

Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS)

Review (January to December 2020)



What was the impact of Consumption and Treatment Services in 2020?

The Consumption and Treatment Services site (CTS) at 150 Duke Street West in Kitchener has been open since October 2019. To understand the early impact of this site, Region of Waterloo Public Health staff analyzed data collected at the CTS for the first full year of operations (January to December 2020) related to client demographics, substances used and security needs. Public Health staff also spoke with 62 participants from key stakeholder groups including clients, the CTS staff, members of the Community Advisory Group, and community safety partners.

5,797

total visits to the CTS in 2020



averaging

15.8

visits per day

47%

of visits occurred between the hours of noon and 5 p.m.

858



different individuals accessed the site in 2020.

The majority of clients (60%) were **between the ages of 20 to 39.**

Only 1% of clients were younger than 20 years old.

62%

identified as male

24%

identified as female

1%

identified as trans or other gender

13%

of clients chose not to identify their gender

99%



of people injected their substance over ingesting or snorting.

Most clients used **crystal meth (45%)** or **fentanyl (37%)**. Staff observed opioid overdoses in clients regardless of whether the drug clients thought they were using was an opioid (fentanyl) or a stimulant (crystal meth).

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the number of clients seen at the CTS in 2020.

Average monthly visits in January to March (pre-pandemic)

764



389



Average monthly visits in April to December (during pandemic)

Security and emergency responses at the CTS

- The CTS staff responded to 188 overdoses in 2020. Only one overdose-related call to 9-1-1 was needed.



- There were **no overdose-related deaths** in the CTS.

- The CTS staff called 9-1-1 for other medical emergencies such as cardiac arrest, seizures, and mental health emergencies 11 times.



- In 2020, security intervention was only required 12 times in or outside the site. The CTS staff are trained to de-escalate emotionally charged situations and work with security staff if needed.



What was the impact of Consumption and Treatment Services in 2020?

Access to wrap around services

In 2020, the CTS provided on-site and off-site referrals including:

“ We see community members benefit in all areas of their well being from having a safe place to use substances ... engagement and knowledge of services available is amazing when clients are being supported in ways they never were prior.

– CTS staff member ”

Social services:
640 referrals



Mental health:
2060 referrals

Primary care:
506 referrals

Addiction treatment:
138 referrals

How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the CTS?

COVID-19 resulted in fewer people accessing the CTS in 2020 for the following reasons:



Fewer people could be in the building at one time to support physical distancing guidelines.



The number of consumption booths was **reduced by half**.



Changes to community services in response to the pandemic made it **difficult for clients to access** them (e.g. shift to virtual services, changes to hours of operation, changed service locations).



People experiencing homelessness were relocated to shelter spaces in other areas, making the trip to the CTS a challenge.



The CTS staff showed **resiliency, flexibility, and compassion** throughout the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

- All staff worked to address challenges that were rapidly changing and complex.
- Staff expressed deep concern for clients who are at increased risk of poor health outcomes should they contract COVID-19, and who also could not access services as easily as before the pandemic.



What did clients say about the CTS?

When asked about what is working well at the site, having strong relationships with staff, feeling safe and valued, and having access to health care came through in clients' responses:

So many people in the community won't even give eye contact but here it's different. You hear me. I feel I matter and what I have to say matters. I feel like I'm a person here."

"I know all the nurses and trust them with my life."

"They're helping me set my goals and reach them."

"The people who need these services are able to use safely and cleanly, out of the public eye."

"If it weren't for the CTS being opened, there would have been a lot more deaths due to accidental overdose."

When asked about what could be improved at the CTS, clients said:

- They'd like the site to be open 24 hours a day.
- They'd like to smoke substances at the site.
- They are concerned about others seeing them enter the site due to community stigma.



What feedback did the Community Advisory Group have about the CTS?

Members of the CTS Community Advisory Group include neighbours in close proximity to the site including City of Kitchener, Downtown Kitchener BIA, Kitchener Public Library, Wilfrid Laurier University, schools, child care centres, neighbourhood associations, nearby neighbours, and faith organizations.

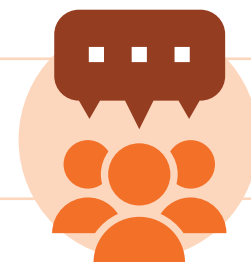
CTS Community Advisory Group survey results

80% of Community Advisory Group members agreed or strongly agreed that the CTS feels like part of the community. The remaining 20% neither agreed nor disagreed or chose not to respond.

90% agreed or strongly agreed the CTS and its partners are responsive to addressing concerns with the CTS and 10% chose not to respond.

When asked if the CTS has negatively impacted the community,

70% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remaining 30% neither agreed nor disagreed or chose not to respond.



Community Advisory Group members said **more CTS locations and more rehabilitation services are needed in Waterloo Region** to support people who use substances.

Community Safety Partner feedback

Community safety

Region of Waterloo Public Health and Sanguen Health Centre partner with the City of Kitchener, Waterloo Regional Police Service and Region of Waterloo security partners to support a collaborative and transparent approach to safety and security issues at the CTS.



When asked about the first year of operations, the following themes emerged:

- Extensive planning prior to opening of the site helped address many concerns about possible negative community impact.
- Developing positive relationships with clients has been a valuable and compassionate approach leading to fewer onsite issues.
- Regular and collaborative problem solving among safety and security partners has been very helpful in proactively addressing issues.

“ There haven't been significant issues. They've worked well in the community. We haven't had the doom and gloom that I think was initially envisioned when we were first bringing a CTS site.

– safety and security stakeholder ”

“ The assumption for the neighbourhood originally is that there would be call after call and resources would be dragged down and used specifically for that site. It was actually the opposite of that ... if you do it properly, plan properly, this is the result.

– safety and security stakeholder ”

Conclusion

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the CTS has been well received. It has been successful in supporting clients to use substances safely, and reversing potentially fatal overdoses, while increasing access to multiple services. Although there were concerns the site would have a negative impact on the community, feedback and data has shown concerns related to the site have been minimal and the site has not required significant policing or security staff attention. Problem solving among partners remains ongoing to proactively address concerns should they arise.

We would like to thank all research participants, including the staff of the CTS whose compassion and expertise has created a welcoming and safe health care environment for people at risk of overdose; and the clients who were willing to share their thoughts about having the CTS available to them. We would also like to thank Waterloo Regional Police Service and other safety partners for their ongoing support and participation in this work. Finally, we are grateful for members of the Community Advisory Group who have made a significant contribution to the operation of the site and its fit with the surrounding community.

For more information call 519-575-4400, visit regionofwaterloo.ca/ph or email CTS@regionofwaterloo.ca. To request an alternate format of this document, call 519-575-4400 or TTY: 519-575-4608.