



Drug Strategy

Introduction

Reflecting the Mission of the Waterloo Regional Police Service, the Drugs & Firearms Unit is committed to a leadership role in crime prevention through drug and firearm enforcement and education initiatives while maintaining community partnerships to improve safety and quality of life for all people.

The 2018 to 2020 Operations Plan calls for the development and implementation of a police specific drug strategy that addresses harm reduction and enforcement and complements the Waterloo Region Integrated Drug Strategy (WRIDS).

Overview

Ontario is experiencing a public health crisis involving a drug overdose epidemic. This epidemic continues to harm our communities, demanding the development of a police specific Drug Strategy and cooperation between public health agencies and law enforcement in order to tackle the crisis.

This Drug Strategy will balance harm reduction strategies with investigation and enforcement as is reflected in the Drugs & Firearms Unit Mission Statement and the overall Mission of the Waterloo Regional Police Service. Potential harm reduction strategies will be presented along with currently implemented approaches and future initiatives.

It has been identified that victims and potential victims of the drug crisis need access to treatment and that frontline officers are in a position to create a “Pathway to Care”. Frontline and Community Resource Officers are able to develop relationships in neighbourhoods impacted by problematic drug use and overdoses through the use of strategic data collection and knowledge of their patrol zones. Through these relationships, targeted enforcement, introduction to treatment, and deployment of resources can be balanced.

The Waterloo Region Integrated Drug Strategy (WRIDS), brings together stakeholders from across the Region, emergency services, public health, social services, harm reduction advocates and more to work on a collaborative approach to address addiction and overdoses within Waterloo Region. The Waterloo Regional Police Service is proud to be an active member of the WRIDS.

The WRIDS supports all harm reduction programs including Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services (SCTS), however, we recognize that SCTS alone is not the answer. This strategy will outline our approach to drug addiction and enforcement in our Region.

There are 4 pillars of the WRIDS that include:

- Prevention
- Harm Reduction
- Recovery and Rehabilitation
- Enforcement and Justice.

Our Service not only supports the Enforcement and Justice pillar, but all pillars of the WRIDS as we work towards its success. This strategy outlines how we currently contribute to the WRIDS and how we can enhance our support into the future under the pillars of harm reduction and enforcement and justice.

Harm Reduction

The Drugs & Firearms Unit of the Waterloo Regional Police Service is dedicated to stakeholder committee involvement and members of the Unit actively participate on several community committees including the WRIDS Steering Committee and sub-committees including the Harm Reduction sub-committee of the WRIDS.

- The Waterloo Regional Police Service will continue to promote and support the Harm Reduction pillar of WRIDS through frontline officers carrying Naloxone and the implementation and education of the Good Samaritan Act.
- The Waterloo Regional Police Service will also continue to promote and support the harm reduction strategies of needle syringe programs, overdose awareness day, and the implementation of supervised consumption and treatment services in our Region as a collaborative effort towards harm reduction.
- Evidence has indicated that tolerance to controlled substances decreases while individuals are incarcerated and there is a higher risk of overdose if they resume pre-incarceration level use of controlled substances.

In support of the Prevention pillar of the WRIDS, the police service will develop a pilot program with our WRIDS Community and Justice partners to provide Naloxone and harm reduction kits to at risk individuals upon their release from the Waterloo Region Consolidated Courthouse.

These individuals will also be offered information on Supervised Consumption and Treatment Centers available within the Region as well as information on Rapid Access Addiction Treatment options.

- WRPS Community Resource Officers will continue to work with the Situation Tables to bring individuals suffering from addiction who require the coordinated, multi-faceted approach to these Tables for supports.
- Our frontline officers are often the first response to an overdose. The first 12 to 24 hours following an overdose is a critical time for intervention. The Drugs & Firearms Unit will work with our partners of the WRIDS to develop an information pamphlet detailing overdose information, education and access to treatment as well as information on Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services within our Region.

This pamphlet will be carried by frontline officers and possibly IMPACT workers and provided to the victims of overdose and their families. These pamphlets could be available at the front desk of all divisions and Headquarters as well as at paramedic, fire stations and local hospitals, thus providing consistent messaging and information.

Enforcement and Justice

The Drugs & Firearms Unit of the Waterloo Regional Police Service is dedicated to stakeholder committee involvement and members of the Unit actively participate on several community committees including the WRIDS Steering Committee and sub-committees including the Enforcement and Justice sub-committee of the WRIDS.

- The WRPS Drugs & Firearms Unit and CORE teams will focus their drug enforcement activities on drug traffickers. We recognize that traffickers are preying on the addictions of persons who use drugs. This is an important part of ensuring public safety that only the WRPS can add to the collective efforts of the WRIDS.
- In partnership with the Crime Analysis Unit and the Criminal Intelligence Unit the selection of targets is based on the development of a priority target matrix created by the Drugs & Firearms analyst. The WRPS Drugs and Firearms Unit will continue target selection using the analysis of intelligence and prioritization based on the most significant threats to community safety based on volume and type of drugs being trafficked and linkages to overdoses.
- The Drugs and Firearms unit will work with Patrol Divisions to ensure that as Supervised Consumption and Treatment Service sites are implemented within our Region there will be NO “safe zone” or “police-free zone” around these sites.

Police presence will be regular and constant in all areas surrounding these sites. Police will not be targeting persons travelling to use the services at these sites, however, any public use of drugs or drug trafficking at any level near these sites or anywhere in our Region will be met with zero tolerance.

- Public use of drugs creates many public safety risks to the general public, the user and the police. The Drugs and Firearms Unit will ensure education so that officers can use all legal authorities to arrest persons engaging in this activity and assess whether laying criminal charges is in the best interest of the individual or the public.

They will be subject to search and records checks to identify any other crimes. The decision to charge persons arrested for public drug consumption will still be at the discretion of the officer and considerations such as public safety, best interests of the arrested person (Drug Treatment Court) and demeanor of the subject will all be taken into account.

- The Waterloo Regional Police Service supports the Waterloo Region Drug Treatment Court as a positive avenue to create a “pathway to care.” Officers laying simple possession charges on persons believed to be suffering from addiction will always make a recommendation the person be considered for this option.