

# CSWB Impact Story - Homeless Crisis Outreach Project

## Final Report

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**City of Ottawa**

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the Impact Story

The purpose of this impact story is to illustrate and explain the impacts of CSWB funding and the supported programs, individuals, and communities it supports. This impact story highlights the Somerset West Community Health Centre's (SWCHC) community-based Homeless Crisis Outreach Project (HCOP) and covers results information about both the organization, and the individuals served by the project.

This impact story report is one line of evidence and aligns with the goals of the CSWB evaluation to explore how the CSWB fund is effecting change at the community level, namely by:

- Increasing capacity in the funded organizations and programs;
- Building and strengthening community resources;
- Positive outcomes for clients; and
- Social development and reduction of risks of harm.

### 1.2 Organization Description

Somerset West Community Health Centre (SWCHC) is a non-profit, community-governed organization that was established in 1978. SWCHC is located in Ottawa's Chinatown and provides health and social services to community members in the neighbourhood. A particular focus of SWCHC work is to help vulnerable people (e.g., seniors, individuals with low incomes, individuals with different levels of ability, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, unhoused or precariously housed individuals or individuals from ethnocultural, racialized or newcomer communities) to access services by removing barriers that these people might be facing.

### 1.3 Impact Story Development Process

All funding-recipients were invited to share impact stories as part of the evaluation process. Additionally, interviews conducted with funding-recipients also included questions around the impact of the funding both internally on the organizations, as well as the clients served by each project. GGI developed an evidence matrix to summarize the collected information and analyse the impact that CSWB funding had with a particular focus on how the funding a) increased capacity in the funded organizations and programs; b) contributed to building and strengthening community resources; c) positively impacting outcomes for clients; and, d) contributing to social development (e.g., enhanced partnerships). This evidence matrix was then shared with city staff to determine which impact stories should be featured. One impact story for each of the three priority areas (i.e., projects and services for mental health promotion, the prevention or

intervention of mental health crisis, and outreach services; projects and services for racialized youth and project and services for Indigenous mental health) was selected. After the selection process, this impact story was then developed based on a review of program documents, an interview conducted with SWCHC as well as testimonials and supporting documents submitted by SWCHC. GGI reviewed and summarized the information which was then verified in collaboration with SWCHC before the final submission of the impact story.

## 1.4 Alignment of Organization with Impact Areas

SWCHC's HCOP project is aligned with the CBSW's priority area of projects and services for mental health promotion, the prevention of intervention of mental health crisis, and outreach services.

## 1.5 Project Description

SWCHC's community-based Homeless Crisis Outreach Project (HCOP) provides outreach supports to address the unique needs of unhoused or precariously-housed individuals experiencing crisis in the Somerset West catchment area. Workers (HCOWs) respond to people in distress, de-escalate conflicts, provide mental health supports (e.g., brief counselling), and refer individuals to SWCHC and other health/social services for follow-up. HCOWs also provide overdose prevention and response, transportation to emergency shelter, referrals to housing, health and social service supports and distribution of items such as food, water, and harm reduction gear.

HCOP promotes both individual and community well-being. Workers engage both in proactive outreach in the area they serve, and respond to calls from residential or business neighbors that they receive. As such, HCOP provides an opportunity for community members to call someone for support other than the police if they encounter someone in crisis. The project's model is community-owned and community-based, meaning that it was developed based on extensive consultations with residents in the area, including those with lived experience of being unhoused or precariously housed. Overall, the project has four specific objectives:

- Providing outreach services to community members at greater risk of mental distress;
- Connecting people to community resources;
- Providing crisis supports; and,
- Promoting mental health by strengthening neighbourhood understanding of homelessness and building capacity.

## 1.6 Project Partnerships

HCOP was developed in response to community recommendations after SWCHC co-hosted a community safety meeting in partnership with city councillors and local Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) including Chinatown/Preston Street. The meeting included presentations

from the BIAs, our MPP, Ottawa Police and Ottawa Public Health. More than 80 residents, businesses, schools, churches and community agencies including St. Luke's Table attended. SWCHC continues their work with the community partners mentioned above to ensure they aren't duplicating services between organizations, hearing a diversity of community perspectives, and utilizing every possible avenue to reach marginalized community members who may not otherwise be tapped into SWCHC services. Because SWCHC's outreach staff have a broader mandate than other services within the community, this collaboration is key to care coordination with existing services/ensuring resources are leveraged effectively.

