

Safe Community Action Alliance - Overview

Report 2.0 - Safe Community Action Alliance Development Summary as at August 2018

The Background:

In 2017, one of Saskatoon City Council's ten Strategic Directions involved Community Safety and Wellbeing. Concurrently, the Saskatoon Police Commission has long supported an integrated focus on expansion of stabilization services through the Action Accord. Together, they asked:

- How does our community respond to the needs of all citizens to have a sense of safety and connectedness?
- Can we increase the feeling of safety in the community for both the vulnerable as well as for the remainder of the city's population?
- Can our community connect and integrate our efforts and achieve better results?
- Can we build on the work of several previous groups to improve collaboration and action toward a vision of a safe and vibrant community for all citizens?
- In other words, "Can We Do Better?"

An integrated approach has been attempted, to a degree, in the past. From each of these prior attempts, most of which included five to eight groups, the SCAA approach has attempted to incorporate the most effective elements, as follows:

- Safe Streets Commission – It focused its efforts on identifying and housing the couple dozen most challenging city residents who were commonly on the streets.
 - Its success was the launch and completion of a focused project that saw most of the target group being housed in a Housing First approach. Its shortcoming is that it has been inactive for several years since this project was undertaken.
- Action Accord – It focused on a narrow band of activities designed to increase the inventory of stabilization facilities and services for people intoxicated in public but who do not present a danger to others.
 - Its success was the significant expansion of intox facilities and services whereas its shortcoming was its narrow mandate.
- Street Activity Steering Committee – It collects and reports highly relevant data every two months on calls for service from the Community Support Officers' interaction with people on the streets in the three central business districts.
 - Its success was the quality of data gathered on a timely basis whereas its shortcoming was the reporting process that can see its data take 6 to 9 months to reach decision makers by which time the data is out of date.
- City Centre Street Issues Group – It was formed to better facilitate a focused and integrated approach by the groups dealing with street activity in the city centre area.
 - Its success was much greater communication between SPS Central Division and the CSO Program as well as a new mechanism for accessing Social Services assistance whereas its shortcomings were a narrow mandate and limited capacity for causing needed changes to occur.

The Development Process:

Discussions with groups regarding the formation of a cohesive, co-ordinated and broad approach to dealing with safety on the streets began in the summer of 2017. One-on-one meetings were held with 34 individuals from about two dozen Saskatoon agencies addressing the questions from the beginning of this report.

The response was exceptionally positive with significant enthusiasm displayed for adopting a more effective model of agency interaction with the intent of creating a systematic approach to community safety issues.

The following principles were identified by participants as vital to SCAA's success:

- Reconciliation needs to be a common thread in all aspects of the process.
- The process must address immediate issues as well as long term / systemic issues.
- Process efficiency is key - meaning fewer meetings and more results.
- The agenda and its actions must be evidence based.
- Advocacy on identified priorities is vital.

- Information sharing is an underpinning of the process.
- SCAA is to be integrated, based on information sharing, with an action agenda based on the facts, and it must be strategic.

The 28 participating groups, some of which have more than one representative, include:

AIDS Saskatoon, Brief Detoxification Unit, Broadway Business Improvement District, City of Saskatoon, Community Support Officer Program, CUMFI, Downtown Business Improvement District, Friendship Inn, HUB, John Howard Society, Riversdale Business Improvement District, Salvation Army, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Saskatoon City Council, Saskatoon Crisis Intervention, Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, Saskatoon Fire & Protective Services, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, Saskatoon Police Commission, Saskatoon Police Service, Saskatoon Public School Division, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Saskatoon United Way, Str8Up, 33rd Street Business Improvement District, The Lighthouse, University of Saskatchewan and YWCA.

The groups met in September 2017 as a confirmation of commitment to the process and for development of next steps. More than 40 representatives attended. That was followed by a second meeting in December 2017 where the SCAA mandate and operating method were further defined. Next, SCAA held its first quarterly meeting in January 2018 where the top priorities were identified and refined. At its April 2018 meeting, SCAA addressed the highest priority topics identified by the group - **suitable housing options** and the **crystal meth** issue. In both cases, a sub-group for each met twice prior to the April 2018 meeting to bring forward refinements about the scope of each issue to be addressed by SCAA, as well as recommended steps and strategies. In addition, **a statistical package**, designed to provide factual evidence of the status of each issue as well as activity overall, is provided for each quarterly meeting.

The Process Overview:

From the outset, there has been an outstanding level of support for this initiative from the groups involved. After a rigorous interview process plus three development meetings (which are prone to some “falling by the wayside” of groups), all groups have remained in the process. In fact, most of the groups are also participating in one of the three sub-groups as well.

It is the clear understanding of the groups that the issues identified will typically have a need for both short term actions as well as longer term strategies. Again, there has been strong commitment by group members to work on either the shorter term elements or the longer term plan. It has also been noted that some of the actions identified by SCAA can be enacted directly by SCAA members.

Some recommendations and actions, however, require the active assistance of senior leaders in the community. That support has been put into place as, concurrently, numerous senior leaders, known as the Partnership Group, have agreed to lend their support to the actions and strategies identified by SCAA.

