

# Make mental health care accessible for all

City of Guelph meeting with  
Ministry of Health



**We call on the Ministry of Health** to work with municipalities and community organizations to close mental health system gaps, and make mental health care accessible for all.

In the short term, the Ministry can support Guelph's recent funding application to extend the IMPACT program to 24/7 operation. Looking into the future, we look for your support in piloting alternative, community-based mental health services in Guelph.

## The benefits



Increased accessibility of mental health care for the most vulnerable



Reduced pressure on hospital emergency rooms

**2.5x**

Ability to appropriately respond to 2.5x more mental health related 911 calls through the IMPACT program

## Why we're here

Municipalities across Ontario are facing an unprecedented level of homelessness, substance use and mental health challenges. There are serious welfare impacts for individuals seeking mental health support, which are putting pressure on the already strained emergency

**Mental health is a complex issue, and closing mental health system gaps will require support and coordination from the Province.**

medical services. With multiple complex factors contributing to this crisis, municipalities do not have the capacity to address these issues alone.

The lack of accessibility across the entire mental health care continuum is a key gap in Ontario's mental health system. New, accessible, and community-based models are needed to increase accessibility of mental health care for the most vulnerable community members.

One such example is Guelph's IMPACT program, which has proven effective at responding to mental health emergencies. However, current funding only supports limited operating hours, meaning that this program misses a large portion of mental health related 911 calls.

# The details

## Mental health gaps

The lack of accessible mental health supports is a significant barrier to accessing health care for many people. In Guelph, free or accessible counseling and therapy services are virtually unavailable, while people seeking accessible psychiatric or residential treatment services face extremely long wait lists.

In light of these issues municipalities and community organizations around Ontario have developed innovative approaches to increasing the accessibility of mental health services:

- In London, the Alternate Care Destination Model provides 10 crisis stabilization beds on a 24/7 walk-in basis for patients with mild to moderate needs related to mental health and substance use. This model has significantly contributed to emergency room diversion and provides a positive experience for individuals who are able to receive targeted support without waiting in the ER.
- The Grove is a youth wellness hub in Guelph, offering a one-stop-shop for individuals aged 12-26 for needs related to mental health, substance use, primary care, education, employment, training, housing and other community and social services. There is interest in piloting an adult version of this model.

## Guelph's IMPACT program

The Integrated Mobile Police and Crisis Team (IMPACT) consists of highly trained mental health professionals from the Canadian Mental Health Association, who work alongside police officers to respond to mental health and addiction related 911 calls. This initiative is supported with funding from the Solicitor General, and has operated 8-12 a.m., seven days a week since 2021.

The lack of overnight coverage means that IMPACT misses around 60 per cent of all mental health related 911 calls, which occur during the night. An application was submitted in June 2023 to the Solicitor General for an additional \$2 million to extend the program to 24/7 operation. As the second application in two years, we are optimistic that this latest round will be successful in securing the much-needed funding.

This program has shown high potential in providing emergency mental health supports. During April 2023, IMPACT workers attended 36 live calls with police with an **80 percent hospital diversion rate**, and responded to 159 individuals following an after-the-fact referral.





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