REDUCTION

SOS GUIDE

HARM

A Guide to Using Information Sharing Tools to Support Harm Reduction

PREAMBLE

This report has been led, informed and compiled by and for people who use drugs (PWUD). The project received the support of Human Health Factors (HHF) for collaborative intervention design and the input of Public Health Ontario (PHO) on evidence-based harm reduction strategies. During the project, we created a non-judgmental space for dialogue about the current realities of PWUD. We acknowledged a continuum of use and reasons for drug use, multiple intersecting areas of discrimination and inequity, and escalating grief and loss during the drug toxicity crisis.

The content reflects the voice of community members as a primary focus, and shares candid and valuable perspectives within the context of drug use in Ontario. This approach recognizes the need for meaningfully engaging, listening, and responding to the voices of PWUD in creating programs and policies intended to serve them.

The vision for an information-sharing platform is intended to empower PWUD to share information and supports that meet their needs. Such a platform is a promising approach that will need to be further evaluated to understand potential benefits and mitigate unintended harms.

Keeping in mind that people who use drugs come from a wide range of perspectives, we aimed to present this guide remaining true to the voices of community members involved. This guide holds significant value in its commitment to engaging PWUD as key collaborators in enhancing current information-sharing practices. While originally designed to inform the development of an information-sharing platform, it serves as a promising foundation for exploring innovative approaches that align with the specific needs and aspirations of PWUD.

CON-TENTS

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

We set out to redesign drug safety alerts, but soon realized that if safety was our goal, we needed to look at the problem through a wider lens. This brought our focus to creating ways for PWUD to quickly share information about their broader experiences with drugs, as well as the safety of the services they use.

WHAT DOES SAFETY MEAN?

Public health alerts for substance use-related harm (SRH) were created to support the health and safety of people who use drugs (PWUD). The original intent was for these systems to help reduce the rate of accidental overdoses and drug poisonings, but many communities feel that these alerts haven't met their needs. At the start of this project, we aimed to engage with PWUD in Ontario to learn more about how they want SRH alerts to change. We quickly learned that people don't find these alerts helpful because drug toxicity is only one very small part of the information that they need to stay safe and maintain their quality of life.

In general, PWUD don't like that public conversations about drug safety usually focus on how to keep people safe from drugs — a mindset where drugs are inherently bad. Most people that we spoke with wanted us to know that they experience both good and bad impacts from using substances and want to be supported in staying as safe as possible, while also being allowed to make their own choices — also known as a harm-reduction mindset. For PWUD, safety is not just about drugs, it also includes safety from the many harms imposed on their lives by policies that lead to gaps in services, stigmatization, and criminalization.

Participants in this project focused on 2 key types of information that they feel are most important to share more freely and rapidly:

WHAT DRUGS ARE CIRCULATING IN THE COMMUNITY?

This includes detailed information about which drugs are leading to good, bad, expected, or unexpected experiences for PWUD.

WHAT COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF PWUD?

This includes which services are more easy or more difficult to access; as well as which ones are leading to good, bad, safe, unsafe, welcoming, or un-welcoming experiences for PWUD.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THIS PROJECT WAS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF PWUD.

WHAT HAS MADE INFORMATION SHARING SO HARD?

Community members have noted that criminalization and stigmatization have both: blocked PWUD from being able to safely share information publicly and have made it unsafe for PWUD to openly seek out information from others.

We heard that PWUD have always discreetly shared information (often at great risk to themselves) within their personal networks. However, there are practical limits to personal communication and there are many people across the province who lack connections to other PWUD.

While some community organizations who work closely with PWUD make an effort to gather and share this infor-mation locally, they don't have formal systems or resources in place to help spread information quickly to PWUD in other communities. There are also no opportunities for PWUD, or for harm reduction organizations in Ontario, to share real-time updates about this information with public health organizations, institutions, or policy makers — and monthly or quarterly reports are not specific enough, or fast enough to respond to the rapid changes at the community level.

Due to the many harms that continue to be imposed on PWUD including increasing drug toxicity, stigmatization, and criminalization; we need safe information sharing tools to help people to reduce harm while PWUD and their allies continue to advocate for change.

WHERE DID WE END UP?

In this project, PWUD imagined possible tools to support the safe, open, and unstigmatized sharing of information related to their needs. We considered how to make it easier for adjacent communities to predict what changes might be coming to their local drug supply based on regional activity. Finally, we developed strategies to encourage diversity and include people who are isolated or live in rural or remote communities across the province of Ontario.

The ultimate goal of this project was to improve the health and well-being of PWUD by: creating safer spaces for PWUD to share information on their own terms, increasing public visibility for the real-life experiences of PWUD, providing PWUD with the information they need to make their own informed choices, encouraging other groups and jurisdictions to support this cause, and advocating for all organizations that impact PWUD to take actions to listen to and learn directly from this community.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE?

In this section, we discuss what you might get from reading this guide and who was involved in its creation. We also explain how we went about gathering information and set some expectations about the benefits and limitations of the methods we used.

WHAT WILL YOU FIND INSIDE?

This guide explores the ways in which information sharing can support harm reduction. The tools and strategies within were designed by PWUD for PWUD. We hope that the ideas in this guide will make it safer for PWUD to share information and to navigate the services and resources around them.

WHO HELPED CREATE IT?

This content was developed by and for people who use drugs (PWUD). The project received the support of Human Health Factors (HHF) for collaborative intervention design and the input of Public Health Ontario (PHO) on evidence-based harm reduction strategies. The findings were co-designed by a diverse group of PWUD, relying on their lived experience; professional experience in a variety of roles and organizations; as well as their long-term engagement with communities and organizations across Ontario.

Thank you to everyone who so openly shared their knowledge, expertise, experiences, and future goals to help make this guide a reality.

As a province-wide collaborative, we want to acknowledge that this project is made possible through the lands and waters that sustain our lives. These lands are part of the traditional and unceded territories of various Indigenous peoples[1]. We also acknowledge that Indigenous communities have fought against and been impacted by colonization, criminalization, anddiscrimination from the beginning of colonial Canada.

In alignment with the priorities of truth and reconciliation, we strive with this project to develop strategies that support intersectional needs, such as: equitable access to resources; improved health of rural and remote communities; increased body autonomy; the lifting of stigma; and upholding of human rights[2].

This work was made possible with financial support from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Substance-Related Harms Division. The views contained in this guide are not necessarily reflective of those of the funders.