## 2.0 Impact of the CWSB Funding

### 2.1 Anticipated Results for the Organization

While HCOP received funding for its first year of operation through another source, SWCHC anticipated that CSWB funding would enable them to expand the HCOP service offering in year one to address a sharp increase in mental health distress and community need resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the funding was thought to allow the organization to continue operating HCOP in subsequent years which was thought to be crucial considering the increasing need for mental health supports accessible to street-involved individuals.

### 2.2 Changes in Organization

CSWB funding has made a positive impact on SWCHC's internal capacity and on offering HCOP. Specifically, the funding enabled SWCHC to sustain and expand the services offered under the HCOP. While SWCHC had secured funding through another funding source to run HCOP for one year, the additional funding received from the City of Ottawa allowed them to continue to offer the program at a similar staffing capacity which would not have been possible otherwise and would have meant to compromise the organizations' ability to reach and support their clients.

The funding also allowed them to adapt their services and resources to address new and emerging needs in their clients and address the increasingly complex challenges that their clients are facing (e.g., increase of overdoses and drug-induced psychosis due to changing drug supply, increased housing and food insecurity partly caused by the gentrification of the neighbourhood).

*The funding has been instrumental in addressing the rising complexities and distress faced by the community. It has allowed us to strengthen our resources, improve our services, and provide targeted support to individuals who are teetering on the edge of precarity.*

Additionally, the funding has allowed SWCHC to integrate dedicated positions for individuals with lived and living experience into HCOP. Previously, HCOP did not have a dedicated position for individuals with lived and living experience, but CSWB funding allowed the organization to expand the HCOP team to incorporate representation from those with firsthand experience. This also allowed them to develop culturally relevant services specifically designed to meet the needs of individuals who are unhoused, precariously housed or substance users.

Finally, the funding has also enabled the organization to strengthen and expand their engagement with existing partners (e.g., the community liaison committee) and to develop new partnerships (e.g., Centertown Community Health Centre), which has overall contributed to providing a stronger network of support for the community at large.

## 2.3 Target Population Served by the Project

The target population of the HCOP is individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity within SWCHC's catchment area. HCOP reaches them through proactive outreach, going into the community to find them where they are sleeping rough, using drugs, socializing with peers, etc. Workers build trust and rapport with individuals over time, with the ultimate hope of preventing mental health crisis by connecting them to social/health services before escalation to a crisis. Residents and businesses can call/email HCOP to request their presence in a mental health crisis situation such as loud yelling/verbalizing, toxic drug reactions, or public drug use - reducing burden on policing and ensuring the arrival of individuals with a social service background who are well-versed in de-escalation/suicide prevention and may have established trusting relationships. There is an overrepresentation of people who are living with mental illness, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+, using substances and/or disabled within the numbers of street-involved people in the city of Ottawa. As SWCHC is a community health centre with varied services, the organization is uniquely suited to meet these complex needs.

## 2.4 Anticipated Results for the Target Populations Served by the Organization

SWCHC anticipated that CSWB funding would allow HCOP to provide continuous crisis support and response to clients as well as to ensure that clients receive appropriate referrals to services and supports (e.g., housing, food banks etc.) needed to enhance their wellbeing. Moreover, the organization hoped that the funding would allow them to maintain their outreach activities to continue to build trusting relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Building trustful relationships is particularly important because many of HCOPs clients have previous experiences with the health care system that have caused them to mistrust.

## 2.5 Changes in Individuals (as Members of Target Populations)

In the last year, HCOWs have responded to 349 calls for service and provided crisis response support more than 4,000 times. Feedback from HCOP clients demonstrates the positive impact that the project has had on their lives. Specifically, this feedback highlights that the project has helped clients to ensure that they get to appointments and feel safe and supported.

