



Canadian Centre
on Substance Abuse
Centre canadien **de lutte**
contre les toxicomanies

Partnership. Knowledge. Change.
Collaboration. Connaissance. Changement.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CCSA Marks National Addictions Awareness Week 2016

Ottawa, November 14, 2016 – On behalf of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), I am pleased to join the many committed individuals and organizations across the country participating in National Addictions Awareness Week (NAAW) 2016.

Addiction touches Canadians from every walk of life – it does not discriminate – yet talking about issues related to substance use often triggers judgment and stigma. This stigma persists despite close to six million people in Canada meeting the criteria for a substance use disorder at some point in their lives (2012 figures).

The opioid crisis we are faced with today has highlighted the dichotomy between stigma and reality. This public health issue has exposed the depth to which harmful use of substances and addiction affects all of us and it has signalled an urgent need for changes to our system of care to enable it to better respond to those suffering from problematic substance use and addiction.

This National Addictions Awareness Week, we look to the future.

Today, we are witnessing a focused approach to meeting the needs of those with an addiction to opioids. Collectively, we are starting to put in place specific services, supports and resources supported by evidence and delivered by those with the appropriate expertise and competence.

In fact, this year NAAW will conclude with Canada's Opioid Conference and Summit, which takes place on November 18 and 19. The event will bring together experts to discuss the current opioid crisis in Canada and identify concrete levers for change. It will conclude with commitments by provincial and national leaders that we hope will bring about the immediate change that is required. The issue is a complex one and no one level of government or organization can address it effectively. It requires commitment and collective action to achieve the needed collective impact.

As part of ongoing work related to the [First Do No Harm strategy](#), CCSA will also continue to provide leadership and guidance to individual and collective efforts, connect partners, gather and share evidence, identify emerging issues, and address the needs identified by our stakeholders, including those who are affected by this crisis.

For many of us touched personally or in our daily work, we know the time has come for a national, comprehensive approach to address problematic substance use and addiction in Canada. We have to address the gaps that the opioid crisis has shown us exist, such as in the availability of and access to services that have been proven to be effective or in the capacity of health professionals to provide the needed response.

To be successful, we must ensure that we leverage existing investments, give a voice to those affected, coordinate our efforts, and use evidence to bring about the needed changes in treatments and supports. We must ensure that we have a good understanding of the science behind the disorder and that we help the millions of individuals who are suffering to regain control over their lives and to lead productive lives in recovery.



NAAW is a reminder that a substance use disorder is a health condition that deserves the same level of attention and investment as other serious health conditions. Those of us working closely on these issues have a responsibility to ensure that every door opened leads to quality treatment and supports for the care of all Canadians. With dedicated funding and resources, and with the body of evidence available to treat this disorder, we are in a good position to continue to accelerate the response.

Throughout the week, our Twitter accounts (@CCSACanada and @CCLTCanada) will be sharing key facts on substance use in Canada. I encourage you to follow the conversation at #NAAWCanada and #SMTPCanada. To support the efforts of individuals and organizations throughout Canada, we have also developed a [NAAW 2016 toolkit](#). Please feel free to share widely and celebrate NAAW 2016.

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The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse changes lives by bringing people and knowledge together to reduce the harm of alcohol and other drugs on society. We partner with public, private and non-governmental organizations to improve the health and safety of Canadians.

CCSA activities and products are made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views of CCSA do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada.