

Saskatchewan Drug Task Force Community Engagement Results

The Drug Task Force (DTF) is an inter-sectoral committee of leaders who are concerned with problematic substance use issues in the province. The root causes of substance use and addictions are complex, touch all sectors of government, and require a multi-sectoral response as well as community engagement and partnerships.

COVID-19 has highlighted the need to do more to address the impact of the increasingly toxic illicit drug supply on individuals, families and communities. In the fall of 2021, the DTF engaged people with lived experience, concerned family members, advocates, and community based organizations who provide services to those affected, to guide future decisions.

Key Findings:

- Substances are highly addictive, cheap and readily accessible in most communities.
- Individuals often avoid seeking services due to stigma and discrimination by service providers, lack of transportation and identification, no permanent address or telephone number for contact, among other factors.
- Some individuals don't know where to go for help. Others cited long wait lists and gaps between detoxification and treatment as barriers, as well as the need for more coordinated care among all service providers to ensure basic needs are met.
- Untreated mental health issues, trauma, intergenerational trauma, and no sense of belonging were identified as key contributors to substance use to numb both physical and psychological pain. Isolation and boredom during public health orders were also factors.

Priorities that emerged from the consultations and from discussions at the Drug Task Force include hotspotting, stigma reduction and trauma-informed services, community engagement and partnerships, and community drug alerts.

As development of a work plan progresses, these priorities will support work already underway through numerous organizations across the province to reduce harms, educate, and build resilience among youth. Examples of this work include expansion of the Take Home Naloxone kit program, Drug Checking, Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine, Police and Crisis Teams, Mental Health Capacity Building in Schools, and housing initiatives.

For more information about the DTF, its mandate and partners, visit:
saskatchewan.ca/drug-task-force