

New working group seeks a comprehensive picture of substance abuse treatment activities in Canada

The goal of creating a national addictions treatment data collection and analysis system in Canada—recommended in a 2005 CCSA report—is moving closer to reality with support from CCSA and the Canadian Executive Council on Addictions (CECA).

The report by Senior Policy Analyst Gerald Thomas, *Addiction Treatment Indicators in Canada: An Environmental Scan* (see *Action News* Vol. XV No. 2), argued that addiction treatment, for the most part, appears to be only loosely integrated and coordinated with overall efforts to improve information and communication technology in the health sector. More importantly, the report pointed to an absence of discussions around standardizing reporting requirements or around issues related to the compatibility of Canada's addictions data systems.

The CCSA report was reviewed by CECA at a meeting in mid-2005, and in subsequent meetings the group agreed to endorse and help fund a formal National Treatment Indicators Working Group. The working group met for the first time last March and has already outlined three projects that it hopes will advance the collection, dis-

semination and analysis of substance abuse treatment data in Canada.

Project 1, *Documenting and Assessing the Current Status of Substance Abuse Treatment Services in Canada*, will describe service categories, treatment demand and supply, access issues, wait times and other organiza-



tional issues as defined in federal, provincial and territorial treatment jurisdictions. The project will use a "model" treatment continuum developed by Wayne Skinner, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), to identify gaps in treatment systems. The project lead is Patrick Smith, B.C. Health Services Authority. His paper and the model treatment continuum will be available at a National Framework Thematic

Workshop on Treatment, Oct. 24-25, in Toronto.

Project 2, *Developing a System for Comparing Substance Abuse Treatment Data in Canada*, seeks to create a matrix for cross-jurisdictional comparisons of basic "treatment episode" data on numbers of clients served in each service category, identification of primary and secondary problems, substances, and basic client demographics such as age, gender and race. This project will be led by Dr. Thomas whose prototype report using 2004-2005 data is due early in 2007.

Project 3, *A Qualitative Analysis of Barriers to Implementing Substance Abuse Treatment Data Collection Systems in Canada*, will examine barriers to implementing data collection protocols, and develop at least one analysis using existing data to show how these data can be used to improve system performance. Dr. Thomas is the project lead and his report will be developed during the second year of the project starting in April 2007.

CCSA has created a special Web page where progress on the Treatment Indicators project will be periodically updated. Interested readers can find this page at www.ccsa.ca by clicking on Topics and then on Treatment. □

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► Following two decades of progress on the alcohol-crash problem, safety advocates, policy makers, legislators and enforcement agencies have begun to express greater concern about the use of drugs by drivers. To a large extent, drugs and driving is a more complex issue than drinking and driving.

CCSA asked to evaluate country-wide DRE implementation

CCSA has won a contract from the RCMP to evaluate the implementation of a program to enhance the capacity of police across Canada to address drug-impaired driving with a view to optimizing the process.

Police officers trained as Drug Recognition Experts (DRE) learn to detect signs of impairment by a variety of drugs, both legal and illegal, during roadside checks. If a DRE officer suspects impairment by a specific family of drugs, the driver is asked to provide a saliva, urine or blood sample. The DRE program is currently operating in all provinces, but only when suspects agree to take part. New federal legislation

proposed in April 2004 (Bill C-16) would have forced these suspects to undergo a DRE evaluation, which is done at a police station. Although progress on Bill C-16 was halted when the federal election of January 2006 was called, it is expected that a similar law will be proposed by the Conservatives.

CCSA consultants Doug Beirness and Jacques LeCavalier will be responsible for developing a systematic evaluation of efforts to expand the DRE program throughout Canada. In a previous series of studies, the two investigators demonstrated the need for an enforcement program and concluded that the validity and accuracy of the DRE

program warranted its expansion throughout Canada.

As part of the new phase of the project, the investigators will develop a model for the enforcement process, create a database of DRE cases, survey key stakeholders, scan emerging research literature on drug-impaired driving and DRE, develop methodology for assessing the impact of DRE on drug impaired driving in Canada, determine further research needs, identify steps to improve the DRE program, and provide ongoing consultation. To gain hands-on familiarity with the DRE process, Dr. Beirness and Mr. LeCavalier will themselves sign up for the two-week DRE training course. □



► Consultant **Heather Clark** is managing CCSA's participation in a project to harmonize the collection of data on student drug use across jurisdictions. Standardized information will benefit policy makers and programmers involved in both intervention and prevention. As well, the ability to assess similarities across regions could lead to better communication and partnership building among national, provincial and territorial organizations.

