LANARK COUNTY INTERVAL HOUSE & COMMUNITY SUPPORT: HARM REDUCTION APPROACH

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

In accordance with our anti-oppression framework, LCIH embraces the philosophy, approach and principles of harm reduction. This involves taking action through policy and programming to reduce the harmful effects of behaviour. It involves a range of non-judgmental approaches and strategies aimed at providing and enhancing the knowledge, skills resources and supports for individuals, their families and communities to make informed decisions to be safe and healthy. To put harm reduction into practice, it is important to convey acceptance and to support individuals to recognize they are the experts in their own lives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Pragmaticism: Harm reduction accepts that the nonmedical use of psychoactive or mood altering substances is a universal phenomenon.

2. Human Rights: Harm reduction respects the basic human dignity and rights of people. No judgment is made on an individual's right to self-determination and supports informed decision making. Emphasis is placed on personal choice, responsibility and management.

3. Focus on Harms: The priority is to decrease the negative consequences of behaviours which may cause harm to that individual or others.

4. Maximize Intervention Options: Harm reduction recognizes that people benefit from a variety of different approaches. There is no one approach that works reliably for everyone. It is providing options.

5. Priority of Immediate Goals: Harm reduction starts with "where the person is" in their life, with the immediate focus on the most pressing needs.

6. Client Involvement: Harm reduction acknowledges that individuals are the best source for information about their own situations, and need to be empowered to join the service providers to determine the best means to reduce harms. The active participation of individuals is at the heart of harm reduction.

Community barriers will exist. Common barriers affecting harm reduction initiatives within communities include:

- Stigma, myths and misconceptions
- Drugs and behaviours
- Politics
- Lack of support/trust/funds

In addition to the barriers experienced by women experiencing violence, there are additional barriers encountered by aboriginal & racialized communities; youth; members of the 2SLGBTQ+ communities; newcomers to Canada; people living in poverty; people with disabilities as well as other marginalized groups.

To promote community involvement in harm reduction initiatives, LCIHCS staff and volunteers can:

- Build rapport and trust within the community
- Establish relationships within the community
- Raise awareness about prevention, care & social services for marginalized groups
- Educate the community about resources and current services within the community
- Support communities and build self esteem among targeted populations
- Respect the community and people within it