

# SUBSTANCE USE HEALTH STRATEGY CONSULTATION: What We Heard





**In the summer of 2023**, the Substance Use Health Strategy committee surveyed people who have used or are using substances and their family members, friends, and caregivers. The committee’s objective was to seek input on concerns, gaps, barriers, and opportunities related to the harms associated with substance use in Cornwall and area. The survey also explored experiences related to drug poisonings (i.e., overdoses) and possible supports for caregivers.

<b>TOTAL RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>262</b>
People with lived or living substance use experience (PWLLE)	<b>61%</b>
Family members, friends, and caregivers (FFC)	<b>39%</b>

NOTE: Results are not generalizable at the population level.





## Concerns

Few respondents (**5%**) identified no concerns for themselves or the person in their life with living or lived substance use experience. However, over half of respondents identified multiple concerns, selecting most of the ones listed in the survey. Concerns selected most frequently were:

- Poor mental health (**81%**)
- Getting a disease, an injury, or dying from using drugs/substances (**72%**)
- Getting arrested or in trouble with the law (**67%**)

Among those with lived or living substance use experience, **not enough money** and **stigma attached to drug/substance use** were the fourth and fifth most selected concerns. However, among family members, friends, and caregivers, the fourth and fifth most selected concerns were **personal safety** and **no job/steady work**.





## Accessing Support

When asked about the level of ease/difficulty to get help with substance use for themselves or someone in their life in the past 12 months, **most respondents described the experience as difficult to very difficult (73%)**.

Most (**71%**) attributed the level of difficulty to **delays in getting into the program or service (e.g., wait lists)**. This was among the top three reasons identified by both FFC and PWLLE, regardless of the PWLLE's age, location, or the group(s) they identify with (i.e., 2LGBTQI+, Indigenous, person living with a mental illness or disability).

When asked what makes it easier to get support or services, respondents most often selected elements that describe quick, immediate, and local help (i.e., **walk-in service, same day support** and **available in community**). These were among the top five elements identified most frequently by both FFC and PWLLE, regardless of the PWLLE's location, age, or the group(s) they identify with.





## Gaps and Opportunities in Substance Use Health Services

When asked which services are missing in our community to prevent harms related to substance use, the most frequently selected service was **treatment/detox centers (71%)**, followed by **access to mental health services (67%)** and **housing/shelter (63%)**.

Respondents (n=57) shared examples of substance use services/programs/solutions from other communities as suggestions that could work locally. They include:

- Rehabilitation and Treatment Programs (26%)
- Shelter/Housing Support (26%)
- Safe Consumption Site (25%)
- Local Detox Centre (23%)
- Concurrent Mental Health Services (14%)



# Drug Overdose (Poisoning) Experience

Over one-third of respondents (35%) witnessed or experienced a drug overdose (poisoning) in the past year. They were asked:

**Was naloxone (Narcan) given to the person experiencing the overdose (poisoning)?**

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
71% (n=67)	15% (n=14)	12% (n=11)

The most frequently selected reason (n=6) for which naloxone (Narcan) was **NOT** given:

**“I DID NOT HAVE A KIT.”**

**Were emergency services called?**

TYPE OF RESPONDENT	YES	NO
People with lived or living substance use experience	54%	32%
Family members, friends, and caregivers	84%	13%

Of those who did **NOT** call emergency services (n=23), the most frequently selected reasons include:

- The person was treated with naloxone (Narcan) (39%, n=9)
- The person recovered on their own (39%, n=9)
- Feared getting into trouble with the law (30%, n=7)
- The person who overdosed was brought to the hospital (22%, n=5)





## Caregiver Support

The majority (82%) of FFC were not aware of support services for themselves. Approximately 42% of FFC that were not aware of caregiver support services are interested in accessing services.

When asked to identify gaps in caregiver support, many respondents suggested services and programs that would address the needs of the people in their lives who use or have used substances, rather than their own needs.

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