

Lambton Drug & Alcohol Strategy

2023 - 2033

On behalf of:

The Lambton Drug and Alcohol
Strategy Steering Committee



Lambton

DRUG & ALCOHOL STRATEGY



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Acknowledgments

The creation of the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy was a collaborative effort. We would like to thank all who participated in the public consultations that informed the strategy, including individuals with lived experience, their loved ones, community members, and key community partners. The Strategy could not have been created without these unique community perspectives.

Steering Committee

- [Aamjiwnaang First Nation](#)
- [Bluewater Health](#)
- [Bluewater Methadone Clinic](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association - Lambton-Kent](#)
- [Chippewas of Kettle & Stony Point First Nation](#)
- [Emergency Medical Services, County of Lambton](#)
- [Lambton Kent District School Board](#)
- [Lambton Public Health](#)
- [North Lambton Community Health Centre](#)
- [Ontario Health West](#)
- [Ontario Provincial Police - Lambton](#)
- [Rapids Family Health Team](#)
- [Sarnia Police Service](#)
- [Sarnia-Lambton Children's Aid Society](#)
- [Sarnia-Lambton Rebound](#)
- [Social Services, County of Lambton](#)
- [St. Clair Catholic District School Board](#)
- [St. Clair Child and Youth Services](#)
- [The Inn of the Good Shepherd](#)
- [Walpole Island First Nation](#)



Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the Chippewa, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples, referred to collectively as the Anishinaabeg, inhabited these lands at the time of transfer to the Crown by treaty. Lambton County was part of the Huron Tract Purchase, which was transferred under Treaty #29 in 1827, and also includes lands associated with the Sombra Township Purchase transferred under Treaty #7 in 1796, and Long Woods Purchase transferred under Treaty #21 in 1819. We also acknowledge the earlier Indigenous people who travelled these lands in the time of the Wampum treaties.

We acknowledge that we are all treaty people, with our own set of rights and responsibilities. Treaties are a foundational part of our society, and the settlement of Lambton County within a treaty area was made possible through the treaty process. The existence of treaties is proof that the first settlers of what is now Canada acknowledged First Nations as sovereign people and negotiated Nation to Nation. By understanding the colonial history of Canada, we can renew our relationships with each other and move towards meaningful reconciliation.

Further, it is through the connection of the Anishinaabeg with the spirit of the land, water and air that we recognize their unique cultures, traditions, and values. Today, we are part of this same land that sustains all life, and it is the sacred responsibility of all people to ensure that the environment remains protected. Finally, we acknowledge that the inherent languages of the Anishinaabeg preclude any English/French meaning.



Executive Message



Like many communities throughout the province, Lambton County is facing a complex issue that will take collaboration and partnership to respond to. The Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy is the start of a 10-year roadmap to strategically tackling the addictions crisis we are facing.

Informed by those with lived experience, their loved ones, and the individuals and organizations who work in the harm, demand, and supply reduction fields, this strategy brings together more than 20 partner agencies to find local solutions to the issues within our communities.

When Lambton County launched its Community Safety and Well-Being plan in 2022, the impacts of Mental Health and Addictions on our community were identified and prioritized as being key to the safety and well-being of our residents.

This collaborative approach will be key to ensuring our resources are placed where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact, and I look forward to the continued work of the Steering Committee and its implementation teams.

Kevin Marriott
Warden, County of Lambton



Substance use and the increasingly toxic unregulated drug supply present a critical and significant public health concern, across Canada and in Lambton County. Our community's experiences of this crisis are embedded within a complex system that has contributed to the current state, with potential solutions often beyond the level of influence of the individual.

As detailed within this Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy, the response to this issue requires the efforts of many to fit the needs of our community. Lambton Public Health joins with all the Steering Committee members to support and commit to this evidence-informed, pillared approach.

The strategy is fit to suit local needs, which has utilized community assessment and public consultations within Lambton County to develop the approach, and fundamentally included people with lived experience of substance use, along with their loved ones.

This holistic approach, set to work on multiple levels including with individuals, within local spaces and settings, and influencing key policies, will move us towards healthy, safe, and resilient communities.

Dr. Karalyn Dueck
Medical Officer of Health, County of Lambton

Partner Endorsements

Bluewater Methadone Clinic

The team at Bluewater Methadone Clinic and Bluewater RAAM Clinic believe that the cooperative effort in developing the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy will benefit our community and we are very happy to be a part of it.

County of Lambton Social Services Division

Addressing homelessness and housing precarity in our community necessitates many of the cross-sectoral collaborations described in the Drug and Alcohol Strategy. Just as an individual is not defined by an experience of homelessness, an individual is not defined by a substance use disorder. Housing is a fundamental social determinant of health, and to make significant progress towards ensuring everyone in Lambton County has a home, our community must commit to employing evidence-informed practices including Housing First and harm reduction.

