strategy" : <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/publication/sharing-brain-story-afwis-knowledge-mobilization-strategy>



Red Deer is located midway between Calgary and Edmonton

Red Deer has one of the youngest populations in Canada



Population of **98,585** as of April 2014, an increase of 5.7% over the previous census of 2011.



5.2% of Red Deer's total population is of Aboriginal identity in 2011



1 out of every 10 people in Red Deer are immigrants



In Canada \$21.4 billion worth of alcoholic beverages were sold during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, \$2.4 billion in Alberta



76.2% of Albertans reported drinking alcohol in 2012

Among people who consumed alcohol over the past year in Alberta **11.9%** exceeded the guideline for chronic effects and **8.8%** exceeded the guideline for acute effects



Cannabis use among Albertans aged 15 years and older was 11.4%

Illicit drug (Cocaine/Crack, Speed, Methamphetamine/ Crystal meth Hallucinogens, Ecstasy, and Heroin) use in Alberta for the previous year was **11.6%**



The incidents involving drugs most often reported involved possession, followed by trafficking, with production and other drug incidents being the least reported offence.



800 Arrested or Ticketed of impaired driving under the influence of alcohol in Red Deer in 2013

43 Reported Cases of impaired driving under the influence of a drug in Red Deer in 2013



3 out of 4 respondents in Red Deer's Point in Time Homeless Count said that they had an addiction

\$4.4 Billion

The overall cost of substance abuse for Alberta (\$1,414 per capita)



PREVENTION

Prevention strategies aim to prevent the problems of substance use before they start. Recognizing experimentation with substances does occur, that if people choose to experiment, they understand how to do so as safely as possible.

These prevention programs can range from prenatal and early childhood initiatives that support healthy brain development, to educational programs for families, children, or individuals already experimenting with or using psychoactive substances.

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, "Brain Hero": <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/brain-hero>



TREATMENT

Treatment includes a broad range of community-based medical and counselling interventions, outreach support and other bio-psychosocial programs that work with individuals struggling with substance use.

While treatment often brings to mind abstinence, treatment can also support developing the capacity to make healthy choices that do not demand total abstinence; for example, controlled drinking programs.

Recommendations

Enhance community treatment resources that support individuals and families toward healthy and rewarding lives through the following actions...

1. Increase the diversity and number of treatment options in the community, not only for those who are addicted, but for those around them. This includes appropriate capacity for shelters working with intoxicated people and medically supported detox spaces for youth and adults.
2. Increase cultural programming for Aboriginal people and newcomers to Canada.
3. Increase addiction supports within the Red Deer school systems.
4. Support affordable, accessible and local access to residential treatment for both youth and adults.
5. Support long-term assisted living and palliative care supports for people with an active addiction.

Recommendations

Increase the community's understanding of alcohol and drug use, reducing the level of stigma and discrimination and strive to prevent the harms of substance use through the following actions...

1. Implement and evaluate a broad-based community education campaign on early brain development, root causes and the critical role toxic stress plays in our understanding of addiction.
2. Increase resiliency for children and families by ensuring education and supports are available.
3. Increase evidence-based alcohol and drug prevention programming for youth in the Red Deer school systems and broader community.
4. Increase workplace addiction-related health and safety education and informing policy on the impacts of drug testing within human resources.
5. Simplify and increase access to addiction and mental health information, including peer support group meetings in Central Alberta.
6. Enhance the level of dialogue between sectors and institutions in order to access and share local alcohol and drug data.



"My brother is in jail. He got busted for crack again. I don't know what happened to him. He used to be so nice to me and let me hang out with him and his friends. We used to play road hockey all the time. Then he started partying, and he hasn't ever stopped. I can't bring my friends over any more because of all the fighting with Mom and Dad and him. All my friends know about it, and I just wait for them to say something to me. I'm so mad; I never thought I'd be ashamed of him."





HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction is an achievable, pragmatic approach to alcohol and drug issues that mitigates harm while understanding that total abstinence may not be an option for everyone. While harm reduction methods have attracted intense scrutiny over the years, they are part of a realistic solution that will help us save lives and greatly contribute to our overall success as a community.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ta2Jmy1ZFXM>

Recommendations

We will work to reduce the harms of alcohol and drug use in Red Deer through the following actions...

1. Increase safety programming for people who inject, inhale or drink substances, as well as maintenance programs to help with withdrawal as people minimize their use.
2. Increase overdose-prevention and awareness programming.
3. Increase harm reduction programming in prenatal programs.
4. Implement a safer partying program/awareness campaign directed at young adults.
5. Increase the variety of Housing First options in the community.



“As a homeless addicted person in Red Deer, I walk around with my head down most of the time. I feel invisible mostly. I usually have a wide berth, no problems with crowds around me. People usually even cross the street to stay out of my way. I grew up in Red Deer, so did my dad and his dad. Until I started using, it was a community that I felt I belonged to. Now the community I “belong” to is full of many people as sick as I am. The old community that walks around me all day doesn’t want me in it anymore. I read the papers; I know I am one of those eyesores in the downtown. People hate the sight of me. I can feel it coming off of them as they look at me. I want to laugh and tell them, “Hey, I used to be just like you.” I made a lot of money in the oil patch; I had all the toys, the fancy truck, the quad, the boat, granite countertops even. I got in debt over my head and started drinking all the time instead of just on the weekends. I didn’t know how to keep it all going. The debt weighed heavy on my shoulders constantly. A little bottle of pills seemed to lighten the load for a while, but now they are the heaviest load I walk with. I lost everything: my family, all the toys, and all the friends I had to enjoy them with me. Everything is gone. The community that welcomes me now keeps me sick and the other wants to keep me hidden. Where do I go?”





COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community safety addresses the crime and social disorder related to drug and alcohol use. As an integral part of any drug and alcohol strategy, enforcement represents all components of the broader criminal justice system, including police, the courts, parole/probation, crime prevention and community-driven initiatives intended to enhance community safety and mitigate social disorder.

Red Deer Police and Crisis Team:

<http://vimeo.com/75507516>

National Film Board of Canada, "Through a Blue Lens":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwFRsfATaag>

Recommendations

We will work to reduce drug trafficking in the community, as well as alcohol and drug-related incidences, and support appropriate diversion to treatment options through the following actions...

1. Increase the coordinated approach between police and community stakeholders in addressing alcohol and drug related crime.
2. Prioritize enforcement resources on organized crime (drug production and trafficking) within the RCMP.
3. Continue to support and evaluate Community Response Unit (CRU) and Police and Crisis Team (PACT) Programs in Red Deer.
4. Increase programs that divert people from the justice system to appropriate health supports. This includes incorporating alcohol and drug related cases into diversion programs.
5. Implement a drug court.

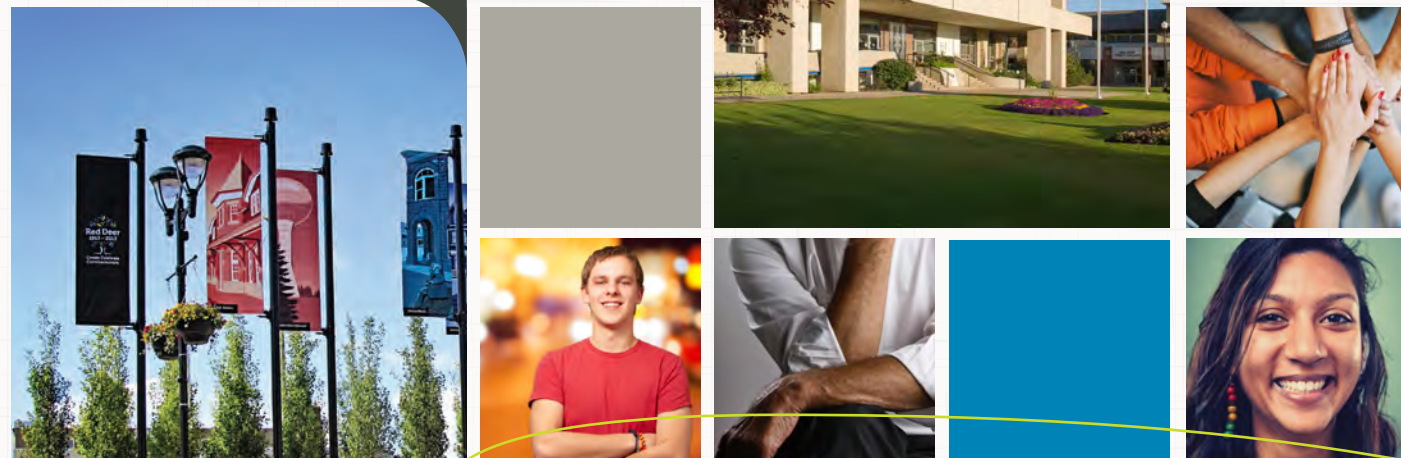


"I am a mother who lost her daughter to cancer. Throughout that entire nightmare, I had tremendous support and love wrapped around me, and it helped me so much as I let her go. Now I have a son I'm losing to addiction, and I feel very alone. This is such a different process, but it can have the same result. I'm terrified to lose him but hesitant to talk to people about it. When I talked to my friends about my daughter's cancer, I knew what their reaction would be. I knew they would embrace me. If I talk about my son and even only give them a glimmer of an idea of what we're going through, there is a good chance they will tell me to kick him out or to stop talking to him. They may even wonder what I've done to contribute to his addiction. No one blamed me for my daughter's cancer. I'm ashamed of this addiction, of what people will think of us when they find out. I told my friends every component of my daughter's journey and very little of my son's. I am ashamed that I am ashamed of him."





CONCLUSION



Our 'made-in-Red Deer' approach to alcohol and drug use provides a comprehensive, community-based and evidence-informed set of strategies that enhances community safety while supporting those struggling with substance use.

There is no simple solution to substance use in our community. But by working together and continuing the conversation about substance use, we can implement innovative strategies that will create an ever-safer, ever-healthier Red Deer.

The Central Alberta Addictions Consortium and The City of Red Deer would like to thank community stakeholders for contributing their time, resources and expertise to the development of Red Deer's Alcohol and Drug Strategy. Our deepest appreciation goes out to all who took the time to help make this a truly 'made-in-Red Deer' strategy.

Full report available at www.reddeer.ca



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