*They help me in tremendous ways. They pick me up when I've fallen down, make sure I'm safe and that I'm where I'm supposed to be, make sure I get to appointments. They are very supportive.*

*I would struggle quite a bit more; I'd be a lot less confident in making decisions and being around in the area. Just not knowing that they're there if I need help would make me feel uneasy. I wouldn't feel like I have anyone to trust and wouldn't feel like I had any support.*

The presence of HCOP workers in the neighbourhood also positively impacts clients' sense of belonging. It instills a feeling of security in clients knowing that there is someone they can turn to in situations of need and/or distress. HCOP workers are also seen as important confidants, as they are often the only people that clients feel they can trust and ask for support. Accessing the

services that HCOP offers can make the difference for some to "make it a good day" despite all the hardship encountered. For some, HCOP also presents the only source of getting help and keeps up their hope of getting off the street eventually.

The work of HCOP does not only positively impact clients but has unexpectedly also resulted in engagement with local businesses and the residential community in the area. Specifically, through their timely response to incidents in the neighbourhood, HCOWs have not only been able to build trust with unhoused individuals but also with business and residential neighbours. This has allowed HCOWs to engage in meaningful conversations with community members to address myths and stigma towards unhoused individuals and to provide community members with education on how to better support individuals in crisis.

*I am slowly losing hope and grip on reality and hope for any kind of recovery from the street. I've been on the street for 5 years now. HCOW is our only source to get help.*

These efforts have both taken the form of informal conversations when responding to calls as well as organized formal training. For example, HCOWs have delivered 7 Naloxone training sessions to local businesses and community groups over the past few months. HCOWs have also developed and distributed resources to community members to better equip them with information on what to do or whom to call when they encounter someone in distress (see the "Who to Call" and "Where to Go" resources in the appendix).

*Five years ago, if I came upon someone in distress, I would have had no idea what to do. Now, because of my engagement with HCOW, I know exactly what to do to assess the situation and who to call if I need help. This is a game changer.*

Community members have indicated the importance of learning about how to appropriately react when encountering individuals in distress and crisis and have also emphasized the importance of HCOWs providing "humane and critical assistance" particularly to unhoused individuals but also the community at large.



## 3.0 Reflections and Conclusion

### 3.1 Key Reflections

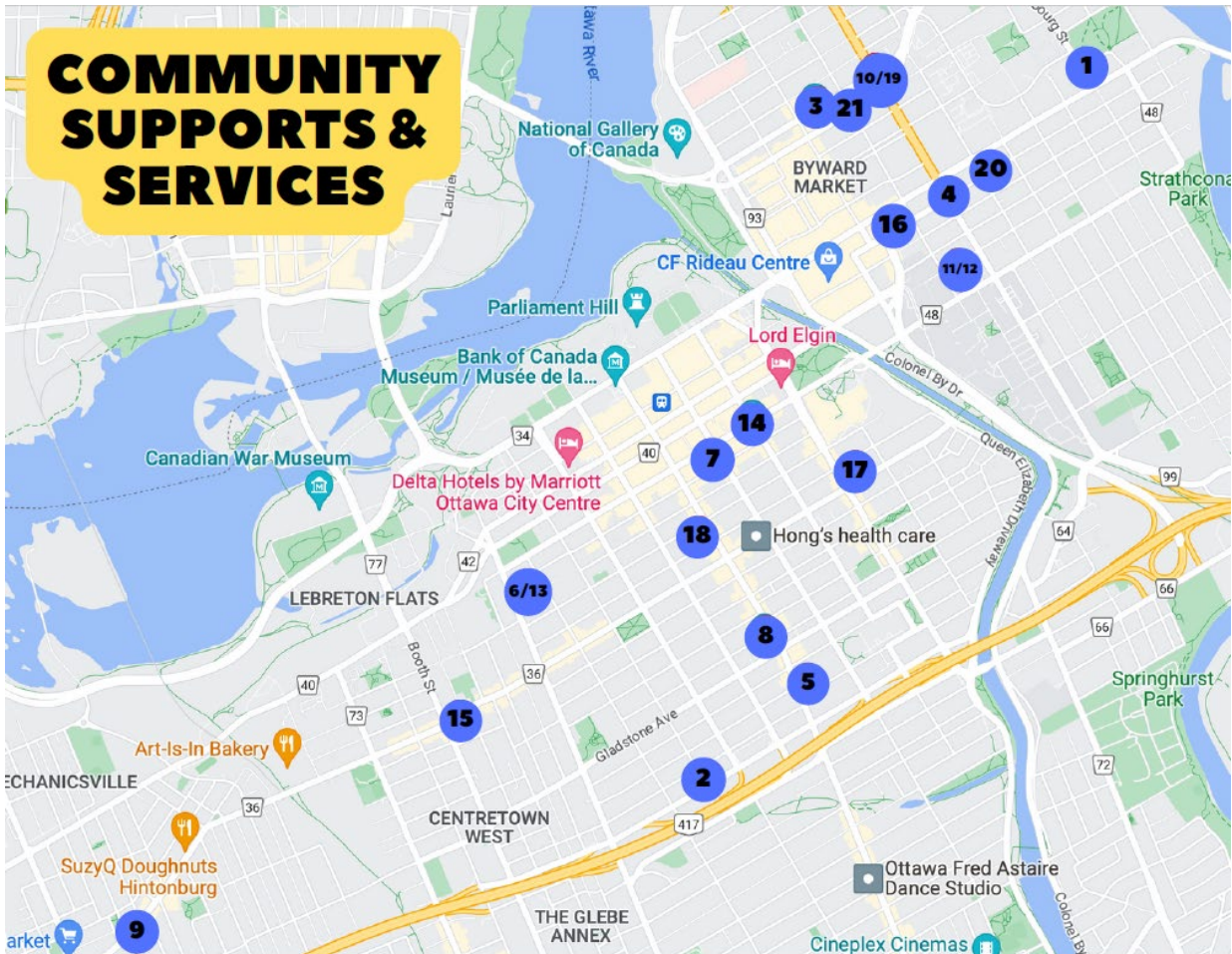
CSWB funding has made important contributions to expanding the capacity of HCOP which has resulted in a number of benefits, most noticeably:

- Being able to respond in a timely and humane manner to the increasing number of mental health crisis experienced by unhoused or precariously housed individuals in the catchment area;
- Strengthening the capacity among community members to know how to react when encountering someone in crisis and ensuring these community members can call someone for support other than the police to deescalate and provide support; and,
- Providing unhoused or precariously housed individuals in the catchment area with needed supports and services as well as instilling hope and trust in them.






























### 3.2 Conclusions

The work undertaken by SWCHC as part of its HCOP has had a tremendous positive impact on the community at large. Funding received through the CSWB fund by the City of Ottawa has not only increased the internal capacity of the organization to deliver the program (e.g., staffing capacity, expanded partnerships etc.) but has also impacted residents and clients positively. Overall, the direct work with unhoused and precariously housed individuals in crisis undertaken by the HCOWs as well as the educational work that HCOWs have been able to undertake with local business owners and residents has resulted in stronger relationships with all stakeholders in the community. Most importantly, this program has contributed to building compassion for and increased capacity to support unhoused or precariously housed individuals in the catchment area ultimately resulting in clients feeling better supported and more secure.

# Appendix A: Where to Go List



## Where to Go: Ottawa Drop-In Services

1. **Capital City City Mission (521 Rideau St)** 
  - Mon-Fri: 9am-1pm and Tue 6:30pm-8pm
2. **Catherine St Hub (370 Catherine St)**  
  - Mon-Fri: 8:30am-4:30pm
3. **Centre Espoire Sophie (145 Murray St) (women)** 
  - Mon-Thu: 1pm-6pm
  - Fri: 11am-2pm
4. **Centre 454 (454 King Edward Ave)** 
  - 7 days/week: 8am-3pm (except closed at 1pm on Wednesdays)
5. **Centre 507 (507 Bank St)** 
  - Mon, Wed, Thu: 9-10:30am, 12-3:30pm, and 4pm-8:45pm
  - Tue: 5:30pm-8:45pm
  - Fri: 9am-10:30am and 12pm-3:30pm
  - Sun: 9am-11am and 12:30pm-3:30pm
6. **Elizabeth Fry (211 Bronson Ave)**   
  - Women and gender queer only
  - Mon-Fri: 9am-12am and 1pm-4pm
7. **Operation Come Home (150 Gloucester St)**   
  - Youth 16-25 years old only
  - Mon-Fri: 8:30am-11:30am and 4:30pm-7:30pm
8. **Ottawa Innercity Ministries (391 Gladstone Ave)** 
  - Tue, Thu: 1pm-3pm (takeaway meals only)
9. **Parkdale Food Centre (30 Rosemount)** 
  - Mon-Thu: 9am-3pm
10. **Shepherds of Good Hope (233 Murray St)** 
  - 7 days/week: 11:30am-12:30pm and 5:30pm-9:30pm
11. **St Joe's Supper Table (151 Laurier Ave)** 
  - Mon-Fri: 9:30am-1pm
  - Tue-Fri: 5pm-6pm
12. **St Joe's Women's Centre (151 Laurier Ave) (women)**   
  - Mon-Fri: 9:30am-3:30pm (except closed until 12pm on Wednesdays)
13. **St Luke's (211 Bronson Ave)** 
  - Mon-Fri: 8am-3pm (except closed at 1pm on Thursdays)
14. **St Peter and St Paul's Anglican Church (152 Metcalfe St)** 
  - Fri: 7:30pm-9:30pm
15. **Somerset West Community Health Centre (55 Eccles St)**  
  - 7 days/week: 9am-4pm
16. **The Ottawa Mission (35 Waller St)**  
  - 7 days/week: 8am-4pm
17. **The Well (275 Elgin St)**    
  - Mon-Thu: 8am-3pm (except closed at 1pm on Mondays)
  - Women only until 12:30pm

