Priority Public Health Interventions for People Experiencing Homelessness Study:
Peer-amedics

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homeless connect toronto

Dalla Lana School of Public Health

Project Summary

- **Codesign**

  a program that reflects the priority public health needs of people at risk of experiencing homelessness in Toronto.

- **Elevate**

  the work of peer programs to deliver public health services, promote linkages to care, and share resources with people experiencing homelessness.

- **Evaluate**

  the effectiveness of peer workers to impact the Quintuple Aim for healthcare improvement:

  1. improved population health,
  2. enhanced care experiences,
  3. reduced costs,
  4. positive provider experiences, and
  5. improved health equity.

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- ## About

  Offer “one-stop-shop” events to bring together essential resources on housing, employment, and health care for people at-risk or experiencing homelessness in Toronto.

- ## Current Peer Programming

  PeerConnectTO: project in partnership with Mentor/Mentee Canada and WoodGreen Community Housing to improve community connections in housing safety, autonomy and sustainability.

- ## Training for Peers

  Peer Support Workers complete a 10-week training program for individuals with lived experience of homelessness.

- ## Current Support Offered by Peers

  Accompany individuals to appointments, provide resources, and support in the domains of mental health and addiction, tenancy, budgeting, employment, and advocacy.

Peer-amedics Services



Smoking Cessation



Harm Reduction



HIV Self-Test Kits and STBBI Support



Extreme Weather Response

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Recruitment Sites:

- WoodGreen Residential Buildings
- Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC)
- Scott Mission
- Agincourt Community Services Association
- Fred Victor
- Margaret’s Hosing and Community Support Services

Recruitment Date: April 2026 to current

Recruitment Totals: 111

Participants' Housing Status

Housing Status	n	%
Sleeping outside or rough (e.g., on sidewalks, parks, abandoned buildings, vehicles, garages, tent)	11	10%
Sleeping in a shelter or respite site	10	9%
Sleeping in transitional housing or short-term stay (e.g., couch surfing, motels, prisons, hospitals, treatment programs, detox centres, group homes, newcomer shelters)	10	9%
Rent a home, but at risk of homelessness (e.g., because of health, job security, benefits running out, eviction, unstable housing, unsafe housing, abuse, etc.)	68	64%
Other	5	5%
Prefer not to say	3	3%
Total	**107**	**100**

Peer-amedics Services



Smoking Cessation

Total NRT Distributed: 131

STOP Enrollment: 61 (55%)

Referrals to other smoking cessation support: 14 (13%)

Peer-amedics Services



Harm Reduction

Harm Reduction supplies distributed: 8
Participants receiving harm reduction support: 4



HIV Self-Test Kits

HIV self-tests distributed: <5
Participants receiving STBBI support (information about treatment, testing): <5



Extreme Weather Response

Participants receiving extreme weather support: <5

Peer-amedics Services

<u>Other Services and Information provided</u>:

- housing supports
- involvement in Peer Support work
- mental health (e.g., self harm support, depression)
- alcohol reduction
- health
- accompaniment to healthcare
- house cleaning
- Everyday Connect Portal
- ID clinic
- getting a new peer connector
- employment and relationship goals

Referrals Provided

Data Source: Peer Worker Documentation

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Referrals	n (%)
Smoking cessation	14 (13%)
Housing Support	< 5
STBBI treatment, follow up on positive result, harm reduction	< 5

Other:

- **Family doctor**
- **AA/NA meeting times and locations, planned accompaniment**
- **Health - CBT, alcohol reduction self-help workbook**
- **Support with depression/isolation symptoms**
- **Peer Support work**
- **Peer Support**
- **Everyday Connect Portal**

Participant Experiences

Data Source: Participant Post-Service Survey

What did you like about the peer worker?

- Participants highlighted how knowledgeable, friendly, welcoming, professional, peer workers were.
- They also highlighted their ability to explain information in lay terms and at a good pace.
- They noted their knowledge of smoking cessation products.

- **“Open more places like this and also offer other programs related to this.”**

What other things about your health would you like to talk to a peer worker about?

- Health
  - Doctor referrals
  - Foot care, diabetes, substance use support
  - Accompaniment
  - Substance use
- Mental Health
  - Encouragement
  - Depression
  - Social support, counselling
- Housing
  - House cleaning
  - Housing situation/issues
- Cash support, ID clinic, passport, understanding information, support in rural areas.