



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Dedicated Support Services for Individuals with an Alcohol Addiction

POSITION PAPER

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Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister Mental Health and Addictions, Ministry of Health

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) requests that the Ministry of Health provide the financial resources necessary to ensure that the appropriate level of support is available for individuals with alcohol addiction in the District of Thunder Bay.

Summary

The TBDSSAB recognizes and applauds the government of Ontario's supportive approach to addressing mental health and addictions. Recently, a great deal of focus has been placed on the growing opioid and stimulant issue. However, year over year emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to alcohol use outnumber other substances. This impacts tenants of TBDSSAB properties and the homeless population serviced throughout the District of Thunder Bay.

Background

The common use of opioid and stimulant substances has increased over the past decade resulting in a public health crisis, not only in the District of Thunder Bay, but across Ontario. The North in general, and the District of Thunder Bay specifically, has some of the highest rates of Emergency Department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths due to opioid use in Ontario.

However, what is often overlooked is that alcohol use continues to be the substance that leads to the highest number of ConnexOntario contacts for services.

ConnexOntario Contact Reason – January 1, 2021- December 31, 2021ⁱ

Substance	Number of Contactors
Alcohol Use Disorder	209
Stimulant Use Disorder	157
Opioid Use Disorder	54
Polysubstance Use Disorder	42
Cannabis Use Disorder	25
Inhalant Use Disorder	2

The data presented for 2021 above is mirrored in the data back to 2017. In fact, in each year Opioid Use Disorder and Stimulant Use Disorder combined are less than Alcohol Use Disorder.

The District of Thunder Bay also has a very high number of Emergency Department visits attributed to alcohol at a rate significantly higher than the rate for opioids.

ED Visits for conditions entirely attributable to alcohol, crude ratesⁱⁱ

Calendar Year	TBDHU total number of visits	TBDHU crude rate per 100,000 population	ON crude rate per 100,000 population
2017	4,127	2,679.8 per 100,000	585.4 per 100,000
2018	4,419	2,865.0 per 100,000	599.5 per 100,000
2019	4,715	3,052.0 per 100,000	587.0 per 100,000
2020	4,222	2,729.9 per 100,000	509.4 per 100,000

Each year from 2017-2022, the District of Thunder Bay has had the second highest rate of all the Public Health Units in Ontario. To put the numbers into perspective, the 2020 crude rate for Emergency Department visits related to opioids in the District of Thunder Bay was 174.6 per 100,000ⁱⁱⁱ, compared with Emergency Department visits attributed to alcohol with a rate of 2,728.9 per 100,000.

Beyond the individual and family cost of substance use, there is a high fiscal cost as well. In the 2017, *Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms* report it is noted that substances cost Canadians almost \$46.0 billion, led to over 275,000 hospitalizations, and contributed to the loss of nearly 75,000 lives. Of this total, almost 63% of the costs of substance use were due to alcohol and tobacco with alcohol accounting for \$16.6 billion or 36.2% of the total costs. Additionally, alcohol use accounted for the greatest costs to the criminal justice system at \$2.8 billion or 30.2% of all criminal justice costs.^{iv}

Despite the increasing use of opioids and stimulants and the dangers associated with these substances, alcohol use continues to be a major concern that needs to be addressed through appropriate supports.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Ministry of Health provide the financial resources necessary to ensure that the appropriate level of support is available for individuals with alcohol addiction in the District of Thunder Bay.

ⁱ Extracted from the ConnexOntario Health Services Information Database on August 24, 2022

ⁱⁱ Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Snapshots: Alcohol Harms Snapshot [Internet]. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2021 [updated 2021 Dec 1; cited 2022 Sept 1]. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substanceuse/alcohol-harms>

ⁱⁱⁱ [Interactive Opioid Tool | Public Health Ontario](#)

^{iv} [Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms \(2015-2017\) \[report\] \(csuch.ca\)](#)