



ADSTV Position Statement on Safe Opiate Supply (SOS)

November 2020

“Limitless possibilities through freedom from addiction”

POSITION:

ADSTV supports the concept of and programs for “Safe Opioid Supply” for people within our community.

The Opiate Crisis across Canada demands a full spectrum of responses to save lives and empower people affected by opiate use in determining the support that is right for them as individuals. Drug and Alcohol Strategies developed by communities commonly support a multi-pronged approach across the traditional four pillars, known as Prevention, Enforcement, Harm Reduction and Treatment. These four pillars comprise the foundation for programs and services that can prevent, intervene and treat dependence on opiates (among other drugs) in our community.

Addiction Services of Thames Valley (ADSTV) supports all efforts to reduce the impact of opiate use on the population and community as per our Vision Statement above. The services we support include Consumption and Treatment Sites, Needle Exchange and Safe Opiate Supply (SOS) as well as access to addiction treatment as desired.

A safe opiate supply strategy is grounded in harm reduction. The challenges associated with the COVID-19 crisis have exacerbated drug overdose deaths in Ontario broadly. In May 2020, Ontario had the highest number of opiate related deaths since 2018. Public Health Ontario reported that May 2020 had the highest number of opiate deaths since 2003.¹

SOS addresses this problem by providing a safe supply of what might otherwise be a lethal drug, the use of which has extensive social costs and burdens. A Safe Opiate Supply provides a process for:

1. Valuing the life of every human regardless of life choices;
2. Providing opportunities for users to access service options along the continuum of care if they choose;
3. Reducing costs associated with overdose in the health system and community.

The opportunity to provide a Safe Opiate Supply would also address the documented inequities in the health care system where marginalized people are disproportionately represented in both overdose and COVID deaths.

Integrity, Compassion, Choice, Excellence and Collaboration are the values of ADSTV. These values drive us to support a program for Safe Opiate Supply and we endorse SOS as a critical component of the healthcare system that wraps around persons who use drugs.

¹ CMHA Ontario “Covid-19 Impact on Ontario’s Opioid Crisis September 2, 2020