

Reduced risk of overdose among clients of a safer opioid supply program in Southwestern Ontario: A pre-post observational cohort study

In Canada, there were over 50,000 opioid-related deaths between January 2016 and September 2024.



What are safer opioid supply (SOS) programs?

Safer supply pilot programs (SOS) aim to reduce the risk of overdose from the highly unpredictable toxic street supply by giving prescribed, pharmaceutical-grade drugs. These programs also provide wrap around social supports for clients.

Clients enrolled in an SOS program in Southwestern Ontario completed a short survey at program entry and again at 6 months to assess program impact and support quality improvement efforts.



Study Demographics

162 enrolled clients
100 completed a follow-up visit (6 months later)
55% were under 45 years old
77% identified as White
73% were unhoused at least one night in the past 6 months

Results

There was a **83% reduction** in odds of overdose and a **sharp decline in overdose incidence** in the SOS program in Southwestern, Ontario.

This program was **successful in reaching** those with **high prevalence of injection drug use, unhoused individuals, and those unable to afford basic needs.**

Program factors that support overdose reduction

1. SOS programs' low-barrier model
Integration with primary care (e.g., health
2. care services)
Integration with comprehensive
3. wraparound support services (including medical and social services)

Criminalization and Disruption to Care

Results from the study highlight the **intersection of criminalization and substance use**: Those who had a recent experience being incarcerated had higher odds of overdose during follow up.

This SOS implementation showed successful reduction in odds of overdose and overdose incidence in clients.



Read the full publication:

[Reduced risk of overdose among clients of a safer opioid supply program in Southwestern Ontario: A pre-post observational cohort study](#)