Lambton OPP

The use of illicit drugs has a significant impact on property crimes, crimes against people and victimizes many, including the substance user themselves. Lambton OPP is committed to partnering with the community to lessen these impacts.

Lambton Kent District School Board

The Lambton Kent District School Board sees great value in our continued collaboration with community partners involved in the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy. As a school board with 22,000 students and 62 school sites, the evidence-based approaches are valuable in supporting all students, families and communities. The Lambton Kent District School Board is proud to be a key partner in sustaining healthy communities through education and is thankful to be part of a countywide focus.



Partner Endorsements

North Lambton Community Health Centre

The North Lambton Community Health Centre supports the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy in its plan to work within a harm reduction framework to act as facilitators, working with clients to achieve small goals and build confidence. With new confidence often comes expanded capacity for meaningful change and growth. Harm Reduction centered care works with clients to identify goals that contribute to their wellness journey – whatever that journey looks like for them.

Harm reduction goes far beyond needle syringe services; it acknowledges a person as much more than their experience of substance use; harm reduction says “We see you. How can we help?”

Sarnia Police Service

The Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy, is one that is supported by the Sarnia Police Service as part of our shared commitment to be a safe and healthier community. It builds on a strong history of partnering with community agencies and social service providers, and positions Lambton County and the City of Sarnia to be at the forefront of emerging trends that impact community safety and well-being.

St. Clair Catholic District School Board

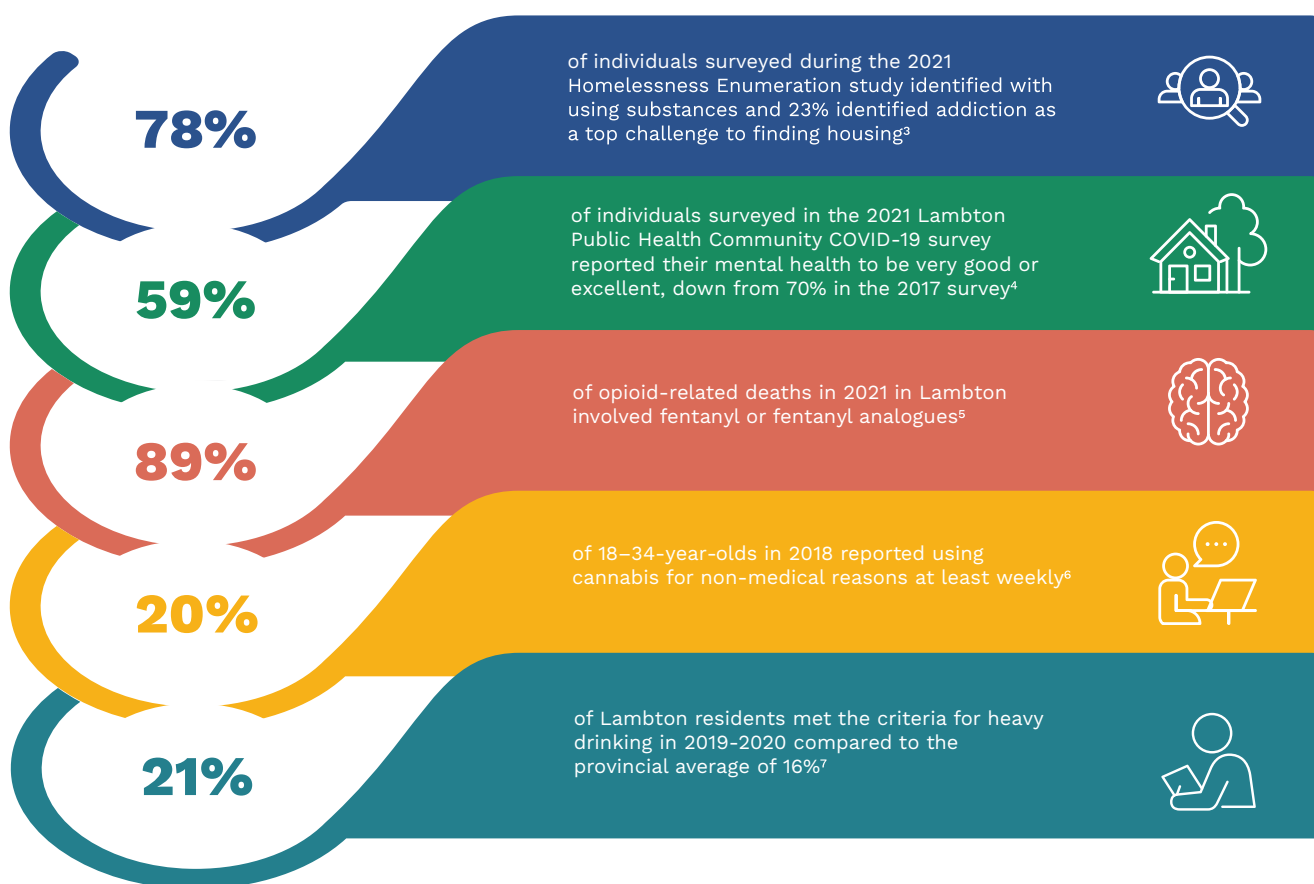
The St. Clair Catholic District School Board is proud to be a member of the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Steering Committee, which supports prevention through mental health promotion in schools, educating students on the short- and long-term consequences on wellbeing from substance use and related harms.



Introduction

Lambton County, located along the southern edge of Lake Huron, is bordered by the St. Clair River, The Municipality of Chatham-Kent, as well as both Middlesex and Huron Counties. The region has many beautiful beaches, parks and trails making it an attractive place to live, work and play. Home to approximately 128,000 residents¹, Lambton County is made up of 11 municipalities and three First Nations with residents dispersed across a combination of rural and urban communities. Lambton's unique demographics and characteristics play an important role in understanding substance use across the County.

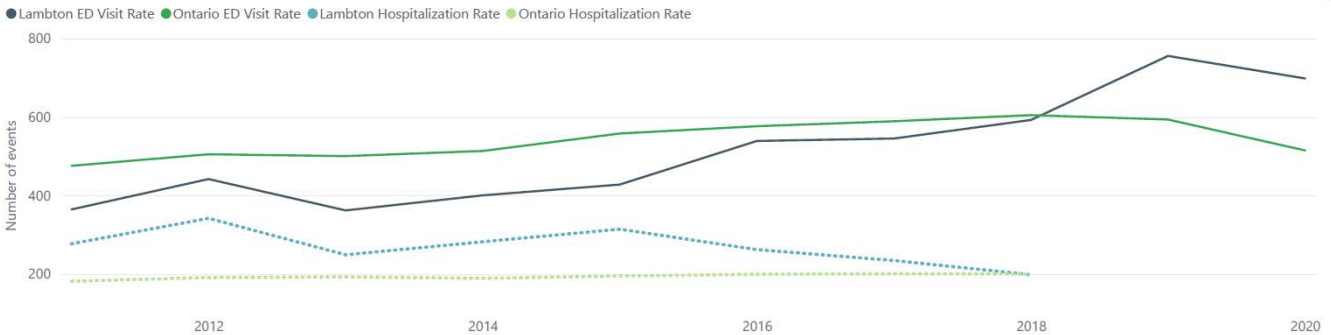
Substance use and related harms are a significant and complex public health issue across Ontario that was only further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Often biological, psychological, and social factors, usually in combination, can contribute to an individual's pattern of substance use.² Risk factors to problematic substance use can include, but are not limited to, a family history of mental health and addiction, adverse childhood experiences, previous experiences of trauma, availability and access to support services, as well as the factors associated with the determinants of health.²



Even prior to the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, Lambton County and Ontario have observed an upward trend in substance-related harms resulting in both fatal and non-fatal outcomes.^{8,9} This increase has been attributed to the unpredictable and unregulated drug supply, reduced access to health services, as well as the limited availability of community-based programs and increased feelings of social isolation, stress, and anxiety.^{8,9}

Alcohol

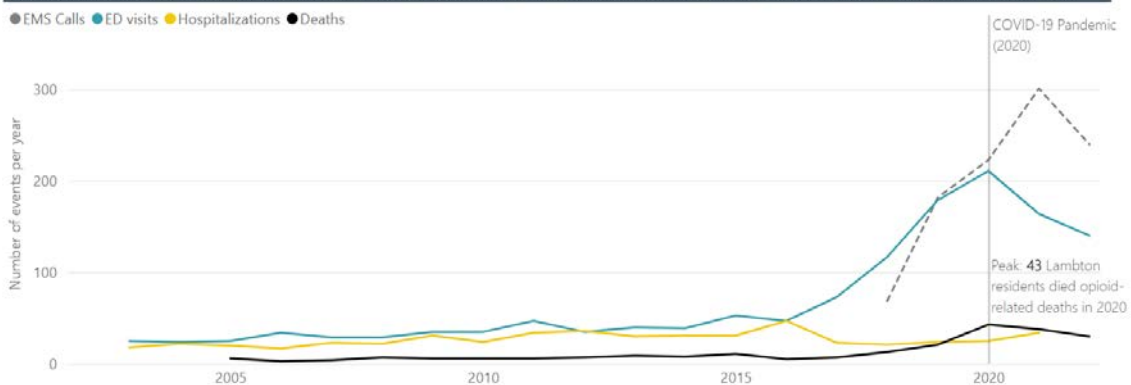
Annual age standardized rate per 100,000 of alcohol-related ED visits and hospitalizations, Lambton and Ontario, 2011 to 2020



Since 2011, the rate of alcohol-related ED visits in Lambton has increased, surpassing the Ontario rate in 2019 and 2020. In 2020, there were 698 alcohol-related ED visits per 100,000 population among Lambton residents, compared to 515 visits per 100,000 for Ontario. Conversely, the local rate of alcohol-related hospitalizations has declined to equal the Ontario rate in 2018. Data on alcohol-related hospitalizations is not yet available for 2019 and 2020.

Opioid

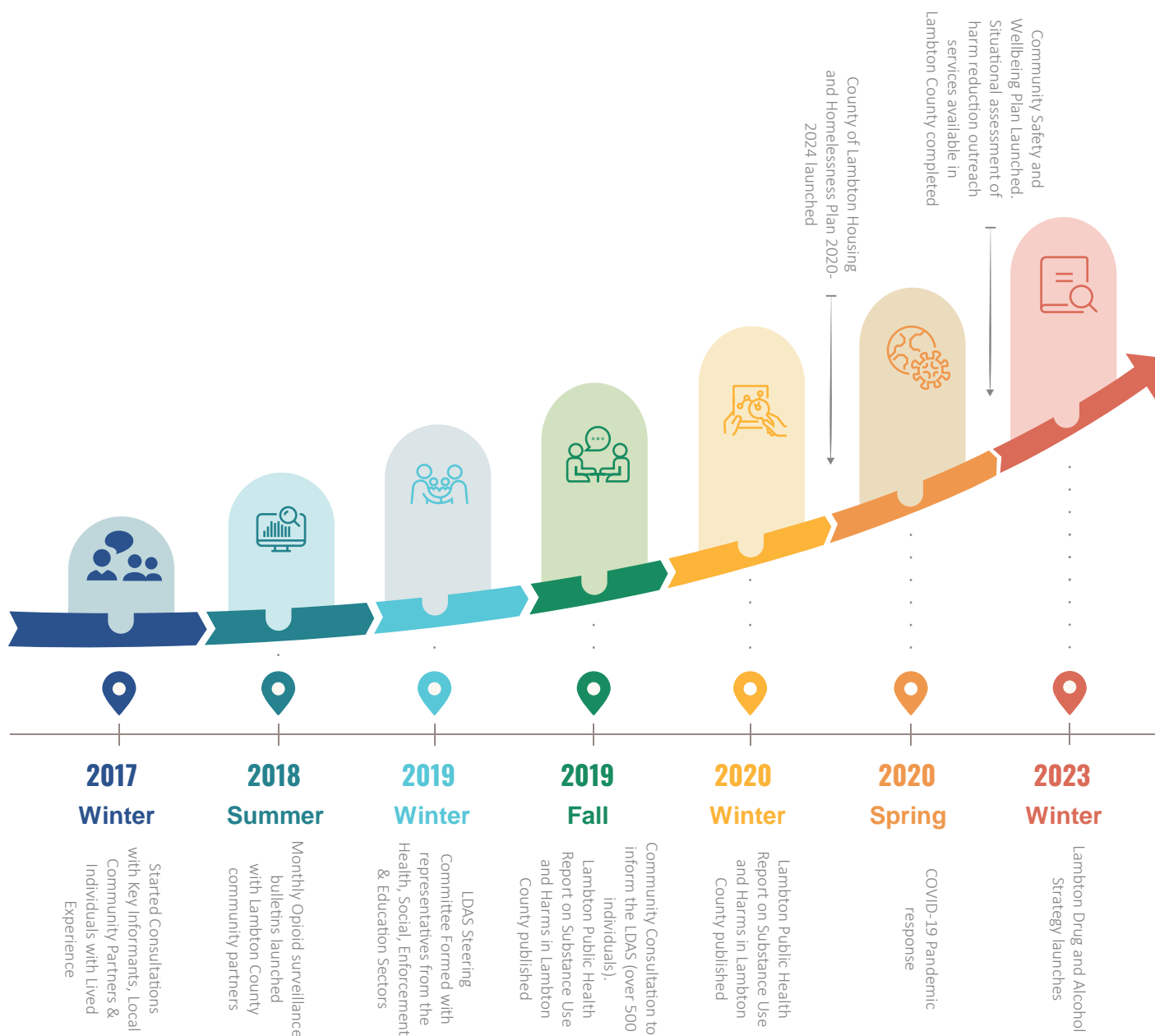
Annual Number of EMS Calls, Emergency Department Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths due to Opioid Overdose, Lambton, 2003 to 2022



