

SNAPSHOT

Withdrawal Management Standards

Addictions and Mental Health Ontario (AMHO) has released an updated version of the [Ontario Provincial Standards for Withdrawal Management Services](#). The Ontario Withdrawal Management Standards set out core standards of professional and clinical practice to guide the operation of Withdrawal Management Services in the province of Ontario.

There are three overarching objectives of the new Standards:

1

To help ensure quality and consistency of withdrawal management services across the province

2

To support funders and service providers by establishing recognized criteria for effective services and supports across the province, while respecting regional differences between health funders and the need for innovative services that respond to local requirements and situations

3

To improve the information available to people about what they can expect when accessing withdrawal management services in the province as well as what is expected of them while they are using a service

PRINCIPLES

The updated standards offer a principle-based approach to supporting a Biopsychosocialspiritual Model of care. The principles are listed below.

- 1 Ensure services reflect evidence-informed best practices
- 2 Provide client-centric care
- 3 Provide accessible care and supports
- 4 Foster a culture of respect
- 5 Ensure a culturally safe environment
- 6 Provide trauma informed services and supports
- 7 Commit to providing services that are anti-stigma
- 8 Encourage family, partner and friend involvement

The standards also taking to account geographic, funding, and capacity challenges across the province.

DEVELOPING THE STANDARDS

The development was led by an expert advisory committee comprised of clinicians, service providers and health system planners. This process was evidence-informed and highly collaborative. The process included reviewing recent clinical and grey literature, a jurisdictional scan, engagement of the AMHO Withdrawal Management Community of Practice (WM CoP), and an expert review from stakeholders across the province including people with lived experience.

SUMMARY OF THE STANDARDS

The standards are divided into three main sections that are reflective of an individual's pathway:

1

Preparing for and
Accessing Withdrawal
Management Services

2

During Withdrawal
Management

3

Preparing for Ongoing
Recovery After
Withdrawal Management

These guidelines are intended to be a *minimum* standard; members are encouraged to meet and exceed them. They should be used in conjunction with META: PHI clinical standards, META:PHI Nurse Practitioner Manual, and Health Quality Ontario quality standards where appropriate.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NEW STANDARDS



Updated Medication Guideline

Due to the complex nature of pharmacotherapy, the standards recognize that policies and procedures will be, in part, dictated by regional and local factors such as human resources, proximity to medical and pharmaceutical services, physical layout of the facility, geographical area, policies and procedures of the sponsoring agency and fiscal resources.



Added Focus on Vulnerable Populations

The identification of vulnerable populations and key considerations for these populations is a new section in the Standards. The literature on treatment for problematic substance use for many of the vulnerable populations is limited, and there is a recognized need for more research on the challenges of supporting these populations.

The standards offer guidelines for general practice, while respecting practitioners own judgement, knowledge, and experience when working with vulnerable populations including: individuals with problematic polysubstance use, pregnant people, parents of dependent children, survivors of violence, people with cognitive disabilities, people with physical or sensory disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, older adults, clients with concurrent disorders, First Nations and Indigenous Individuals.

CONCLUSION

The newly updated Standards should be broadly implemented across the withdrawal management sector. Many of the practices captured in the refreshed standards are already in place across the province, however some practices will involve a process of ongoing implementation and continuous learning. Embedding the principles outlined above will help ensure that services are delivered in a safe, supportive environment with positive outcomes for individuals using the services. We encourage providers to work within your organizations and reach out to AMHO and funding partners in order to take the necessary steps to meet the Standards.

Withdrawal Management Services are one part of a continuum of services required for a strong, coordinated, evidence-based, quality system of care. Advocacy on securing the resources members require to meet and exceed quality standards and supporting transitions across the continuum of care is ongoing. AMHO will continue to advocate for quality services and shorter wait times, and work with the mental health and addiction sector to strengthen the continuum of care, as we move forward to achieve the best addiction and mental health system, anywhere.