### SHOWER AND LAUNDRY SERVICES

15. **Somerset West Community Health Centre (55 Eccles St)**
  - Mon-Fri: 9am-4pm (shower only)
18. **Centretown Community Health Centre (420 Cooper St)**
  - Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri 9-11:30am (shower only)
12. **St Joe's Women's Centre (151 Laurier Ave) (women)**
  - Showers: Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri at 10am and 1:30pm
  - Laundry: Mon, Tue, and Thu
17. **The Well (154 Somerset St) (women only until 12:30pm)**
  - Mon-Thu: 8am-3pm (except closed at 1pm on Mondays)

### SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION

15. **Somerset West Community Health Centre (55 Eccles St)**
  - 7 days/week: 9am-4pm
19. **The Trailer (230 Murray St)**
  - 7 days/week: 24 hours
20. **Sandy Hill Community Health Centre (221 Nelson St)**
  - Mon-Fri: 8am-5pm
21. **Ottawa Public Health (179 Clarence St)**
  - Mon-Fri: 9am-5pm

# Appendix B: Who to Call – English Version

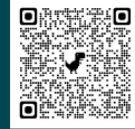
APRIL 2022



## WHO TO CALL

If there is a life threatening emergency, always call 9-1-1. This list of services was developed for the West Centretown area. Some services are catchment specific and some are municipal.

scan me to  
provide feedback



### WHEN YOU WITNESS SOMEONE IN DISTRESS OR NEEDING SUPPORT

#### YOUR FIRST CALL:

Somerset West Community Health Centre Homeless Crisis Outreach (HCOW) Program & St. Luke's Outreach  
*West Centretown specific*

- Can respond to issues such as people in distress, public drug use and clean-up of needles or other items.
- 613-447-0029 or [homelessoutreach@swchc.on.ca](mailto:homelessoutreach@swchc.on.ca)
- Available 7 days a week, 1pm-9pm

#### A SECOND RESOURCE FOR EVENINGS:

Drug Overdose Prevention and Education Response (DOPE) Team *Catchment specific*

- Foot outreach in the neighborhood 7 days per week, 5pm-11pm. They can assist with someone in distress or at risk of overdose, as well as with needle clean-up activities.
- Carlington Catchment Area: 613-619-0584 Centretown Catchment Area: 613-619-0543  
Somerset Catchment Area: 613-402-5189
- The DOPE response team assists isolated people who use drugs and are at risk of an overdose, provides resources, peer support, overdose prevention and more.

#### YOU SEE SOMEONE SLEEPING OUTSIDE:

Salvation Army Outreach Van *City of Ottawa*

- Connect with them through 311 or or [outreach@saobc.org](mailto:outreach@saobc.org)
- Emergency-based transportation service for homeless and shelter-staying clients.
- Life-sustaining necessities such as sleeping bags, boots, jackets, socks, gloves, water, etc. Only provides food when donations are given.
- Available: 7 days a week, 11am-3am

### WHEN YOU FIND DISCARDED NEEDLES OR DRUG USE SUPPLIES

Do not pick up or touch the needle without the proper supplies and knowledge of needle disposal. Please call 3-1-1. If you need this cleaned up more immediately than can be done by the City of Ottawa, please call the HCOW or DOPE team at the numbers listed above.