The monthly number of opioid overdose-related calls to Lambton Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has increased steadily since 2018 when monitoring began. In 2018, EMS received an average of 6 calls for opioid overdose per month; by 2021, EMS received an average of 25 calls per month, representing a 4-times increase. The monthly number of opioid overdose-related emergency department (ED) visits in Lambton has generally been comparable to the number of EMS calls, however, since February of 2021 the number of EMS calls has exceeded the number of ED visits. The annual number of opioid-related deaths have also increased dramatically over this time period. In 2018, 13 Lambton residents died of opioid-related deaths, and by 2020 annual deaths had tripled to 43. While counts in more recent years have decreased (38 and 30 deaths in 2021 and 2022, respectively), this data is considered preliminary and counts still greatly exceed those observed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy Key Development Milestones

The need for a coordinated response across the health and social service sectors as well as collaboration with local enforcement officers, educators, and the community brought together a multi-sectoral steering committee in 2019 with the aim to reduce the harms related to drug and alcohol use in Lambton County. Although the launch of the committee’s strategy was delayed due to COVID-19, important work supporting the population was continued throughout the pandemic.



Key Recommendations

In consultation with Ipsos Public Affairs, several interviews were conducted with key informants from other community jurisdictions, local community partners, and individuals with lived experience and their family members to inform the development of a County-wide strategy. Recommendations from the consultation period have been adapted and are displayed below. For a detailed report on the results of the consultation process please refer to the [Drugs and Alcohol Strategy Research Report \(2019\)](#) and for more information on the impact of substance use in Lambton County, see the [Report on Substance Use and Harms in Lambton County \(2019\)](#).



Throughout the summer of 2022, a situational assessment was conducted with community partners to understand the current programs and services that are operating within a harm reduction model to help inform the final development of a Drug and Alcohol strategy. Consistent with the recommendations published in 2019, partners indicated that as we move forward to address the harms related to substance use, we need to prioritize the following:

Supporting
Individuals Basic
Needs (i.e., Utilizing
a Determinants of
Health Perspective)

Communication &
Collaboration Among
Partners to Support
a Client Centred
Approach

The Development of
a Comprehensive
Referral Pathway

Engaging Individuals
with Lived/Living
Experience as
Experts





Vision

A flourishing community,
working together to prevent and
reduce the harms of drug and
alcohol misuse.



Guiding Principles

To achieve our vision, the Strategy calls on a broad range of community partners working through collaboration and directly informed by people with lived experience of substance use and their loved ones. Grounded in health equity, the Strategy will employ actions that are locally relevant, strengths-based, upstream, innovative and/or disruptive of the status quo, evidence-informed, and inclusive of people who use drugs and/or alcohol and their loved ones.

The Strategy's activities are:



and will be accountable to the residents of Lambton County



Strategic Priorities



The Pillar Approach

Consultations identified that Lambton County needs an approach that focuses on limiting the harms of current use, while curbing the reasons people use in the first place. Therefore, a pillar approach has been used to develop and structure Lambton's Drug and Alcohol Strategy. Based on evidence from [Australia's National Drug Strategy](#) and consultation with the steering committee, the strategy will integrate prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction interventions into three pillars.



In order to build a community that works together to reduce the harms of substance misuse, the Strategy will act on multiple levels:



People: Supporting and educating individuals, loved ones and community partners



Places: Creating safe and welcoming spaces while building capacity within community settings



