 <p>Regional HIV/AIDS Connection</p>	<p>Title: <b>SAFE SUPPLY POSITION STATEMENT</b></p>	<p>Policy Number: AD Prin - 1017 Page 1 of 2</p>
	<p>Category: Administrative Position Statements</p>	<p><b>Original:</b> November 2020 <b>Revised:</b> <b>Replace:</b></p>
	<p>Approved by: Board of Directors</p>	

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC) is an evidence-informed agency committed to harm reduction practices that positively impact those living with, at risk for, or affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. It is with this mission we strongly support the advancement of safe supply programs across London and all communities.

“In 2018 there were 67,367 drug overdose deaths in the United States, and since 2016, there have been more than 14,700 overdose deaths in Canada, with most related to fentanyl”.<sup>1</sup> These deaths could have been prevented through the reduction of the toxic drug supply flooding our community.

London continues to be a leader in addressing the opioid pandemic with successful trials of the Safer Supply program at London Intercommunity Health Centre. Review of their internal data from 2016-2019 showed, “there were no fatal overdoses in the group, and participants have made gains in health and social functioning”.<sup>2</sup>

Continuing the development of opioid distribution programs like safe supply along with other harm reduction measures such as *Carepoint*- London’s supervised consumption facility, naloxone distribution, and needle exchange programs can reduce risk. These programs are vitally important for people who inject drugs, who are increasingly living with, at risk for and affected by HIV/AIDS and Hep C.<sup>3</sup>


The Canadian Association for People who Use Drugs defines safe supply as “a legal and regulated supply of drugs with mind/body altering properties that traditionally have been accessible only through the illicit drug market.”<sup>4</sup> It is not a substitution agonist therapy such as methadone and buprenorphine/suboxone.

<sup>1</sup> Ivsins, Andrew et al. “Tackling the overdose crisis: The role of safe supply.” *The International journal on drug policy* vol. 80 (2020): 102769. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7252037/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7252037/). Accessed 2 October 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Rapid Response Service. “Possible benefits of providing safe supply of substances to people who use drugs during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.” Toronto, ON: *Ontario HIV Treatment Network* (April 2020). [www.ohntn.on.ca/rapid-response-possible-benefits-of-providing-safe-supply-of-substances-to-people-who-use-drugs-during-public-health-emergencies-such-as-the-covid-19-pandemic/](http://www.ohntn.on.ca/rapid-response-possible-benefits-of-providing-safe-supply-of-substances-to-people-who-use-drugs-during-public-health-emergencies-such-as-the-covid-19-pandemic/). Accessed 1 October 2020.

<sup>3</sup> “HIV outbreak among PWID, Opioid prescribing.” *Middlesex London Health Unit* (16 June 2016). [www.healthunit.com/blog/hiv-outbreak-among-pwid-opioid-prescribing](http://www.healthunit.com/blog/hiv-outbreak-among-pwid-opioid-prescribing). Accessed 5 October 2020.

<sup>4</sup> “Safe Supply Concept Document.” Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs (February 2019, pg. 4). [www.capud.ca/sites/default/files/2019-03/CAPUD%20safe%20supply%20English%20March%203%202019.pdf](http://www.capud.ca/sites/default/files/2019-03/CAPUD%20safe%20supply%20English%20March%203%202019.pdf). Accessed 1 October 2020.

	<b>Title: SAFE SUPPLY POSITION STATEMENT</b>	Policy Number: AD Prin - 1017 Page 2 of 2
	Category: Administrative Position Statements	<b>Original:</b> November 2020 <b>Revised:</b> <b>Replace:</b>
	Approved by: Board of Directors	

These therapies do not contain the alteration of mind/body that is desired with recreational substances.<sup>5</sup> It is providing a pharmaceutical grade alternative to replace a contaminated supply off the street with a known dose and potency.<sup>6</sup>

Safe supply is for those at risk for overdose and other complications of drug use such as infection. It is an acknowledgement that people who depend on substances are given a prescription for these as part of their health care and is a life saving essential service.<sup>7</sup> With a prescription for legal and regulated opioids, individuals are not searching for substances to stay well which can reduce crimes and criminalization associated with drug use. This in turn allows a more focused approach to finding housing, positive health outcomes in those affected by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and other chronic medical conditions. It also allows women involved with survival sex trade to make safer choices with their work.<sup>8</sup> In summary, broader social determinants of health can now be addressed that can lead to stabilization and positive outcomes in one's life.

The response to the Covid-19 pandemic has shown how quickly our governments and our communities can come together in life-threatening situations. We ask that the same response be given to the ongoing opioid pandemic affecting those most vulnerable in our communities. Safe supply offers an evidence-based response that can reverse the increasing trend of opioid overdose deaths and other substance-related harms.

Given all these variables, we, the Board of Directors at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, strongly urge all levels of government to expand access to safe supply in Ontario demonstrating the courage to do what is right for those in need of support in our communities.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Zanbergen, Rebecca. "5 ways this doctor says prescribing opioids to drugs users can help." *CBC*. [www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/prescribing-opioids-to-drug-users-1.5351329](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/prescribing-opioids-to-drug-users-1.5351329). Accessed 5 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Bonn, Matthew. "Now more than ever, we need a safe supply of drugs." *CATIE*. April 21, 2020. [www.blog.catie.ca/2020/04/21/now-more-than-ever-we-need-a-safe-supply-of-drugs/](http://www.blog.catie.ca/2020/04/21/now-more-than-ever-we-need-a-safe-supply-of-drugs/). Accessed 2 October 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Zanbergen, Rebecca. "5 ways this doctor says prescribing opioids to drugs users can help." *CBC*. [www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/prescribing-opioids-to-drug-users-1.5351329](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/prescribing-opioids-to-drug-users-1.5351329). Accessed 5 October 2020.