

# Overdose Outreach Team – Service Level Change

## ISSUE

The Overdose Outreach Team (OOT) pilot program between the Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD) and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) has been extended to March 31, 2025, thanks to an extension of funding from the Ministry of Health (Ministry).

## BACKGROUND

In December 2022, SFD partnered with the SHA and the Ministry to launch the OOT comprised of one Mental Health and Addictions Counsellor from SHA and a Primary Care Paramedic from SFD to deliver outreach and support to people and their families who have experienced an overdose and connect individuals with services. OOT was also launched simultaneously with Regina Fire & Protective Services.

## CURRENT STATUS

The program has seen success, aligning with multiple strategic goals connected to services improving the health and well-being of Saskatchewan people, including the Province of Saskatchewan's goal of Enhancing Mental Health and Addiction Services, the City of Saskatoon's goal of Community Safety and Well-being, and SFD's goal of Advancing Community Resiliency through Risk Reduction Partnerships.

To date, funding for OOT has been provided in three- and six-month increments. SFD staff have been seconded from other SFD business lines to align with this funding. Funding was set to expire on March 31, 2024; however, recognizing the value of the program, the Ministry confirmed a funding extension for one year, through to March 31, 2025, in Saskatoon and Regina.

## DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Short-term secondments to OOT have provided opportunities for SFD staff to work with some of Saskatoon's vulnerable populations in a proactive and non-traditional manner.

Thanks to the year-long funding extension, SFD has created a new 1.0 FTE temporary position, dedicated to the OOT. SFD worked closely with the International Association of Fire Fighters' Local No. 80 to develop the job description and Memorandum of Agreement as it relates to classification and compensation. The Primary Care Paramedic position was advertised internally on the City of Saskatoon's website, as well as external sites. The position does not require Firefighter qualifications typical of SFD operational staff. This position will be filled for the duration of the funding extension and will be evaluated as necessary based on continued SHA funding.

The pilot project and extended funding aligns with key actions in [The Ministry of Health's 2024-2025 Business Plan](#), the [City of Saskatoon's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and [SFD's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) for the advancement of community resiliency as it relates to mental health and substance use.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Funding for SFD's OOT position is being provided by the Ministry, through the SHA. As outlined in Appendix 1 – Services Agreement Overdose Outreach Team 2022 and Appendix 2 – Second Amending Agreement Overdose Outreach Team 2023, SFD will regularly invoice the SHA for 1.0 FTE salary, as well as the use of an SFD vehicle and the related fuel surcharge. SFD is providing in-kind supports such as office space, use of two-way radios, dispatch (staff movement), and incident and data tracking.

Confirmation was received from SHA for the continuation of funding, however, as of April 29, 2024, the most recent Amending Agreement has not been received for review or execution. It is expected that the Amending Agreement will remain the same, and that funding and operation costs have not decreased. Should any unexpected changes occur, discussions with SHA and relevant stakeholders (i.e., Local No. 80 and corporate strategic partners) will be initiated. The position will not be filled until such time as amendments can be agreed upon and signed.

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

SFD's OOT aims to reduce the societal impact of drug overdoses by providing education and outreach to Saskatoon's vulnerable populations. The Ministry's year-long funding extension is a recognition of the value of the program, and that dedicated resources can help develop networks that contribute to its long-term success.

The extension will:

- provide stability and consistency to the program;
- allow for the cultivation of long-term strategies and relationships;
- increase the program's capacity and reach;
- bolster the program's efficacy and impact; and
- create new inroads to supporting individuals that align with the Province of Saskatchewan's transition to a recovery-oriented system of care.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no privacy, legal, or environmental implications identified.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The development of the OOT agreement with SHA has been a catalyst to updating SFD's other partnerships and agreements relating to SFD's emergency response services in Saskatoon. This partnership has also created opportunities for SFD to begin exploring other proactive community and pre-hospital partnerships, using the OOT's model as a template.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Services Agreement Overdose Outreach Team 2022
2. Second Amending Agreement Overdose Outreach Team 2023

Report Approval

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