[1] visit **https://native-land.ca** for more information
[2] visit **https://nctr.ca** for more information

NOTHING
ABOUT
US WITH-
OUT US.

WHAT WAS OUR PROCESS LIKE?

Following a "nothing about us without us" mindset, we used co-design to ensure that people with lived/living experience (PWLLE) led the project towards its goals.

We started with in-depth interviews led by PWLLE, where we interviewed PWUD in a variety of communities across the province to better understand the root causes of the problems with existing SRH alerts. We also spoke with people who use SRH data in their jobs to better understand how this information flows between organizations.

We then held 3 workshops to imagine the features of an information sharing tool that would better serve the needs of PWUD and to develop strategies for its success. Finally, this guide was written and revised with the input of all of stakeholders including the people who participated in our workshops.

Each step we took was driven by PWLLE, from interviews to insights; including our process, the questions we aimed to answer, and our eventual insights. We used qualitative methods that are best suited for understanding people's stories, experiences, and perspectives. The insights in this guide reflect what our collaborators feel would have the biggest impact on their well-being based on their lived experience. We hope that future work will be able to pilot or implement tools like this to measure their outcomes on the well-being of PWUD.

WHO WAS THIS MADE FOR?

This guide was made with three groups in mind:

People who use (or have used) drugs, including anyone with lived or living experience.

We hope that this guide will help give you a sense of what happened in this project and why. As a person who could be impacted by future information sharing tools for PWUD, we welcome any thoughts or feedback about how your perspectives are similar or different from what we talk about here.

People who work in organizations that serve, or collaborate closely with PWUD.

This includes community workers, harm reduction workers, and other employees or volunteers. We hope that this guide will help support your understanding of the needs of the communities you work with, and to see opportunities where your organizations could help to facilitate information sharing as a harm reduction strategy. We also welcome your perspectives on whether these insights align with your organizational goals.
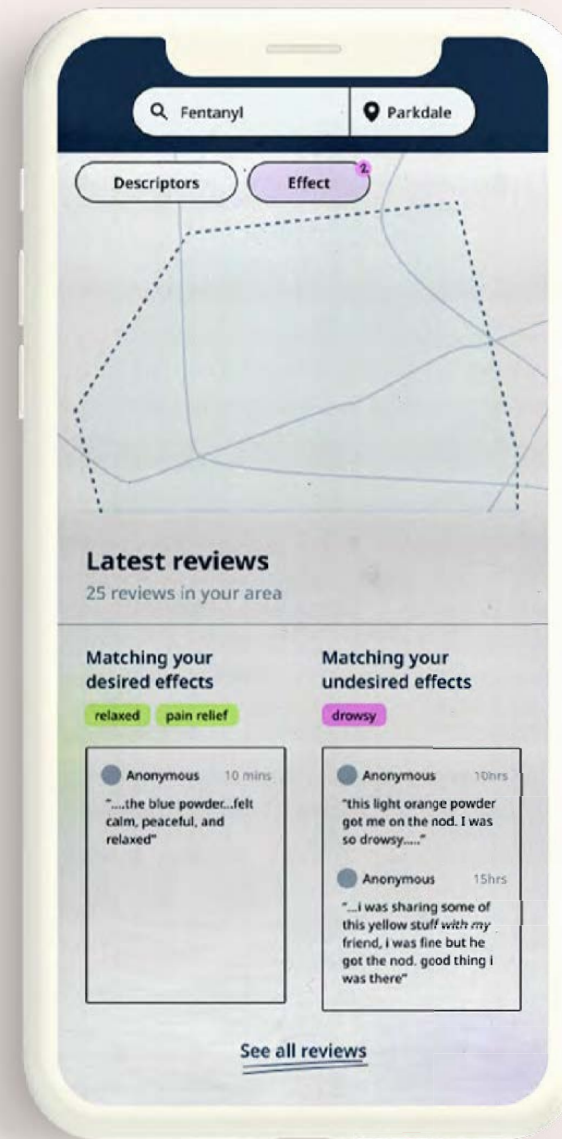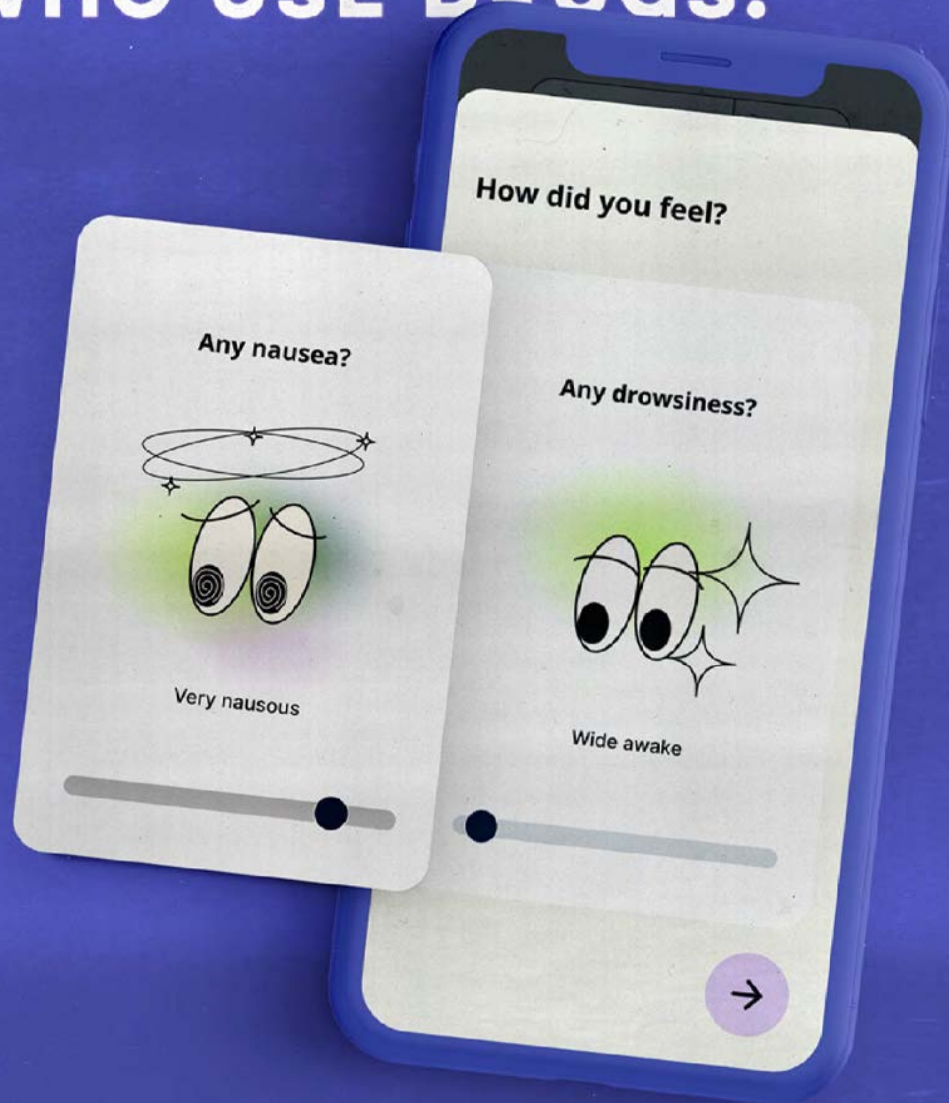
People who work in non community-facing roles that impact PWUD.