Policy: Supporting and educating individuals, loved ones and community partners

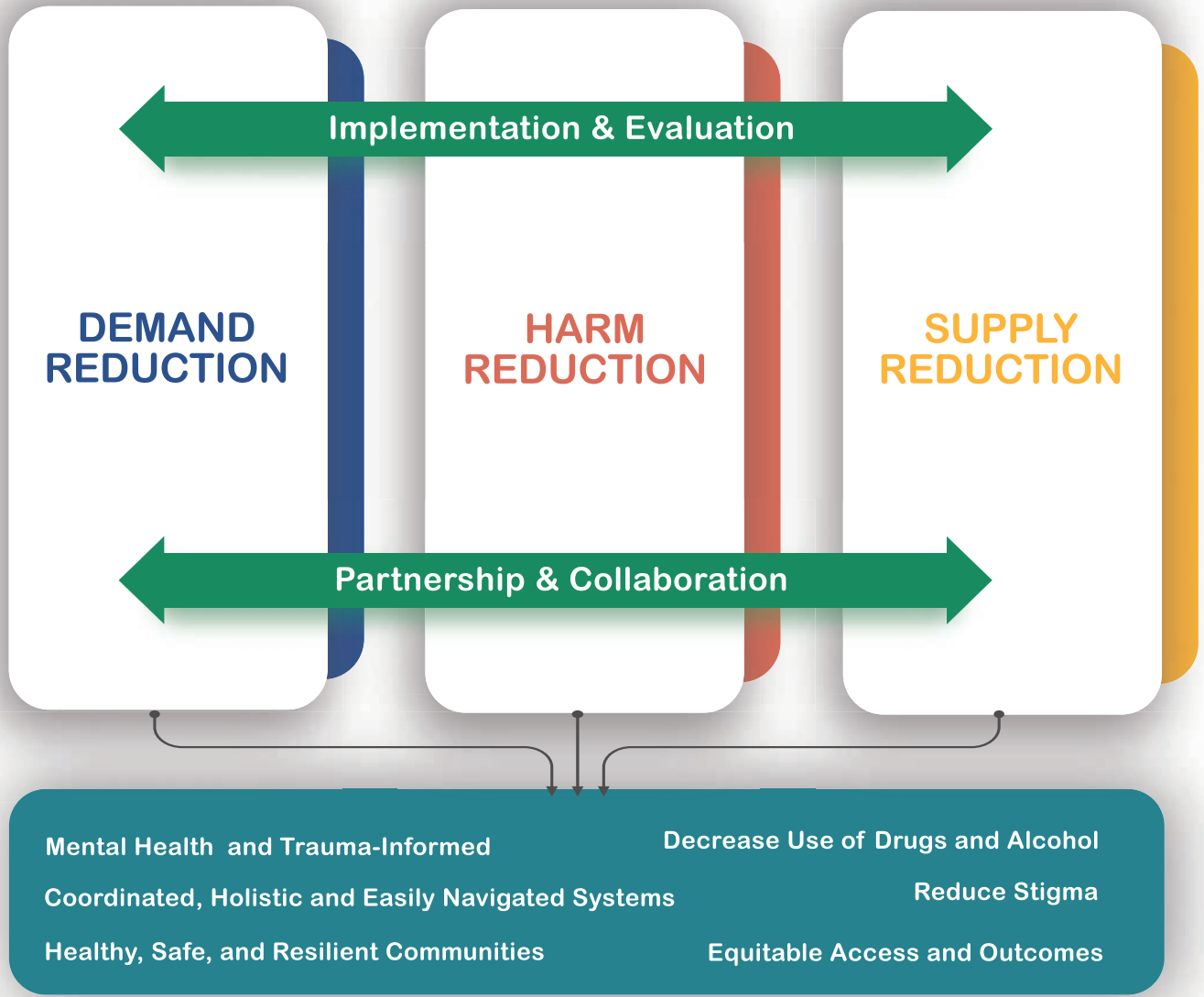
A collaborative approach is required to address the root causes of problematic substance use. Individuals need a supportive system that considers socioeconomic status, housing availability and accessibility, support to raise healthy families, accessible mental health care, regulated substance supply, and focuses on restoring our community from the legacies of colonization and discrimination. Consequently, each pillar breaks down the objectives into a people, places, and policies lens to demonstrate a multilevel approach.





Lambton

DRUG & ALCOHOL STRATEGY



Lambton Drug & Alcohol Strategy Model (2023-2033)



Lambton

DEMAND REDUCTION

GOAL: Improve the community conditions that promote resilience and support healthier alternatives to substance use.

2023 - 2033 OBJECTIVES

1. Increase access to positive alternatives to substance use for youth across Lambton County.
2. Increase access to safe, affordable housing.
3. Increase opportunities for early identification of problematic substance use and related behaviours.
4. Increase awareness of the risks of substance use; educate the community on substance use trends.
5. Promote protective factors and mitigate risk factors for problematic substance use later in life.

How this will be achieved:

PEOPLE	PLACES	POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage youth to develop programming as a positive alternative to substance use (1) • Inform children, youth, and families about the risks of legal and illegal substances (3) • Develop a culturally relevant strategy to denormalize substance use (4) • Implement programs to increase social connectedness among all residents (5) • Reduce and mitigate impact of harmful childhood experiences that have the potential to lead to substance misuse (5) • Increase accessibility of safe, affordable housing (2) • Carry out Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations to support Indigenous-led activities to reduce substance misuse (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop youth hubs in all communities (1) • Provide evidence-based curriculum linked programs in schools to raise awareness, de-normalize substance use and increase resilience (4) • Create and preserve community spaces for activities for children and youth (1) • Promote peer support models to enhance social connectedness in youth (5) • Develop early identification and screening strategies in schools (3) • Increase capacity across service providers for early identification and prevention. (3) • Ensure workplaces can recognize and support staff experiencing substance use problems/concerns (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for restrictive marketing legislation (4) • Advocate for policies that address the social determinants of health such as basic income guarantee, housing first (2) • Develop organizational policies to allow for effective communication between agencies to intervene early with families at risk (3) • Implement local, regular surveillance of youth substance use (4) • Prioritize local funding to subsidize children and youth activities (1) • Advocate for increased provincial funding for social emotional learning/mental health promotion programs (5)

