



News Release

Monday, June 28, 2021
For Immediate Release

Open-Air Drop-in Program Opens at Shepherds of Good Hope

Shepherds of Good Hope (SGH) is pleased to partner with Ottawa Inner City Health (OICH) and the City of Ottawa to provide an Open-Air Drop-in Program for people experiencing homelessness in Ottawa.

The COVID pandemic has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of people seeking shelter services, a deterioration in mental health and an increase in use of toxic illicit drugs in the homeless community. These realities in combination with reductions in service capacity due to COVID measures have negatively impacted people experiencing homelessness and the surrounding community. As we begin our pandemic recovery, we recognize the need to offer services to people where they are, which in absence of a full day indoor drop in program to accommodate a large number of people, is outdoors during the summer months and into the fall. By providing these services, we can engage people in their personal recovery more effectively.

The program will operate from Monday June 28 to the end of October in the parking lot at 233 Murray Street, welcoming people from 8 am to 11 pm. In addition to providing a welcoming space for people who use our services, the drop in will be supported by an interdisciplinary team comprised of peers, social workers, addictions counselors, doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and psychiatry.

The program will operate in addition to the existing meal service, evening drop in and health care programs for people experiencing homelessness. It will complement existing street outreach services from OICH and the Salvation Army by providing a place for people to go and access support during the day and evening as an alternative to the streets. This enhanced capacity to address issues surrounding homelessness will support the Byward Market and Lowertown community.

Quotes:

“This drop-in program addresses a desperate need in our community. People experiencing homelessness have almost nowhere to go during the day and evening where they can feel welcome, and access supports. During the pandemic, the

homelessness service sector in Ottawa has come together like never before. We are pleased to continue these strong partnerships to serve our community better. We are grateful to the City of Ottawa for supporting these much needed resources for people who are living with mental health challenges, substance use disorders and trauma.”

-Deirdre Freiheit, President and CEO, Shepherds of Good Hope

“The pandemic has had such a negative impact on the mental health of people experiencing homelessness. The illicit drug supply has never been so toxic. We recognize that existing services will never have the capacity to restore our community to the pre-pandemic state. We are grateful to have the support of our partners and community so we can bring treatment and care directly to those who are experiencing unbearable suffering. Pandemic recovery must include everyone if it is to succeed.”

-Wendy Muckle, CEO, Ottawa Inner City Health, Inc.

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