New project aims for comparability of student drug use data

CCSA has made substantial progress toward agreement with national and provincial partner organizations in nine provinces and two territories on harmonizing ways of collecting data on student drug use across jurisdictions.

Student surveys that ask about substance use are an essential source of information on the prevalence of substance use and associated harms, and they help to identify high-risk groups within a youth population. Such surveys are currently conducted intermittently in nine of 10 provinces and there is wide variability across jurisdictions in survey methods used and

information gathered. This limits opportunities for inter-regional comparisons and bench-marking.

The new initiative will result in a set of core indicators to be included as a recommended minimum standard in province and territory-specific student surveys, as well as guidelines for using comparable methodologies across jurisdictions. In addition, it will provide technical support for developing and implementing student drug use surveys in provinces and territories where they are not currently being conducted.

In addition, efforts are being made to coordinate the student survey project with a new initiative being carried

out by research partners in British Columbia and Ontario to develop a comprehensive epidemiological monitoring system for substance use in Canada. For example, the core indicators developed by the student survey group will be included in piloting conducted for the national surveillance initiative.

To date, the core indicators working group has developed some preliminary questions on alcohol use, cannabis use, and on demographics. There has also been progress toward agreement on measuring substances other than alcohol and cannabis, and the group is set to discuss ways of measuring the consequences of substance use. □

Atlantic addiction executives endorse National Framework

The Atlantic Association of Addiction Executives (AAAE) has agreed to endorse the National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol, Other Drugs and Substances in Canada. Thirty-two organizations from across Canada have now endorsed the Framework.

A resolution backing the Framework received unanimous support at an AAAE meeting in Moncton, N.B. in June, following a presentation by Carolyn Franklin, CCSA's Senior Advisor on the Framework, and Karen Cumberland, Policy Coordinator for CCSA's National Health, Education and Enforcement in Partnership (HEP) Program.

The AAAE was established in 2004 to provide a forum

for the development of common positions on addictions policy, prevention, treatment, research and training in Atlantic Canada. The association is made up of senior representatives from the four Atlantic provinces.

At its June meeting, the group reviewed progress on papers dealing with methadone maintenance treatment and concurrent disorders, and also discussed Atlantic Canadian approaches to pre-

venting and treating crystal methamphetamine, and addressing substance abuse in the workplace. Two committees were struck to address communications and the development of an Atlantic "Tool Kit for Employers".

The National Framework is managed jointly by Health Canada and CCSA. For more details and updates, visit the new Framework website at www.nationalframework-cadrenational.ca □



► CCSA staff members Carolyn Franklin (far right) and Karen Cumberland (fourth from the right) made a presentation on the National Framework at a June meeting of the Atlantic Association of Addiction Executives (AAAE) in Moncton, N.B. The AAAE is now one of 32 organizations across Canada that have endorsed the Framework. AAAE Chair Greg Purvis is in the blue shirt, third from the right.

Lessons from Grand Manan: can HEP make a difference?

The torching of a suspected drug house in Grand Manan, N.B. made national headlines this summer and prompted a public comment from CCSA on its implications for drug policy and practice.

In a letter published in the New Brunswick Telegraph Journal, CCSA called for a comprehensive and holistic community approach to drug use, and cited its national Health, Education and Enforcement in Partnership (HEP) Program as a mechanism for mobilizing effective community responses.

"This means addressing the underlying issues that influ-

ence drug use, such as mental health, employment, housing and social competencies, and developing responses based on each community's unique needs and resources," said the letter, signed by Lianne Calvert, Director of Workforce Development. "HEP's goal is to build community capacity through information sharing and co-ordination of services."

The letter cited the Charlotte County Coalition for a Drug-Free Community and Partners for a Drug-Free Miramichi as examples of New Brunswick-based programs, connected through the provincial HEP network, that are seeing early successes.

Partners for a Drug Free Miramichi recently did a study showing that 66% of the youth in that community are at risk for substance abuse. In response to these findings, the group is working to identify programs and projects that take an "asset building" approach to youth issues. External assets include family and community support, while internal assets include motivation and self-esteem. On May 9-11, 2007, Miramichi will strengthen its focus on positive youth development by hosting the Helping Canadian Kids Thrive! conference.

For more details on Thrive!, go to www.thrivecanada.ca □



► Police on Grand Manan Island, N.B. say a large group of people attacked this house, beat up some of its residents and burned it down on July 22. Neighbours said the house was a drug den. The attack prompted a public response from CCSA calling for a comprehensive and holistic community approach to drug use.

Photo by Candace Maclean, New Brunswick Telegraph Journal.