The path forward for SCAA can be summarized as follows:

- To clearly define top priority issues (which it has already done, although it will shift over time),
- To then carefully frame the issue from the standpoint of SCAA’s capacity to cause positive change,
- To set out specific recommended strategies,
- To carry out the actions in areas where SCAA has the capacity to do so, and then
- To engage the assistance of the Partnership Group, populated by those who have the gravitas to see the recommended strategies be enacted, in carrying forward the issues raised by the full SCAA group to the federal, provincial or civic government agencies, as required.

SCAA participants are cognizant of the challenges associated with developing an integrated and cohesive approach in addressing these vital community safety issues, with this large number of groups in the mix. That said, the participants are highly aware of the fact that the Safe Community Action Alliance is likely the broadest, most comprehensive and most integrated approach to community safety that has ever been attempted in the history of Saskatoon.

Report 3.0 - SCAA Crystal Meth Action List

10 members including two lived experience voices

The crystal meth group has reviewed statistics from police and SHA to determine the dimensions of CM usage. Data from past 6 years confirms violence, and criminal charges and increasing use of this drug. There is strong evidence for concerns with the effects being felt in almost every SCAA member agency. Treatment options for those who express a desire to abstain are woefully lacking in our community ranging from immediate detox beds to long term treatment and intervention avenues. The nature of CM users is such that when treatment intervention is offered it must be immediate or the user is lost again.

Completed

- Ensuring that the judicial system is applying the harshest and strongest penalties for dealing and trafficking. (received information from judges with precedents and recent cases to demonstrate that judicial system is applying the best possible avenues for deterrence for trafficking and dealing)
- Endorsing the expansion of treatment with suboxone as an immediate intervention with addicts who self- identify in the ER (underway at SHA Saskatoon)
- Support for and endorsed the provincial decision to keep meth pipes and glass stems for drug consumption behind glass and designate this paraphernalia as “imported novelties”

Underway

- Staff Training and education for security and safety – How do we ensure that the frontline workers are trained and know how to keep themselves as safe as possible when encountering or dealing with CM?
- Examining the options for pooling the resources we do have to determine if the system for training can be realigned and maximized to be more efficient especially for those agencies who have few resources for training and exploring options for emergency fund available through the federal opioid response fund to potentially access to support our development of a joint training program for staff of all agencies. And accessing national and international avenues for online training and training manuals for interventions that are effective for both safety of workers and treatment resource development
- Learning about treatment advances and opportunities – as the science of intervention develops are we accessing the best options for our community for treatment? And learning about small policy changes that may support advances like extending the permitted length of stay at BDU etc.
- Tracking the gaps and developing a more seamless system for interaction with crystal meth users – Where is our system disjointed or not connected so that as a result many clients fall into cracks and those who are working in the field are not connected enough.
- Preliminary planning for a workshop to determine a CM intervention pathway in Saskatoon.

Recommendations to SCAA

1. That SCAA endorse a plan to complete a mapping exercise for the fall for members to work together to trace the pathway for CM interventions in Saskatoon.
2. That SCAA endorse a plan in conjunction with the above recommendation that includes or develops a separate exercise with voices of lived experience to tell us where the gaps are in our system.
3. That SCAA work towards consolidating the training programs in Saskatoon to provide adequate access to all SCAA members staff for safety training and protocols.

Requests to Partnership Group:

- That all Partnership Group Members move to ensure their current training resources for CM are as open as possible for access by all SCAA members staffs for training and safety learning.
- That all Partnership Group Members publicly speak to the issues of rising crystal meth use in our community and communicate the need to support education and awareness as well as expand treatment resources.
- That Partnership Group Members provide 1) facilitators, and 2) practical resources (room rental, food, registration details) to deliver the mapping workshop(s).
- That Partnership Group Members provide evaluation and data analysis assistance as an ongoing element of the CM action plan.

Report 4.0 - SCAA Sustainable Housing Action List

11 members including 2 lived experience voices

The Sustainable Housing group has reviewed a number of initiatives underway in Saskatoon and recognized that communication amongst all groups working on the initiatives is an essential step. If all involved are fully aware of the activity of others there is synergy to be gained in supporting one another and offering to collaborate when needed.

Completed

- Support the development of a landlord registry for Saskatoon – discussions at the City are well underway and the SCAA should be recognized as a supportive partner as well as a body to be consulted throughout the development process.
- Continue to be informed of advocacy efforts related to the provincial decision to eliminate disability housing supplement.

Underway:

- Learning about managed alcohol housing options and supporting the increase in available programs/spots for clients to access
- Learning about Rent/Smart opportunities and supporting the development of Rent Ed program; investigation into other linkages with community service agencies to support the training for leaders to provide the course modules (i.e. Food Bank, Salvation Army)
- Learning about the Crime Free Housing program and determining potential linkages amongst agencies not already involved.

Recommendations to SCAA:

1. That SCAA members support and endorse the expansion of managed alcohol programs in Saskatoon as an effective alternative housing option for selected clients. And, that SCAA members where possible provide letters of support for expansion of the Lighthouse managed alcohol program as the application for a federal grant to expand progresses. (Individual members of SCAA will receive updates on the progress of the application and the need for signed letters of support to be included in the application process.)
2. That SCAA members support and endorse the continuing development of a Rent Ed. Program and explore the funding support for train the trainers activity.

Requests For Partnership Group:

- Provide letters of support for the expansion of managed alcohol beds at the Lighthouse
- Speak to the ongoing needs for managed alcohol housing alternatives.
- Resources to support the Rent Ed. Train the Trainers program
- Resources to fund selected participants to complete the Rent Ed. Program