



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	April 15, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre Deaths Inquest Jury Recommendations (BOH19016) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not applicable.

INFORMATION

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of Health of Public Health Services (PHS) response to the Office of the Chief Coroner inquest into overdose deaths at the Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre.

A Coroner's Inquest was held in Hamilton from April 9, 2018 – May 18, 2018 into the deaths of eight inmates of the Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre (HWDC). These deaths occurred between March of 2012 and March of 2016 and opioids were implicated in the cause of death in each case. Margot Corbin, Public Health Nurse and Dr. Elizabeth Richardson, Medical Officer of Health both participated in the inquest.

The verdict of the Coroner's inquest consisted of 62 recommendations to various provincial ministries and organizations. PHS was assigned one recommendation, Number 57, which was to "provide the necessary resources to expand the training

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program delivered by Hamilton Public Health to include male inmates”.¹ Commitment to this program expansion by PHS was provided at the inquest.

Beginning in May 2019, PHS will initiate harm reduction sessions to male inmates at the HWDC. PHS currently provides evidence-based, harm reduction education sessions to female inmates at the HWDC. The goal is to enhance inmates’ knowledge of resources that are available while incarcerated and community resources available upon release from custody.

Background

The purpose of a coroner’s inquest is to inform the public about the circumstances surrounding the death(s) to learn from these situations and make recommendations for policy and program change. A jury verdict provides recommendations that are directed at organizations who are in the position to implement or influence change.

The verdict of the Chief Coroner’s Inquest consisted of 62 recommendations to various provincial ministries and organizations. PHS was assigned one recommendation, Number 57, along with The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, and Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre. The recommendation stated “In order to increase awareness of access to the Take Home Naloxone Program for inmates at discharge, provide the necessary resources to expand the training program delivered by Hamilton Public Health to include male inmates”.

The need for public health intervention in the inmate population is demonstrated by infectious disease data that shows that within Ontario detention centres the rate of HIV is eleven (11) times higher, and the rate of Hepatitis C is twenty two (22) times higher than that of the general population.² The inmate population also experiences an increased risk of overdose. This not only applies to the period of incarceration, but also upon release from prison due to having had a period of drug abstinence.³ This risk is highest immediately after release, however, this increased risk continues for a period of up to one year.

In 2017, an independent review of corrections in Ontario was released.⁴ This report addressed the issue of the complex health needs of the provincially incarcerated population. The report noted that health care in this population is largely reactive and was often falling below the standards of healthcare available in the community. This review emphasized that it is the right of incarcerated individuals to health care that is equitable to the services that are provided in the community. In May of 2018, The Correctional Services Reintegration Act was passed. It affirms the government’s obligation to provide equitable health care services and continuity of care with services provided in the community. This includes access to Public Health services.

Hamilton Public Health Services currently provides evidence-based, harm reduction education sessions to female inmates at the HWDC. The population of female inmates at HWDC varies between 50-60 persons. The sessions provided by PHS complement the work of HWDC with their Take Home Naloxone kit program by enhancing inmates' knowledge of resources that are available upon release from custody.

The work within HWDC on both the male and female side aligns with the program requirements outlined by the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS). Within PHS, the Harm Reduction and Mental Well-being team currently provides harm reduction programming and outreach clinical testing, needle exchange distribution and operates the community naloxone program to prevent the exposure to and limit the transmission of blood-borne infections throughout various organizations across Hamilton.

The male population of the HWDC is housed on three floors with three units on each floor. Each unit has two mini units of detainees. The volume of male inmates varies but is generally around 500-550 persons. A Public Health Nurse will be onsite every Thursday for 3.5 hours to provide three (3) one-hour sessions for within one of the units each week on the male occupied floor. This program expansion will be initiated within the current staffing complement. There will be no impact on the net levy for the addition of this service.

The provision of harm reduction education sessions at HWDC will be monitored and evaluated throughout the implementation period to inform continuous improvement and to assess the effectiveness of sessions to our priority populations. A process evaluation will be completed at three months to evaluate uptake and attendance of sessions as well as to assess the schedule of mini units that the Public Health Nurse is able to present at.

In closing, the program expansion to the male side of the HWDC is an important step in further expanding PHS reach to priority populations to continue to reduce the burdens associated with problematic substance use in our community.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report BOH19016: Response to the Jury Recommendations
HWDC Deaths Inquest Q2018-06

References

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3. Groot E, Kouyoumdjian FG, Kiefer L, Madadi P, Gross J, Prevost B, et al. (2016) Drug Toxicity Deaths after Release from Incarceration in Ontario, 2006-2013: Review of Coroner's Cases. PLoS ONE 11(7): e0157512. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0157512
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