New faces around the CCSA office



▶ CCSA has welcomed several new staff members in recent weeks. *Left to right: Matthew Graham, Policy Advisor; Rebecca Jesseman, Policy Analyst; and Karine Plouffe, Workforce Development Policy Coordinator.* For a complete list of CCSA staff and their contact information, go to www.ccsa.ca and click on *About CCSA*.

CCSA appoints Northern advisor

CCSA has appointed Rachel Dutton-Gowryluk as its Senior Advisor on Northern Canada. She will work with agencies, government departments, the private sector and Aboriginal groups in the North to mobilize support for substance use issues. "Reaching out to Canada's North" is a National Framework priority.

In her most recent job as project manager with Mental Health and Addiction Core Services in the Northwest Territories, Rachel functioned as NWT Coordinator for CCSA's national Health, Edu-

cation and Enforcement in Partnership (HEP) project.

Rachel will be based in Winnipeg where she received an advanced B.A. in psychology from the University of Manitoba in 1993. □



▶ Rachel with Siberian husky, Sakic, on the tundra in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

Drug User Congress was well attended

In the last issue of *Action News*, we reported on the First Canadian Drug User Congress, which took place in May in Vancouver. After the article appeared, we were contacted by Brent Taylor, one of the Congress organizers, who said we underestimated attendance at the event. Mr. Taylor said organ-

izers were forced to cap invitations at 80 because of limited meeting space, but in the end, some 60 Canadian drug users did attend. As well, there were a dozen drug user activists from countries such as England, Australia, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Macedonia, Ireland and the United States who were invited as "expert reference persons". □

Events

For details of these and other events or to submit an event, go to **Calendar of Events** at www.ccsa.ca

Oct. 22–25—3rd International Conference on Alcohol and Harm Reduction. Cape Town, South Africa. www.alcoholconference.org/ (e-mail: alcohol@q4q.nl) Tel.: +31 20 3303 449; fax: +31 20 3303 450

Oct. 25–27—Annual Conference of the Ontario Public Health Association. Cornwall, ON www.ophaconference.ca/

Oct. 26–27—2006 ActionNorth Conference (addressing substance abuse in the workplace). Prince George, B.C. www.actionnorth.net/an2006/index.php (e-mail: infoonccsa@mag-net.com) Tel.: 250-649-4000; fax: 250-649-4003

Nov. 5–8—4th Annual Making Gains Conference in Mental Health and Addictions: Healthcare Transformation in Ontario—Evolution or Revolution? Scarborough, ON www.ontario.cmha.ca/content/inside_cmha/making_gains.asp (e-mail: rachelandassoc@xplornet.com) Tel.: 705-454-8107; fax: 905-384-1675 or 705-454-9792

Nov. 9–12—6th National Harm Reduction Conference: Drug User Health—The Politics and the Personal. Oakland, CA www.harmreduction.org/6national/ Tel.: 212-213-6376

Nov. 9–12—56th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Psychiatric Association. Toronto. www.cpa-apc.org (conference@cpa-apc.org) Tel.: 613-234-2815, x242; fax: 613-234-9857

Nov. 16–18—Western Canadian Conference on Mental Health & Addiction. Richmond, B.C. www.healthquest.ca/ (occhealth@infoserve.net) Tel.: 1-888-877-4777 or 604-718-6929; fax: 604-270-4684

Nov. 17–18—Let's Talk About Addictions: Living with Addictions. Kamloops, B.C. rwebster@tru.ca Tel.: 250-377-6085; fax: 250-371-5697

Nov. 20—Wellness Walk (12–4 p.m.) Downtown Friendship Centre, Calgary. gloria.pipes@aadac.gov.ab.ca Tel.: 403-297-3337; fax: 403-297-4592

Nov. 19–22—World Forum 2006: Future Directions in Child Welfare. Vancouver. www.worldforum2006.ca (WorldForum2006@gov.bc.ca) Tel.: 1-866-660-9704

New resources on CCSA's website

Here are some recent additions to CCSA's website:

▶ A new fact sheet entitled *Self-Harm Among Criminalized Women* begins with a definition that goes beyond the traditional focus on physical self-injury. Self-harm can refer to a wide range of physical, social, emotional or spiritual behaviour, including the misuse of alcohol and drugs.

▶ *Harm reduction policies and programs for youth* is the second in a series of four CCSA documents on harm reduction for special populations in Canada. The report reviews current research on the sub-

ject and explores the controversy around using non-abstinence-based approaches with younger populations.

You can order copies of these two documents at info@ccsa.ca or download them from What's New at CCSA at www.ccsa.ca.

▶ Faculty presentations from the 2006 National Summer Institute on Addictions are now online. The theme this year was *Working Together: Partnerships Along the Continuum of Service*. The presentations can be found by following the link from Workforce Development to Summer Institute at www.ccsa.ca □