This includes policy makers, drug strategy coordinators, program managers and leaders. We hope that this document will help you to consider what institutional or governmental policy shifts would be required to support the safe and unstigmatized sharing of information to improve public health and well-being.

Please contact **substanceuse@oahpp.ca** with any questions or concerns you have about this guide.

PART 1

STATS ON THE STREETS (SOS) IS A CONCEPT ENVISIONED BY PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS.

How did you feel?

Any nausea?

Very nausous

Any drowsiness?

Wide awake

SOS aims to **inform, build resources,** and **keep community connected** using an online platform.

Fentanyl   Parkdale

Descriptors   Effect

Latest reviews
25 reviews in your area

Matching your desired effects
relaxed   pain relief

Matching your undesired effects
drowsy

Anonymous   10 mins
"....the blue powder...felt calm, peaceful, and relaxed"

Anonymous   10hrs
"this light orange powder got me on the nod. I was so drowsy....."

Anonymous   15hrs
"...i was sharing some of this yellow stuff *with my* friend, i was fine but he got the nod. good thing i was there"

See all reviews

HOW COULD THIS SERVICE WORK?

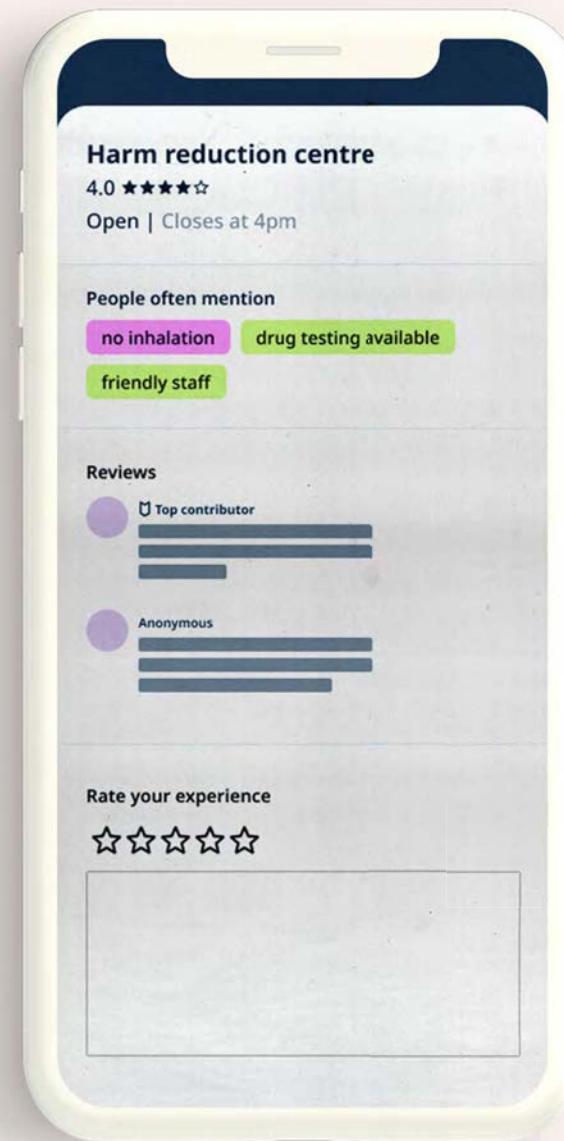## FIND OUT HOW PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING DRUGS IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

/01

/ See what batches of drugs people are talking about in your area
e.g. crack cocaine in a local neighbourhood

/ Read reviews about what effects people have been feeling, and whether people liked or disliked their experience
e.g. some people don't want to feel drowsy

/ Make informed choices based on important background information
e.g. the reviewer also inhales fentanyl and has a very high tolerance right now

/ Set up notifications for any new information that matters to you

LEARN ABOUT LOCAL SERVICES

/ Use SOS to locate services in your area that support the needs of PWUD
  e.g. consumption sites, shelters, harm reduction kit pickup locations

/ See the services they offer, and the hours of operation to determine what is available to you right now

/ Learn about features of the service that might affect PWUD
  e.g. you're not allowed to bring kits upstairs or there are specific beds reserved for people leaving prison
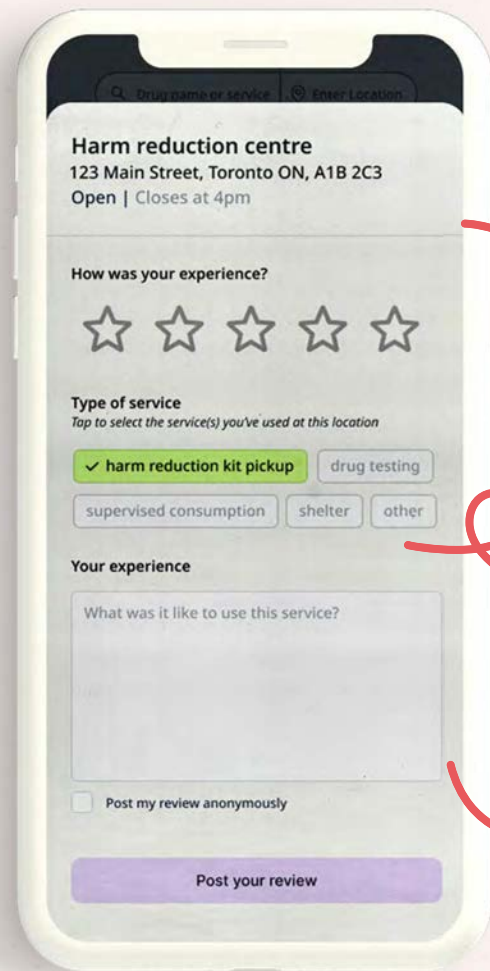
/ Read reviews of the service written by PWUD

/02

Harm reduction centre
4.0 ★★★★☆
Open | Closes at 4pm

People often mention
no inhalation   drug testing available
friendly staff

Reviews
🛡 Top contributor

Anonymous
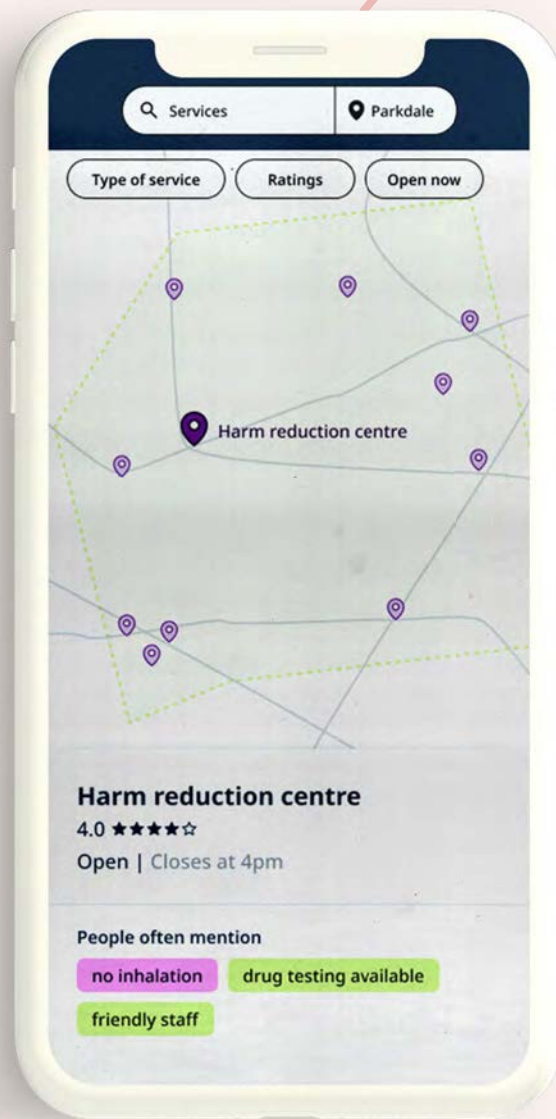
Rate your experience
☆☆☆☆☆

/03

CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR COMMUNITY

/ Share your own experiences with drugs to help other PWUD

/ Comment on other peoples' experiences if you had a similar or different experience

/ Leave reviews for services that you used

Phone screen (left)

🔍 Services   📍 Parkdale

Type of service   Ratings   Open now

Harm reduction centre

Harm reduction centre
4.0 ★★★★☆
Open | Closes at 4pm

People often mention
no inhalation   drug testing available
friendly staff

HOW WOULD REVIEWS WORK?

FOR DRUGS:
Street name of the drug, photo, and physical description - *This can include colour, smell, taste, texture, how it changes when drug is prepared*
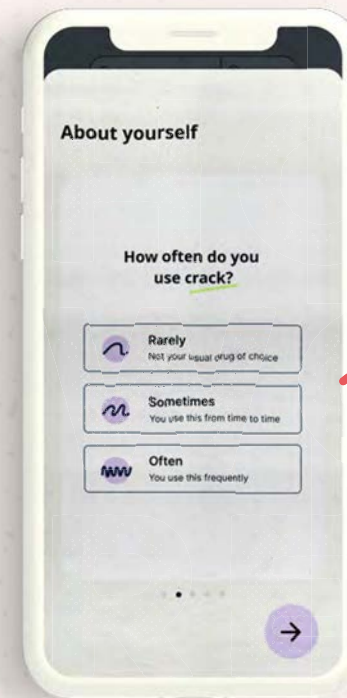
FOR SERVICES:
Name and location of the organization

Which services were used during your visit?
e.g. drug testing, services, supervised consumption, shelter, etc.

What was the experience like for you?
e.g. was the service easy to find, were there special requirements, how safe did you feel, etc.

Personal information
Tolerance for this drug, Personal effect preferences, Personal reasons for use

Any additional context
This can include if any other substances were taken together, the amount used, method of use & effects of the drug

WHAT VALUES SHOULD IT BE BUILT ON?

