

## Media Release

***H.O.M.E Program Initial Results – The results of this preliminary evaluation demonstrated that the program reached individuals that do not otherwise access health and social services, improved health outcomes of clients served, and built a stronger continuum of care for those marginalized in our community.***

LONDON – Aug 12, 2021 – We are excited to share the results from a preliminary evaluation of the Health Outreach Mobile Engagement (H.O.M.E) Program. The H.O.M.E Program was launched in January 2021 to improve the health outcomes and health equity of highly marginalized individuals. Since the launch, the inter-disciplinary team has provided mobile health and social services at seven different sites throughout the City’s downtown core.

The H.O.M.E Program aims to engage individuals who face barriers to accessing traditional models of care and develop service provider capacity to overcome systemic barriers in providing harm reduction, stabilizing health care, and comprehensive care services. The impact of the pandemic exacerbated the opioid crisis and hit the community in ways no one could have ever imagined as restrictions caused further marginalization, isolation, and barriers to access care. As health and social service organizations closed their doors and our society shifted towards virtual interactions, those living on the streets were left completely alone.

*“The H.O.M.E Program extends our reach, especially during COVID. It aligns addiction [and harm reduction] work with health care services and is building/strengthening a continuum of care. Deaths and serious health impacts can be prevented or minimized, and [the program] can build trust for those who avoided care due to feeling unwelcome or poorly treated.” – Program Team Member*

The preliminary results show that between January 11, 2021 and May 31, 2021, the H.O.M.E Program served 500 unique individuals! According to feedback gathered from program team members, site partners, and service partners, the most significant impacts of the program on clients were improved access and decreased barriers to needed services, the development of greater trust in care services and reduced stigma, access to multiple supports in one location, timely access to care, and improved health outcomes.

Not only did the H.O.M.E Program impact the individuals served, but also service providers. Program team members, site partners, and service partners reflected the main benefits to their organizations included sharing of knowledge and experience, increased capacity for service coordination and system navigation, improved reach and accessibility of services, creating a shared culture of service, and the development of collaborative and supportive working relationships.

*“[Clients] expressed extreme gratitude about us being able to come to them directly or indirectly to provide for their health care needs. We have helped people avoid developing sepsis due to multiple infections, more severe illness due to proper wound care, and improved well-being due to sincere concern for their overall health. Safer Opioid Supply [a service provided as part of the H.O.M.E Program] has been instrumental in helping to prevent [overdose] death and severe illness from the contaminated street drug supply.” – Program Team Member*

An outdoor media event has been organized for Thursday, August 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. at the front of the Centre Branch YMCA, one of the sites that hosts the H.O.M.E Program, which is located at 382 Waterloo Street in London.

To learn more about the H.O.M.E Program, visit <https://www.homeprogram.ca/>

***To schedule an interview with Dr. Andrea Sereda (LIHC Physician) or Scott Courtice (Executive Director), please contact:***

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