Note: Numbers in parentheses reflect objectives listed above



Among parents with kids 14 and older, **45%** said they were concerned about drug and alcohol use and **37%** about smoking cigarettes or vaping e-cigarettes¹⁰

[My child] has mental health issues in terms of high anxiety and depression and that... Whether one has started or caused or made the other worse is I think one of the challenges. The more he has anxiety, the more challenges, the more drugs he uses to self-medicate, which has made his mental health deteriorate sort of thing.
- Parent¹¹

53% of Ontarians say they are experiencing increased mental health and/or addictions challenges as a result of the pandemic⁴



HARM REDUCTION

GOAL: Reduce the negative consequences of problematic substance use.

2023 - 2033 OBJECTIVES

1. Increase understanding of harm reduction and its impact.
2. Reduce institutional and community stigma against people who use drugs or alcohol.
3. Increase access to the continuum of services and wrap around client care for people who use drugs and their loved ones.
4. Engage people who use drugs and alcohol and their loved ones more often in service development and delivery.
5. Improve transitions to, through, and from care.

How this will be achieved:

PEOPLE	PLACES	POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform people who use drugs how to reduce harm associated with alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs and medications (1) • Increase community capacity to understand and empathize with a harm reduction approach (1) • Adopt one community screening tool for identifying problematic substance use (5) • Improve community service providers knowledge about harm reduction and treatment services available in the community (No wrong door) (1/3) • Investigate alternative treatment modalities (3) • Engage people who use drugs in the development of programs and services (4) • Develop peer support network for both people using/have used drugs AND families and caregivers (4) • Centralized system of supports for families and loved ones of people who use substances (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a community where addictions and mental health are understood as health concerns (2) • Educate healthcare and service providers on the nature of addiction and benefits of the harm reduction approach to care (2) • Easier access to and availability of harm reduction and treatment services in both urban and rural areas (3) • Develop a community needle recovery strategy for Lambton County (3) • Ensure availability of transitional housing between withdrawal management and residential treatment (5) • Ensure traditional service options are available (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create local organizational policies that reduce systemic barriers to accessing treatment and harm reduction services (2) • Include people and organizations in treatment planning that the individual chooses (i.e., expand circle of care to include non-traditional partners where desired) (4) • Increase funding for harm reduction services (3) • Develop and invest in a full continuum of housing supports and a housing first model (3) • Leverage technology such as electronic medical records and telemedicine to improve care coordination and access (3) • Advocate for local residential treatment options including transitional housing supports (3) • Emphasize relationship-building and a more holistic approach to services (3) • Develop a shared referral pathway to connect individuals to available supports (5)

Note: Numbers in parentheses reflect objectives listed above

3807

Naloxone Kits distributed by
Community Partners in 2021



The accessibility of Harm Reduction services is extremely important in a substance users' journey. Services are created and driven by the client in a way that is nonjudgmental and supported by workers who are kind and compassionate. While everyone's goals are different, harm reduction services help individuals to reduce the barriers of substance use and meet each client where they are at. Harm Reduction saves lives, like mine.
- Service User

7 Needle Disposal Bins
across Lambton
County



SUPPLY REDUCTION

GOAL: Access to substance is limited, regulated, and responsible.

2023 - 2033 OBJECTIVES

1. Decrease youth access to substances.
2. Increase access to safer alternatives.
3. Increase the capacity of enforcement officers and community policing to promote safe communities.
4. Reduce opportunities for harmful consumption of drugs or alcohol.