GET INFO OUT FAST
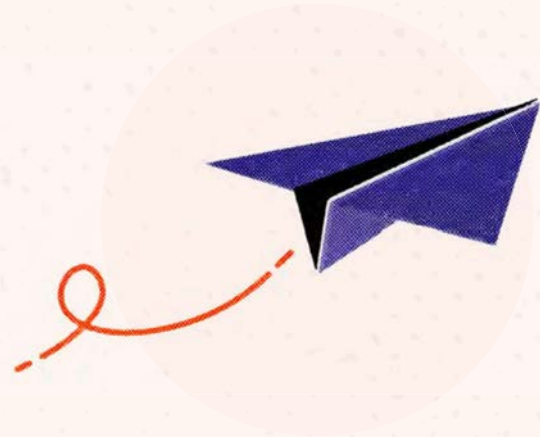
BY PWUD FOR PWUD

KEEP PEOPLE ANONYMOUS
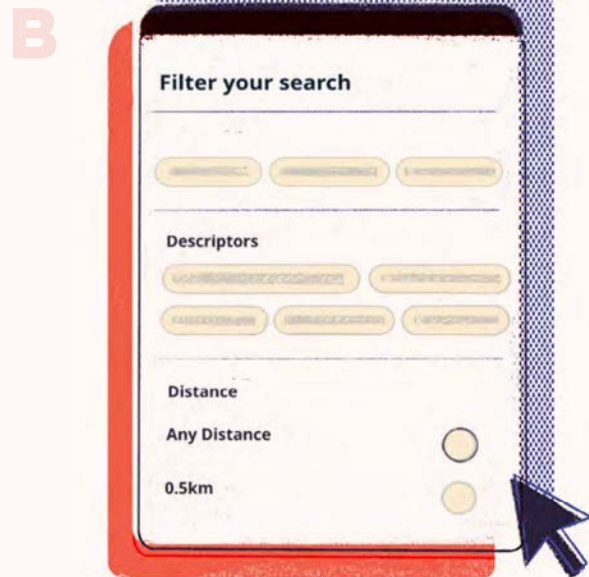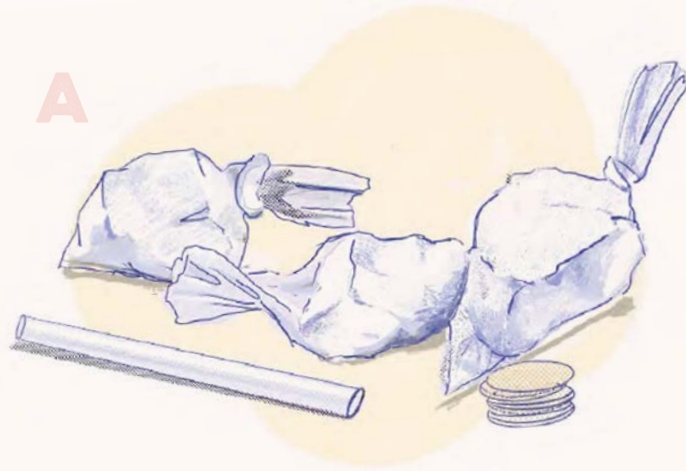
Anonymous

PROTECT PEOPLE FROM HARM

**QUICK AND EASY TO USE**

FIT WITHIN DRUG CULTURE

Scenario 1:
INFORMED DECISION MAKING

You're planning to look for crack, but you want to know more about what's happening in the area before getting in touch with any contacts. You open SOS and it shows you what's nearby.

SOS alerts you that there have been several new reports of crack in your area causing people to grit their teeth, and some people think it might be mixed with speed. Even though there are people who really like this mix, it would make you feel uncomfortable. There are some images of the crack you want to avoid, but it looks just like any other batch. Visuals aren't going to be enough to help you in this case.

Filter your search

Descriptors

Distance

Any Distance

0.5km

You've set up SOS to only show you things sold as crack. It already knows that you are concerned about jaw clenching and damage to your teeth, so it highlights reviews that mention this as a side effect and warns you to avoid crack mixed with stimulants.
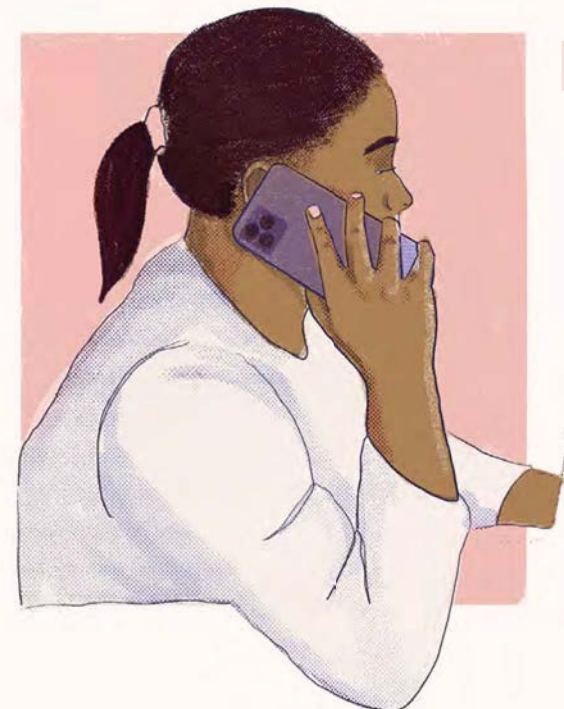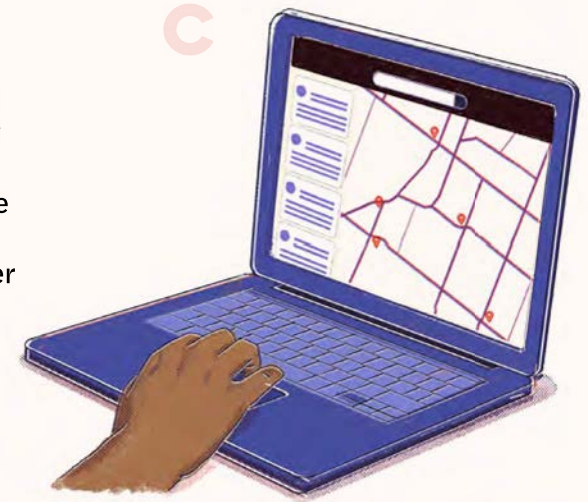
Luckily, you find that in another nearby area the recent reviews have been showing the effects you're looking for. Based on the neighborhood you're able to figure out a contact who can help you access that supply. This doesn't mean that what you buy is guaranteed to be safe, but it's a first step to helping you to understand your options.

Scenario 2:
PLANNING FOR SAFER SUBSTANCE USE

Your friend shared some fentanyl with you. It came wrapped in a flap made from a lottery ticket and the colour of the powder looks a little different from what you're used to. The person who sold it to your friend told them it's something new that they just got yesterday.

There aren't any reviews from your area, but there are some posts from a nearby city from last week. It seems like a lot of experienced people with very high tolerances have been having close calls with this new stuff. This could be risky for you because you haven't used that much recently.
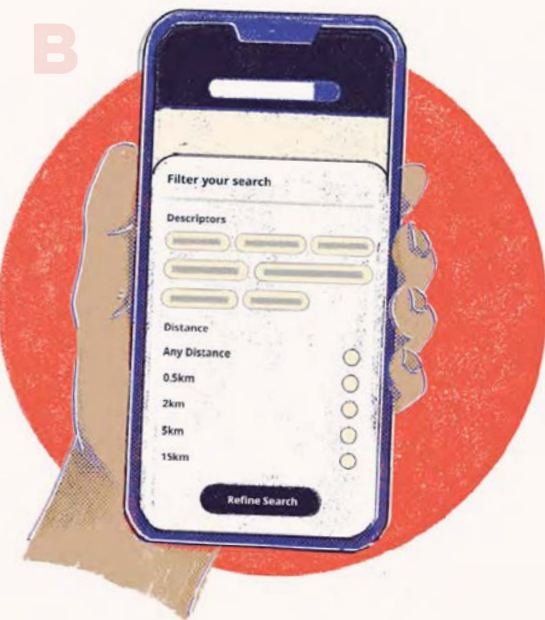
You're not sure what to expect, so you open SOS and search for what you have with some info about: the area where it was sold, how it was packaged, and what it looks like. It's easy to enter in the information and the tool shows you all the areas where similar things have been reviewed.