City of Ottawa *City of Ottawa*

- 311 or [needlereporting@ottawa.ca](mailto:needlereporting@ottawa.ca)
- City of Ottawa needle pick-up and disposal
- Takes up to an hour or more for arrival
- Available 24/7
- Website: <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca>

CONSIDER SAVING OUR  
NUMBERS IN YOUR  
PHONE!





# Appendix C: Who to Call – French Version

MAY 2022



## QUI APPELER

En cas d'urgence mettant en péril la vie de quelqu'un, appelez toujours le 9-1-1. Cette liste de services a été développée pour la région du centre-ville ouest. Certains services sont spécifiques à la zone desservie et d'autres sont municipaux.

numérisez pour donner  
votre rétroaction



### SI VOUS VOYEZ UNE PERSONNE EN DÉTRESSE OU AYANT BESOIN D'AIDE

#### À QUI S'ADRESSER EN PREMIER LIEU :

Le programme d'aide aux sans-abri en situation de crise du Centre de santé communautaire Somerset Ouest et le programme d'approche de St. Luke's – *Spécifiquement au centre-ville ouest* :

- On peut intervenir dans des situations telles que des personnes en détresse et des cas de consommation de drogues en public et de ramassage de seringues ou d'autres objets.
- Composez le 613-447-0029 ou envoyez un courriel à [homelessoutreach@swchc.on.ca](mailto:homelessoutreach@swchc.on.ca)
- Heures de service : 7 jours sur 7 de 13 h à 21 h;

#### RESSOURCE À UTILISER EN SOIRÉE :

Équipe d'intervention pour la prévention et l'éducation en matière de surdose de drogues – *Spécifique à la zone desservie.*

- Sensibilisation à pied dans le quartier 7 jours sur 7, de 17 h à 23 h. Ses membres peuvent intervenir auprès d'une personne en détresse ou à risque de surdose et aider à ramasser les seringues usagées.
- Zones desservies : Carlington : 613-619-0584; centre-ville : 613-619-0543; Somerset : 613-402-5189.
- L'équipe aide les consommateurs de drogues en situation d'isolement et à risque de surdose, leur fournit des ressources, un soutien par les pairs, une sensibilisation à la prévention des surdoses, et plus encore.

#### QUAND VOUS VOYEZ QUELQU'UN DORMIR DEHORS :

Fourgonnette d'intervention de l'Armée du Salut – *Service à travers la ville d'Ottawa*

- Communiquez avec l'Armée du Salut en composant le 3-1-1 ou [outreach@saobc.org](mailto:outreach@saobc.org)
- Service de transport d'urgence pour les sans-abri et les personnes hébergées en refuge.
- Matériels essentiels au maintien de la vie, notamment les sacs de couchage, les bottes, les manteaux, les chaussettes, les gants, de l'eau, entre autres. Elle fournit de la nourriture uniquement en cas de dons.
- Heures de service : 7 jours sur 7, de 11 h à 15 h.

### QUE FAIRE LORSQUE VOUS TROUVEZ DES SERINGUES USAGÉES OU DU MATÉRIEL DE CONSOMMATION DE DROGUES?

Ne ramassez pas et ne touchez pas la seringue si vous ne disposez pas de l'équipement adéquat pour la faire et si vous ne savez pas comment vous en débarrasser. Veuillez appeler le 3-1-1. Si vous avez besoin d'un nettoyage plus immédiat que ne peut le faire la Ville d'Ottawa, veuillez appeler l'équipe du programme d'aide aux sans-abri en situation de crise du Centre de santé communautaire Somerset Ouest ou l'équipe d'intervention pour la prévention et l'éducation en matière de surdose de drogues aux numéros indiqués ci-dessus.

Ville d'Ottawa – *Service à travers la ville d'Ottawa*

- 3-1-1 ou [needlereporting@ottawa.ca](mailto:needlereporting@ottawa.ca)
- Service de ramassage et d'élimination des seringues
- Délai d'une heure ou plus avant l'arrivée du service.
- Heures de service : 24 heures sur 24, 7 jours sur 7
- Site Web : <https://www.santepubliqueottawa.ca>

PENSEZ À ENREGISTRER  
NOS NUMÉROS DANS  
VOTRE TÉLÉPHONE!

