



Community Safety & Well-Being

Featured Initiative

Established in 2020, the CACP/Motorola Solutions Community Safety & Well-Being Award (CSWB) was created to recognize outstanding effort and contributions to improving community safety and well-being in Canada through the process of inter- or multi-sector partnership, community mobilization, shared issue/problem ownership, shared outcomes and shared measurement. Many deserving submissions are received and the CACP wishes to share initiatives that could be implemented and/or be adopted by other police services. Here is one such initiative.

THE 'HEAVY USERS OF SERVICE' PROGRAM

Edmonton Police Service

Recipient of the 2020 CACP/Motorola Solutions Community Safety & Well-Being Award

The problem to be solved / The need to be met

The Heavy Users of Service (HUoS) project evolved from a collective understanding that despite frequent interactions with health, justice and social services, the needs of some of Edmonton's most vulnerable people were not being met. Similar conversations were occurring in different sectors, leading to the recognition that the most frequent users of one system were often the same frequent users of other systems, but that the "systems" did not often communicate with one another. As a result, certain community members who are highly vulnerable were repeatedly cycling through community support systems, and "falling through the cracks".

Struggling with a range and multitude of mental, physical and addiction issues, this population is faced with challenges such as homelessness and chronic involvement with social disorder incidents, as both victim and offender. This results in frequent and often inappropriate involvement with justice, health, and other emergency supports. These are extremely vulnerable individuals with complex needs who have experienced deeply traumatic life events. They are disproportionately Indigenous and experiencing the intergenerational impact of residential schools, colonization and loss of traditional family support networks, and they are people living with the long-term and irreversible impact of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. In addition to severe addiction issues, most clients have major psychological disorders ranging from schizophrenia to bipolar, to personality disorders, etc.

The clients referred to HUoS are typically chronically homeless and have been evicted or rejected from most everywhere. Most do not have a car, a driver's licence or any ID at all. Most are eligible for the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program or for Income Support because they cannot sustain employment. Many have cognitive brain disorders linked to the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) and some are of such low capacity that they require a public guardian or trustee to take over their decision-making. In addition, their physical / medical state is often diminished (Hepatitis C, HIV, liver failure, chronic other illnesses, etc.).

These are vulnerable people confronted with systemic barriers and gaps that prevent or reduce access to supports, treatment, and programming. This results in the frequent and often inappropriate use of support and emergency services and a lack of appropriate medical treatment.

Partners

Initial meetings between the various providers in the justice, health and social sectors took place between 2012 and 2015. The HUoS stakeholder group consisted of 16 stakeholders including the City of Edmonton, the George Spady Centre, the Hope Mission, the Bissell Centre, Homeward Trust, the Boyle McCauley Health Centre, Emergency Management Services (EMS), Alberta Health Services (Mental Health and Addictions, Edmonton Zone Emergency, as well as Primary Care and Chronic Disease Management), REACH Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Service, Boyle Street Community Services, Alberta Human Services (Family Violence Prevention and Homeless Supports, as well as Employment and Financial Supports), and the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society.

The Solution

An Assessment, Sobering and Care Centre, which later evolved into the “Heavy Users of Services Project” for 18 to 20 frequent users of support and emergency services.

Objectives

1. Improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable citizens and the broader community.
2. Finding efficiencies in the delivery of services provided to these individuals.
3. Increase instances of appropriate services being delivered.
4. Increase the alignment of costs to deliver those services.
5. Maintain and further increase communication amongst all stakeholders.

Planning

The following steps were completed:

1. The identification of **internal and external partners** involved in the implementation of the project, their roles, level of participation or involvement, and the phase at which they would be involved.
2. A **memorandum of understanding (MOU)** was established with all partners identifying project responsibilities, oversight, communications protocol, information sharing, indemnification, duration, dispute resolution, contacts, and definitions.
3. A **working group** was established to identify a set of criteria to select several vulnerable individuals who are the greatest draw on Edmonton's social, health and justice services. This group also jointly developed key messages to support internal and external communications.
4. The working group also developed a **Case Planning Sub-Committee**. This multidisciplinary panel was responsible for developing and executing personalized case plans. By tracking individuals over a 12 to 24-month period, information, gaps, overlaps and strengths in the existing models were identified and could be addressed.
5. The working group also created and staffed a **Navigation and Coordination Centre (NCC)** to develop, implement, and monitor a set of comprehensive case plans. The NCC is staffed by a Sergeant, a Methods Analyst, two Constables, two Social Workers, and one Administrative Assistant.

Implementation

1. Develop systems and a process to identify, develop a case planning process and monitor a cadre of vulnerable persons.
2. Address referral gaps as they are identified, and whenever possible, develop strategies to reduce and eliminate these gaps.
3. Monitor a log of identified system gaps in client case plans, including any actions taken immediately to address gaps that can be used to inform other members.
4. Share the collaborative and integrated approach with complimentary stakeholders, emphasizing the case management philosophy with wrap-around services targeting underlying drivers of systematic processes and at-risk behaviours.

Marketing and Communications

The Edmonton Police Service Corporate Communications team developed a three-stage process for promotion of the HUoS program:

1. Preparation
2. External launch
3. Public/government advocacy/support for new action

Financial, Human and Material Resources

- The Government of Alberta, REACH, and the City of Edmonton provides funding support.
- Boyle Street Community Services provides two navigators and administrative support positions.
- The Edmonton Police Service funds one sergeant, two constables and one analyst position.
- The Edmonton Police Service also provides space, equipment, and constable vehicles.
- The project requires support from municipal, provincial and federal governments, the not-for-profit sector, volunteer groups and the community. As most of the services, programs and agencies involved are either run or supported by the three levels of government, cooperation and support are essential.

Program evaluation

In 2016, members of the Evaluation Sub-Committee participated in regular meetings, provided input into the development of the evaluation strategy, reviewed data collection instruments (interview and focus group guides), discussed relevant sources of secondary data involving HUoS clients, and provided ongoing feedback as required. The evaluation strategy built on the “Outcomes Map” developed by Greg McIntyre, BDO Consulting.

Pre-intervention data were calculated up to two years prior to a clients' start date with HUoS to provide a standardized baseline for each client.

Initial quantitative data analyses were focused on descriptive methods (e.g., counts and rates). Counts included the total number of interactions that a client had with a specific service and/or agency. Monthly counts and aggregated counts (i.e., the sum of monthly counts) were calculated. These counts were tallied to allow for the comparison of pre- and post-intervention results.

The Navigation and Coordination Centre team uses an adapted version of the Self Sufficiency Matrix for assessment for the Canadian context. This version includes two additional fields to capture cultural and spiritual capacity.

Impacts of the program

Impact on clients :

- decreased inappropriate use of services
- decreased Edmonton Police Service interactions
- decreased Edmonton Transit Service interactions
- decreased Emergency Department visits
- improved client self-sufficiency scores (functional ability, housing, food and safety according to a scale ranging from "in crisis" to "thriving").

Impact on service providers :

- attitude changes toward heavy users of service clients
- increased trauma-informed services (e.g., increased understanding of the role of trauma in the lives of heavy users of service clients and their behaviours)
- increased understanding of system complexity
- increased awareness of system gaps and barriers
- increased understanding of the limitations, capacity, roles and mandates of the various service providers, leading to greater respect between agencies
- changes in practice
- increased linkages between service providers beyond HUoS
- changes observed among colleagues not directly involved with HUoS.

To learn more

If your agency is interested in learning more and wishes to explore the possibility of implementing a similar initiative in your community, you are invited to contact:

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