You warn your friend about what you read and you make a plan to 'spot' for each other and go very slow. You make sure to have naloxone ready to stay as safe as possible.

Scenario 3:
SHARING YOUR OWN DRUG EXPERIENCES

You have been using SOS for a few months and the information from the community has been helping you feel more aware of your options. You learn about some 'down' from a friend and notice that most people have been sharing good experiences about it on SOS, but those people are listed as having a higher tolerance and years of experience.

You set up an anonymous profile so that people can know a bit about you. You share things like your experience level, your health conditions, and the drug effects that you like and dislike. You then enter your review of the fentanyl you took and share it with the community.
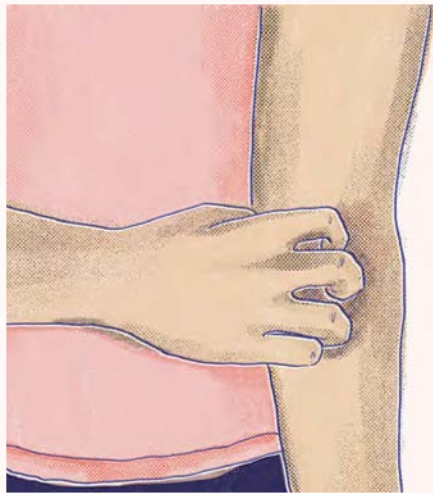
You know from warnings on SOS that you shouldn't assume that you will feel the same effects as someone else. You're also newer to fentanyl so you know to be careful. But when you try this batch, it's different from what you expected. You have some moments where it feels hard to breathe and after use, you get a rash at the injection site. You decide to use SOS to share your experience with others.

By sharing your experience, other people like you can get a sense of how your experiences might be similar to, or different from theirs. Your reviews help fill in the gaps in the community's knowledge, building a more complete picture of how local substances are affecting people.

Scenario 4:
NAVIGATING LOCAL SERVICES

A

You are looking for a supervised consumption site, but have had trouble in the past finding a space that allows inhalation and smoking. You prefer inhalation and having a cigarette is an important part of how you prepare to use. Local sites are also only open until 4pm, which doesn't align with your work schedule.

C
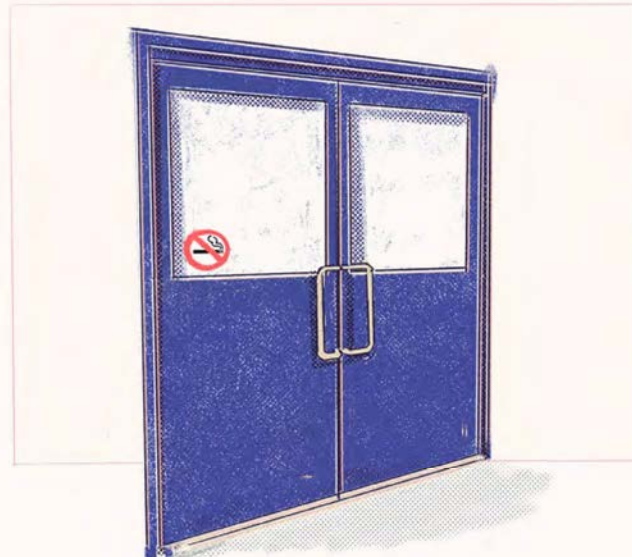
The official supervised consumption sites in your area don't match the criteria that you're looking for, but you find a community-run pop-up that is happening in town. The pop-up is unsanctioned, but it meets all the other criteria that matter to you.

B

You use SOS to look up all the supervised consumption services in your region. You can filter them by what matters most to you, so you filter for inhalation, allows smoking, and evening hours.

D

SOS provides you with the information you need to prepare for your visit. It shows that the service is run by PWUD and that there is no pressure to enter any abstinence programs if you aren't interested. It's clear what the rules are; what tools are provided and which ones you have to bring yourself; and it gives you a warning that the pop-up is outdoors so it's important to dress warmly.

BUILDING AWARENESS

For this tool to be useful, it needs a constant stream of up-to-date information from community members.. This means that building awareness of SOS so that people remember to share data often is critical to its success. This section will provide you with some ideas about what kinds of messages could be effective when reaching out to your community.

PRINCIPLES

Across all promotional work it is important to keep these principles in mind. They can apply to in-person outreach work, or to advertising in any other media.

Non-Stigmatizing

Use language and imagery that is not stigmatizing and accurately portrays the diverse community of PWUD.

For more information, please contact **substanceuse@oahpp.ca** to inquire about the Photovoice Project

Several Modes of Access

Meeting people where they are at requires using many modes of communication. Both print and digital media can help when placed in the right location; however, PWUD indicated that (because of past harms, stigmatization and criminalization), recommendations from friends are most trusted.

Shaped by PWLLE

Messaging that comes through PWLLE or people who are close to the community is most likely to be impactful. Advertising should be designed in consultation with PWUD to ensure that it builds trust. Using the right terms, tone, and imagery, will instil confidence that SOS is by the community for the community.

DECIDING ON CONTENT

These are the most important messages to share when talking about SOS. If you are talking in-person, these priority levels might help you choose the order of topics in your conversation. If you are advertising to people through digital media or print, the priorities could help you to make decisions about visual design hierarchy.

01

/ What core need does the tool meet?
/ How does it meet that need?
/ Where to access or learn more?

/ Built for PWUD by PWUD
/ Safe to use for PWUD
/ Is anonymous
/ No account needed for information viewing
/ Anonymous usernames for information sharing

02

03

/ Other information about the process of signup and use
/ Answers to frequently asked questions
/ Who else is involved

PLANNING FOR OUTREACH

Outreach should be strategically planned based on these principles. Make sure to aim for a wide breadth of people and communities and remember not to be constrained by preconceived notions of who you might assume uses or doesn't use drugs.

Rely on Local Relationships

A great place to begin is by identifying collaborators that have close relationships with PWUD. Keep in mind that there are many diverse communities of people who use drugs. As a result, you want to find partners who can help you to reach different people and spaces. Not everyone who interacts with PWUD is perceived positively and trust in communities can shift over time. Talk to PWUD about how they feel about the organizations in the community and why they feel that way. It can be helpful to look for organizations with a strong harm-reduction mindset and employees with lived experience. These organizations are often trusted by community members.

