Toronto youth talk harm reduction: Re-envisioning a new model for Trip!

The Trip! project is a youth-led harm reduction health information service for the dance music scene, and youth who use drugs. Trip! provides outreach, support, education, and peer leadership programming for youth who use drugs (ages 16-19) including providing: drug checking services, harm reduction supplies/information, direct support to youth, and training and support to peer volunteers to run program activities, and more. Trip! is located at Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (PQWCHC), a community-based health service organization located in south-west Toronto. PQWCHC offers a broad range of services including - primary health care, dental care, harm reduction, health promotion, counselling, and community development programming.

Trip! and PQWCHC partnered with the Centre for Community Based Research to conduct this evaluation. Our larger goal was to align the Trip! project with <u>PQWCHC's values, vision, and mission</u> of "providing and leading equitable, accessible, comprehensive health care for people where, when, and how they need it." A community advisory board consisting of primarily youth and some service providers guided this evaluation.

What did we want to learn?

patterns amongst young people in Toronto?

What are current drug use



What are young people looking for in harm reduction programs? How is Trip! currently run?
Who does Trip! serve? What
is/is not working well for
engaging diverse youth
who use drugs?

Community Health Centre's vision, values, and mission?

How does Trip! address

Parkdale Queen West

What would best support and enable youth from diverse drug using communities to engage with the Trip program?

What did we do? Who did we hear from?



and external literature review Interviews

Internal Trip! documents

Document Review



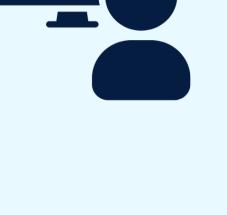
youth not connected to TRIP!.

Program Design Workshop

Shared findings with,

1 in-person and 2 online with 21

Focus Groups



6 external stakeholders (service providers internal and external to PQWCHC, party promoters) and 7 TRIP! (volunteers, peer workers, coordinator).



and workshopped program recommendations with 21 participants and community advisory board members

Drug Use Trends

Youth use drugs for lots of different reasons (for fun, relief

What we learned



from life challenges, and different drugs for different settings and seasons). The most mentioned drugs used by youth were cannabis, cocaine, MDMA, crystal meth, alcóhol, ketamine, and múshrooms. Age 12 was the most common age youth started using drugs.

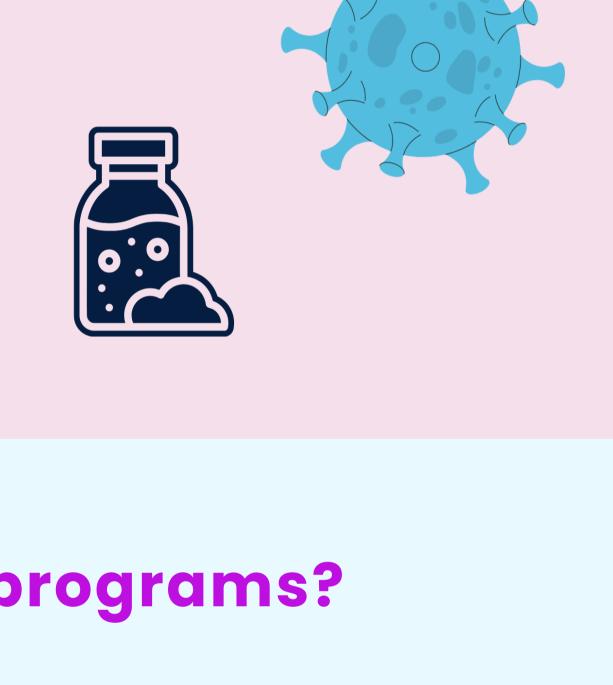
Youth shared many impacts from covid-19 including a disrupted drug supply (fentanyl laced into drugs and increased overdoses); changed and increased drug access; changes in the party scene (more youth using drugs in private settings). For many, drug use increased

and mental health challenges. What are youth looking for in harm reduction programs? Access to harm reduction