How this will be achieved:

PEOPLE	PLACES	POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote positive role-modelling by parents, caregivers and trusted adults regarding substance use and coping strategies (1) • Increase services for pain management (2) • Increase access to treatment for addictions (2) • Reduce availability of substances in the home including pharmaceuticals and alcohol (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Smart Serve Certification and other harm reduction strategies by staff (and patrons) of licensed locations (4) • Foster safe neighbourhoods that have limited access to legal and illegal substances through the development of a community safety and well-being strategy (3) • Youth and community outreach by local enforcement officers. (3) • The provision of harm reduction services and treatment during incarceration. (3) • Increase access to safe and supportive housing (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and provincial policies reduce availability and accessibility of retail locations (4) • Local policies in place that allow for safer substance use and moderation (1) • Community-based crime prevention (3) • Promote policies that strictly regulate Tailgating at sporting and other local events (4) • Develop and implement a court diversion program and/or drug court. (3) • Develop a strategy for safer prescribing of opioids and improved access to addictions therapy (2)

Note: Numbers in parentheses reflect objectives listed above



274

Police reported incidents related to drugs and/or alcohol in 2020¹²

Since 2019, Lambton OPP has experienced an increase of 11% per year in drug investigations and 25% in overdose occurrences. We will continue to provide community education on the dangers of illicit drug consumption through our School Resource Officer Program in an effort to reduce demand, while continuing enforcement efforts to reduce supply. We are committed to working collaboratively with our community partners in an effort to keep all of Lambton County safe.

- Lambton OPP

Next Steps

The Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy is merely a blueprint for community action to reduce the harms of drug and alcohol use. In order to transition the work of the Strategy, meaningful actions must align with the guiding principles of being collaborative, actionable, governable, and measurable, all while serving the residents of Lambton County. Next steps include:



Seek a commitment from local government, community organizations, and First Nations partners to support an implementation plan that is transparent to community members.



Align with priority recommendations in existing community strategies including the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (2022-2025) and the County of Lambton Housing and Homeless Plan (2020-2024) in order to identify shared goals and efficiencies.



Research and employ innovative, upstream, and evidence-based approaches, including promising practices and traditional ways of knowing.



Connect with provincial and national networks, such as The Drug Strategy Network of Ontario to share knowledge and align our focus on improving community safety while decreasing costs and harms incurred by the current response to the drug poisoning crisis.



Provide transparency through the development and implementation of an evaluation plan and report progress back to the community in a timely manner. A draft logic model to aid in the plan's development is in Appendix A.



Next Steps

Lambton residents passionate about reducing the harms from substance use have not been idle during the development of the Strategy. The tireless and necessary work of frontline staff, decision-makers, people who use drugs and their loved ones alike has played an important part in saving lives in Lambton County. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the harms from substances have increased and our approach to this issue has, and will continue to change. Launching the Lambton Drug and Alcohol Strategy as a 10 year plan is an important milestone in the continued work of becoming a community safer from the harms of substance use. The strategy will be continually reviewed and may be revised at an earlier date as it will expand upon existing efforts and ensure a holistic approach to improving the lives of Lambton County residents while supporting people who use drugs and their loved ones. Through the pillar approach focusing on demand, harm, and supply reduction the strategy aims to address multiple aspects of this complex public health issue from the individual to policy level.



Appendix A

Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnerships - Funding - Lambton Drug & Alcohol Strategy - DSNO network support - Research/evidence to inform interventions - Evaluation framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community consultation - Evidence/Best Practice Interventions - System coordination - System navigation - Capacity building - Education/ Knowledge Exchange - Advocacy - Communications 	<p>Strategy Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meaningfully engaged in strategy implementation - Action taken to align, increase and/or improve practices related to three pillars <p>People Who Use Drugs/Peers/Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of access and quality of services - Awareness, access and update of harm reduction services - Perceived ability to be meaningfully engaged in the strategy (if desired) <p>Leaders/Policy Makers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of and support of issues related to substance use - Support for destigmatization efforts - Support for policy and practice changes <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stigma reduction based on perceptions - perception of healthy, safe, resilient community 	<p>Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decrease in # of overdoses - decrease in # of individuals/youth who report using substances - increase in reported uptake of harm reduction - increase in number of people who are accessing addictions therapies/treatment services <p>Community Safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduced stigma - decrease in criminal offences related to substance use - reduction of and type of drugs supply available <p>Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number/type of policy changes <p>Root Cause/Prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decreased social isolation - increased resilience/protective factors - increased access to housing and other social determinants of health

Adapted from [DSNO Evaluation Framework](#)¹³



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Additional Information

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2. Lambton Public Health: [Drugs and Alcohol Strategy Research Report](#)
3. Community Safety and Well-Being Plan: [Lambton County 2022-2025](#)
4. County of Lambton: [County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2024](#)
5. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care: [National Drug Strategy 2017- 2026](#)
6. Drug Strategy Network of Ontario: [Solutions to End the Drug Poisoning Crisis in Ontario: Choosing a New Direction](#)





Produced By Lambton Public Health
on behalf of:

The Lambton Drug and Alcohol
Strategy Steering Committee

 Lambton
DRUG & ALCOHOL STRATEGY



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