Expand to Other Communities

When looking to enter new communities, it's helpful to find local advocates. A good collaborator will have a strong sense of priority locations, priority community members, and anything that might need to be modified to tailor promotion to their region.

Consider Diversity

There is often a tendency in drug policy to label certain people or places as high-risk. This has led to some people, locations, communities being the target of stigma, while PWUD who don't fit certain stereotypes are ignored or unable to access the services they need.

For SOS to be effective, it needs the maximum amount of information from the widest and most diverse population possible. Consider that there are PWUD of every possible age, social circumstance, and cultural background. There is also a wide range of preferences for different substances and use behaviours. There is no one size fits all.

Diverse participation also has the potential to reduce stigma by normalizing the idea that drug use is not associated with any particular group of people, but is a widespread human behaviour. When creating promotional materials make sure to make a variety of deliverables that contain themes, situations, and language diversity that will resonate with the people and cultures that make up the local community.

Consider Young People Who Use Drugs

We learned that many harm reduction resources are not accessible to young people due to age restrictions (e.g. supervised consumption sites) putting many young PWUD at risk. As a result, focused effort must be made to learn about young PWUD and to adapt the strategies in this guide for their needs.

Access, awareness, and promotion for this age group was not explored in this project. However, strategies will likely look different for young people.

THERE IS NO ONE SIZE FITS ALL.

Consider People Who Use Alone

Intentional effort must be made to reach out to people who sometimes use drugs without any support from others. These people may have less access to information, may be harder to reach through in-person community based promotion, and may experience increased risk in the case of an overdose.

Consider creating promotional content that focuses on the concerns of PWUD alone, by using key messages that speak to the experiences and needs. It can also help to offer discreet and anonymous opportunities to learn about SOS in a way that won't put someone at risk of being outed as a person who uses drugs (e.g. online advertising).

To reduce the amount of people who use alone, conduct outreach to organizations that perpetuate harms against PWUD and encourage them to shift toward a harm-reduction and stigma-free information sharing mindset. Consider any organization or setting that would typically punish, exclude, stigmatize, or criminalize PWUD.

For example:
/ Professional licensing organizations

/ Parole offices

/ Child protection services and child welfare agencies

/ Schools and workplaces

Consider People Moving Between Different Settings

People become disconnected from their usual sources of information about the unregulated drug market when they transition to a new space or return to their community after time away. They also often experience disruptions in the resources they need to access technology.

/ When returning from incarceration

/ When returning from a hospital stay

/ When traveling to another community

/ When moving to a new home, shelter, settling within or leaving an encampment

Think about moments of transition where PWUD could lose touch with their personal contacts or might need to quickly form new contacts and relationships. These are excellent moments to promote use of a tool like SOS to fill gaps in information when PWUD are adjusting to an unfamiliar and rapidly changing situation.

It's also important to support free access to resources that people need to access SOS, like an open access device, chargers, public wifi, data access, etc.

Consider the Best Locations

When considering the placement and location of your promotional efforts consider to think about:

/ Places where people may have less access to technology and prioritize in-person or printed promotional material.

/ Places where PWUD may meet or access other services. These locations might be different in each community.

Potential locations for outreach might include:

/ **COMMUNITY SPACES**
Community centres, libraries, youth centres, older adult centres, Aboriginal centres, cultural centres, and local drop-ins

/ **HEALTH & HARM REDUCTION**
Community health clinics, HIV/HepC organizations, naloxone kit locations, pharmacies, mobile harm reduction teams, sexual health centres, organizations that support PWUD or sex workers, and supervised consumption sites

/ **GATHERING PLACES**
Trap houses, encampments, shelters, beaches, parks, raves, sporting events, concerts, public transit, coffee shops, convenience stores, transit stations

/ **INSTITUTIONS**
Hospitals, treatment centres, correctional facilities, court houses, workplaces, public schools, colleges, universities, trade schools

/ **ONLINE**
Social media (e.g. Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter), websites, forums (e.g. Reddit, Bluelight), messaging platforms

ACCESSIBILITY

We recognize that people may have varying levels of technology and internet access which will affect their ability to use SOS. Each community should identify multiple ways for people to view and contribute information.

Support Access to Technology
Identify places that allow people to access free technology or wifi. For example: libraries, coffee shops, or community centres. Consider expanding free public access to technology especially in locations that are frequented by PWUD. Encourage organizations that serve PWUD to provide or expand free access to technology if they have space or resources.

Enter Information for Others
Community outreach partners can support PWUD with limited access to technology, by using SOS on their behalf, to share good and bad drug experiences.

When sharing second-hand information it needs to be clearly marked on SOS that it is from a by-stander, friend, or community worker. This transparency will avoid confusion and support trust.

Share Through Word of Mouth
Consider building a network of peer workers and outreach staff that can keep up-to-date with the latest information on SOS and share it with the community through word of mouth or at drop-in meetings.

Encourage PWUD that engage with this tool to communicate with people in their personal networks about what they see on SOS. The tool should also be designed to allow for easy re-sharing of posts to social media or have a button to copy links to text messages, etc.

Offer Alternate Access Points
It could be valuable for SOS to develop a phone-line or SMS service that allows people to access updates or contribute information using a voice call.

Harm reduction organizations, shelters, and other partner organizations could also support information entry into SOS using paper forms, but these forms would need to be confidentially entered into SOS by support workers and then safely disposed of in a way that protects anonymity.

Provide Language Support
If we want SOS to be accessible to linguistically diverse communities, it is important that the tool is accessible in their preferred language. SOS will either need to be translated, or set up using best practices to support web translation. SOS could allow for multi-lingual information entry and could use visual images and icons to help support more universal navigation.

The SOS team could also collaborate with culturally focused community services (e.g. refugee centres), to help provide linguistically and culturally tailored supports to access this technology.

DIGITAL SUPPORT

This tool should be simple and intuitive to use without training or support, but no matter how carefully designed a tool is, there will always be challenges that people encounter. Here are some strategies to help smooth out and improve that experience and to support continued use and engagement.

Provide an FAQ

Some users will just need a bit more information to decide if they are interested in this tool and to overcome concerns they have about its safety. It's important to develop an FAQ that answers these concerns so that people can make an informed decision about whether this is the right tool for them.

Develop a "First Run" Experience

When someone arrives in a web-tool for the first time they are often unsure about how to get started. Provide new users with a quick overview of the features and highlight the first steps they can take to start seeing value immediately. This is often done using a carousel of images, tool-tips, or an introductory video.

