SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO: WARDEN & LAMBTON COUNTY COUNCIL

PREPARED BY: Kevin Churchill, Manager, Health Promotion & Program Support

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

MEETING DATE: April 16, 2008

SUBJECT: United Way Sarnia-Lambton Drug Strategy

BACKGROUND

The Community Health Services Department (CHSD) has been involved locally in providing leadership and program support to prevent alcohol and substance abuse in Lambton County for over 20 years. As an organization and founding member of the Lambton Drug Awareness Action Committee, CHSD has successfully delivered programs in schools, community centres and other settings.

Through the Ontario Mandatory Public Health Programs and Services Guidelines, the department has the following mandate:

To reduce disability, morbidity and mortality caused by motorized vehicles, bicycle crashes, alcohol and other substances, falls in the elderly and to prevent drowning in specific recreational water facilities.

a. develop, maintain membership on and actively participate in a community injury prevention coalition and a substance abuse prevention coalition; and

b. promote and provide, on an annual basis, educational information and activities on three of the topics identified in 1. above. This shall include as a minimum:

   i. provide at least one community-wide education campaign annually. The campaign must include the use of three of the following: television, radio, newspapers, posters/pamphlets and the Internet; and

   ii. provide one community event (community or board of health led), per 100,000 population or two community events per year, whichever is greater. Community events are open to the general public and/or specifically-targeted groups. They must involve public interaction and participation, and provide information and/or skill building.


In this capacity, CHSD has delivered and worked with our partners to coordinate many successful programs, including Racing Against Drugs, an annual educational event for Grade 5 students and the Alcohol and Drug-Free Family New Years event.
In addition, the Department has provided many educational events, provided teaching resources to support the Ontario curriculum, as well as providing information for hundreds of requests we receive every year, from teachers, students and parents.

DISCUSSION

In April 2007, at the invitation of the United Way of Sarnia Lambton, CHSD staff attended a roundtable Drug and Alcohol Forum to discuss issues regarding substance abuse prevention in Lambton County. This forum was well organized and the result was a renewed sense of urgency regarding the need for community response to the many challenges related to alcohol and substance abuse in Lambton. Further meetings were scheduled, with a goal of producing a Sarnia-Lambton Drug Strategy.

In July 2007, the Department prepared and submitted a report to Council regarding the burden of alcohol misuse in Lambton. The report highlighted the issues and drew attention to the fact that the CHSD was limited in our capacity to deliver prevention programs due to lack of adequate funding. A request for additional funding under the Focus Community program was sent to the Ontario Minister of Health Promotion in August. To date, no reply has been received.

In September 2007, the United Way of Sarnia Lambton released the Sarnia-Lambton Drug Strategy, a comprehensive summary of the issues, discussions and recommendations from the roundtable meetings. The strategy will be presented to Council on April 16, 2008 by a delegation from the United Way. The United Way will request that Council endorse the Sarnia-Lambton Drug Strategy (SLDS).

The SLDS contains 10 recommendations for action, covering a range of actions that target youth, children and families, and individuals who use substances. The recommendations are also classified according to where they fit on the continuum of substance use and abuse, from prevention, early intervention, treatment, and harm reduction.

The CHSD staff are supportive of all 10 recommendations contained within the strategy, and have a mandate to actively support or deliver services related to the following recommendations: (quoting from the strategy)

1. (Ensure appropriate, comprehensive substance use prevention and education programming is provided to all students annually across all school boards and include the option for parents to participate where possible),
2. (Provide substance programs to residents throughout Lambton County through the school setting and/or community groups with a focus on prevention. A coordinated approach will be taken in order to avoid duplication or re-creation),
7. Provide the Needle Exchange program throughout Lambton County to ensure accessibility to all residents.
8. Provide a local fact, statistic based document identifying the need for resources and services.
Endorsing the strategy would reaffirm Council’s commitment to working with community partners to address alcohol and substance related issues, and help to raise the profile of the strategy. The strategy provides a “roadmap” for addressing the many issues related to alcohol and substance misuse, the impact of which is well known, and affects residents from every municipality and all walks of life within Lambton. It is anticipated that the strategy could be used to support funding applications for programs and services required to address alcohol and substance related issues.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Endorsing the strategy will not obligate Council to provide any additional funding. Council’s endorsement and support of the strategy may be helpful in securing external funding to help meet the goals and objectives contained within the strategy.

CONSULTATIONS

The strategy is the result of a comprehensive community consultation process led by the United Way of Sarnia-Lambton and involving partners including the Community Health Services Department, Sarnia Police, Ontario Provincial Police, Sarnia Lambton Rebound, Bluewater Health Addiction Services, Aamjiwnaang First Nation, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and other partners.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The goals and recommendations contained within the SLDS are consistent with the principles, values and areas of effort identified in the Strategic Plan. The recommendations build on and support the value of Lambton County as a healthy community.

CONCLUSION

Alcohol and substance abuse has a negative and often tragic impact on the lives of many residents of Lambton County, regardless of age or socio-economic status. The SLDS represents a locally coordinated response to work cooperatively to reduce the burden of alcohol and substance abuse in Lambton County. The strategy is consistent with the strategic goals of the county and the mandate of the Community Health Services Department.
Recommendation


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