



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HKLN Drug Strategy Recognizes Anti-Stigma Day on June 26th.

Local event taking place to raise awareness around the negative impact stigma has.

(June 25, 2024) – The [Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes Northumberland \(HKLN\) Drug Strategy](#) would like to recognize June 26th as *Anti-Stigma Day* raising awareness and education regarding the negative impact stigma has on those who use substances.

Addiction is not a choice. It is a treatable medical condition, yet many people affected by addiction face stigma. Stigma is negative attitudes, beliefs or behaviours about or towards a group of people because of their situation in life. It includes discrimination, prejudice, judgment and stereotypes, which can isolate people who use drugs.

People struggling with addiction face discrimination and barriers to getting help. Stigma can:

- lead a person to avoid getting help because they are afraid of judgement or getting in trouble with work, their loved ones or even the law.
- cause a person to hide their drug use or use drugs alone.
- affect a person's ability to find housing and jobs, which affects their health and quality of life.
- contribute to people who use drugs receiving a lower quality of care from the healthcare system when they access services.

The HKLN Drug Strategy would like to acknowledge the [Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough](#) who began hosting this annual community event in 2021. Their goal is to raise awareness and education within the Peterborough community regarding the negative impact stigma can have on those who use substances by offering practical ways to combat stigma.

"We encourage everyone to be kind and consider the language you may be using or encountering which can be extremely stigmatizing against those who use substances," said Dane Record, Chair of the HKLN Drug Strategy. "Reducing the stigma associated with substance use is a huge goal for us and we commend the leadership and team at The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough for their active involvement each year."

The HKLN Drug Strategy would like to encourage members of the public, local agencies and community organizations to participate by sharing social media posts in support of *Anti-Stigma Day* or attending the following event to show support:

OUR VISION

The HKLN Drug Strategy strives for supportive and safe environments that promote the health and resiliency of individuals, families and communities, and reduce the harms and stigma associated with substance use.



Anti-Stigma Day at Peterborough's Millenium Park

Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2024. | Time: 1-4 p.m.

Location: Millenium Park, Peterborough, ON

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough will be hosting a community event with several other organizations offering educational activities, listening and information sessions, giveaways and games.

Changing how you talk about drug use

The language you use has a direct and deep impact on people around you. You can reduce stigma by changing the words you use to talk about drug use. Using kind words can make it easier for someone to speak up, to feel understood or to receive help.

You can:

- use person-first language, for example say 'person who uses drugs' instead of 'drug user'.
- use neutral, medically accurate words when describing drug use.
- avoid slang such as "addict" and "junkie".
- use language that shows care and concern, rather than judgement.
- speak up when you hear someone being treated or talked to in a disrespectful way.
- use language that acknowledges and promotes the fact that recovery from addiction is possible and looks different for everyone.

Take these steps to help reduce stigma:

- do not define any person by their drug use.
- be respectful, compassionate and caring to those who use drugs.
- educate your friends and family - pass on facts and challenge stereotypes.
- remember that addiction is a treatable medical condition, not a choice, and is deserving of care just like any other medical condition.
- be aware of your attitudes and behaviours because they may be influenced by stereotypes, negative stories and images about people who use drugs.

For More Information

- Visit the Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough's [webpage](#) on Anti-Stigma Day
- Visit the [HKLN Drug Strategy](#) to learn more about current harm reduction efforts
- View the '[End Stigma Campaign](#)' video, Government of Canada

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