supplies and drug testing

due to increased stress, boredom, isolation,





harm reduction programming. Different approaches to harm

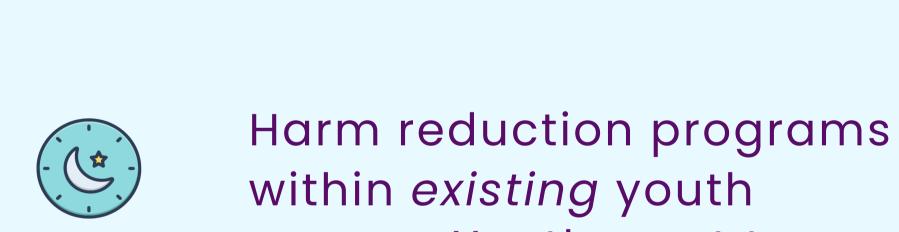


housing status, etc.

of race, sexual orientation,

reduction depending on their

lived identities and experiences



within existing youth spaces. Youth want to access services near where they live or hang out geographically.



Program Recommendations

Youth friendly signage

Incentives: food &

volunteer honoraria.

and social media content



and weekend hours led by youth with lived experience Harm reduction education

both inside and outside

want service providers,

workers trained in harm

reduction approaches.

organizations. Youth also

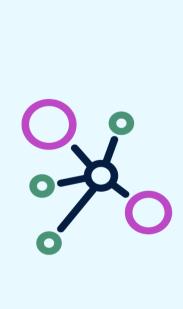
youth workers, and shelter

Non-judgemental, youth

friendly spaces with evening

Peer support. Programs run

by youth is vital for youth



Scene(s) Reach youth where they are at via inperson workshops and drop-ins

prioritizing venues

1. Expand Outside of the Party

outside of PQWCHC as well as a

dedicated partnership strategy

When conducting outreach at parties,

consider larger issues of equity when



Dedicate per volunteer and

employment opportunities for

youth who are also racialized,

low-income youth, in particular

- queer, and/or trans, and/or youth involved in the shelter system. Create enhanced support and incentives for youth on the
- 3. Establish a Youth Advisory Committee to Provide Guidánce

margins (honorariá, referral

processes, etc.).

on Future Activities

- Meetings to provide feedback on Trip! activities/outreach/ recruitment Set membership with drop in
- by others Incentives for youth participation

meetings for additional feedback

Youth currently not engaged in Trip! want to access harm reduction outside of the party scene.

reduction program activities. 79% of stakeholders identified "more outreach, workshops outside of the party scene, done in partnership with other organizations" as top activity.

marginalization)

of ranking were:

suggested future harm

4. Explore Future Program Activities

During a program design workshop,

we asked participants to rank



PARKDALE

Community

Health Centre

& peer worker trainings to integrate an intersectional approach Host in-person opportunities for youth to connect (especially for youth experiencing

Continue advocating for timely/reliable on-site drug testing

Intentionally revamp Trip! volunteer

 Explore conversations about youthspecific supervised consumption site (potentially in partnership with other youth-serving organizations) Use a partnership strategy to

strengthen referral system to better

- support Trip! youth Conduct_external service provider training (especially for those working in transitional housing/youth shelter system)

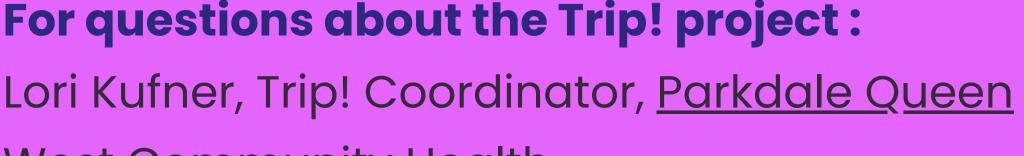
Internal in-reach through other

PQWCHC programs

- 5. Consider Revisiting Internal PQWCHC Priorities
- Intentionally integrate other youth-supports, services and structures into PQWCHC Decentralize the PQWCHC location as the physical 'centre' of Trip!, and instead,
 - move to a partnership-based service model, where primary outreach, workshops, drop-ins and support happens via alternate youth agencies
- who use drugs outside of the party scene

Enhance the scope of Trip! by sourcing other resources to meet the needs of youth

Partner with other youth agencies equipped to house and support Trip!



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