Train Peer Workers to Help

Peer workers can provide outreach support to PWUD in the community, helping them to access and use SOS.

RE-
DUCING
RISK

REDUCING RISK

Although there are many benefits to information sharing between PWUD, there are also risks that are important to consider. Some guidelines for reducing these risks are included here.

SUPPORTING ANONYMITY

/ People should be able to view information without an account, and people that choose to post should be able to use anonymous usernames. The usefulness of SOS for all users is not dependent on the identity of information sources.

/ It is important to be transparent with people who use this tool about the limitations of anonymity and risks that may exist to them through being seen using it, leaving themself logged in, accessing it from shared devices etc. This will allow people to make well informed decisions about when and where to access it.

SCREENING & MODERATION

So far, PWUD suggested the following guidelines for moderation:

/ No sharing of real names nicknames, descriptions, photos, locations, or any other identifying information of PWUD or drug sellers

/ No attempts to use the tool to sell or promote drugs

/ No homophobia, xenophobia, racism, etc.

/ No hate speech, violence, or threats

PWUD described a need for moderators to review any free-text/image content before they are posted to ensure that it doesn't violate any guidelines.

People should be able to respond to submissions to confirm/deny accuracy and to flag inappropriate content for review. This process should ask people why they are flagging something as inappropriate to better understand their needs and identify how to make content appropriate (culturally or otherwise).

People would like to know what information or users may be more trustworthy. Important or frequent contributors could be "verified" or "endorsed". However, the strategy for how people would become verified or what criteria should be used for vetting has not yet been discussed.

CLARIFICATIONS & DISCLAIMERS

It is important to remind people who use this tool that no one can be certain of the experience they will have each time they use drugs because of:

/ A poisoned an unregulated drug supply

/ Difficulty distinguishing different batches of drugs

/ Variations between people's bodies and health history

/ Possible inaccuracies (either unintentional or intentional) in crowd-sourced information

It's very important to:

/ Be up-front about the limitations this system has

/ Educate people on how to interpret information found on SOS

/ Remind people that they must always assess the risks personally when choosing to use drugs

/ Warn people about the risks of misinformation

/ Legally disclaim any responsibility for harm resulting from the use of this tool

WAYS TO GET STARTED

So far this guide has outlined the vision for a future provincial information sharing tool. However, because this tool is not yet built, we need work-arounds that our communities can use right now to support information sharing. This section contains ideas for strategies you could use in your own community today.

Promote Open Dialogue

Train workers in your organization to have conversations with PWUD about their current experiences.

Consistently ask the population you serve about what they are experiencing, seeing, and hearing. Try to keep community members informed about any important concerns and trends, but remember to protect people's anonymity.

Make it a Two-way Conversation

If you are currently putting alerts or other information out into the community, consider ways in which PWUD can respond to you. Is there a place or time for people to give you feedback or share information with you that could be used to make that information more timely and helpful?

Make sure to have a place and time for PWUD to give feedback to your organization about the services you are delivering in a safe and comfortable way for them. Make sure that you respond to their feedback and share your learnings with other organizations like yours.

Remember that PWUD need to remain anonymous to avoid criminalization and stigmatization. Allow people to submit anonymous feedback to get the best quality and most diverse results.

Build a Supportive Community

The fastest strategy for sharing information without developing new tools or technologies is to create connections between people who can share information organically.

Despite limitations in the reach of personal communication, many parts of Ontario could benefit strongly from the development of more welcoming spaces for open and unstigmatized discussions about substances, safety, and harm reduction.

Extend Your Reach

Recognize which groups of PWUD your organization may not regularly reach. Look to form partnerships and open lines of communication with other organizations that may be able to better reach them.

Think about how the community structure might impact your strategies for getting out your message:

/ **Dense urban neighborhoods**

/ **Spread out remote communities**

Identify ways to adapt your services and the messages you share to consider differences in:

/ **Age**

/ **Language**

/ **Cultural norms**

/ **Socioeconomic status**

/ **Etc.**

Consider Other Organizations

SHARE LOCALLY

Circulate the information you hear in your neighbourhood to other support workers and PWUD in your community.

SHARE UPWARD

Connect with governing bodies, policies makers, programs and public health organizations that can use this information to better inform advocacy and resourcing efforts. However, when sharing remember to protect people's anonymity and the safety of the community you serve.

SHARE OUTWARD

Reach out to nearby communities to help warn each other about emerging drug trends.

FUTURE POLICY

In light of the current state of the toxic drug supply, preventable drug poisonings are on the rise. The community is calling for changes to failed drug policy and emphasizes that drug policy will need to adapt in the coming years if we hope to avoid mounting deaths. It is important for us to take a critical look forward and consider how SOS could be impacted or improved by these shifting circumstances.

DECRIMINALIZATION

Decriminalization of drugs has been introduced in several communities around the world (notably Portugal, Oregon, and most recently in Vancouver). Discussions have also begun around the possibility of decriminalization in Toronto. If this policy is eventually adopted, it will make it safer for PWUD to openly share information about drug use through SOS.

SAFE SUPPLY

Conversations around safe supply have been taking place for years. While there has been some buy-in for safe supply programming, these programs are often limited by funding and work at maximum capacity. It is unlikely that safe supply programs will ever completely replace the entire unregulated drug market. However, if safe supply is introduced, PWUD are likely to still want to discuss their experiences and share information with their communities.

We hope that this document has been helpful in explaining the process we took, who was involved, and what we learned. Throughout this process the most common theme was a need for people to be able to have open, safe, unstigmatized space to share information that can support the health and well-being of their communities. In light of the fact that SOS is a future vision and that much work still needs to happen to make it a reality, we encourage you to explore what you can do in your own organization or community to constantly keep your processes up-to-date and support safe information sharing.

Thank you to everyone who was involved in this process including: all of our collaborators with lived experience, and our teammates from ONPUD, PHO, HHF. We welcome your feedback on the information in this guide. It is only with the involvement of the community that we can collectively push forward towards a better future.

SOS GUIDE

**A Guide to Using Info-Sharing Tools
to Support Harm Reduction**

This guide explores the opportunities that
PWUD developed through co-design to use
info-sharing to support harm reduction.
Inside, we discuss: what an info-sharing
service could include; when and why people
would want to use it; and several strategies
for its success. We hope that the ideas in
this guide will make it safer for PWUD to
share information and to navigate the ser-
vices and resources around them.