

Call for Submissions

We invite you to participate in the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction's (CCSA) **Issues of Substance 2025** conference as a speaker. The conference will take place at the Halifax Convention Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from November 17 to 19, 2025.

We acknowledge that the conference will be held on the ancestral, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw Nation.

Please review the information below to learn about:

- The [conference in general](#);
- Submitting a [research, program and policy abstract](#);
- Submitting a [personal experience presentation outline](#);
- [Conference subsidies](#); and
- Other [key conference information](#).

About Issues of Substance 2025

CCSA's Issues of Substance is one of the few conferences in Canada that brings together a wide range of valuable perspectives on substance use health from people across the country. Healthcare professionals, harm reduction workers, counsellors, service providers, researchers, policy makers, knowledge brokers and people with direct or indirect lived and living experience with substance use come together with the common goal of learning from each other.

Occurring over three consecutive days, the event will provide an opportunity to share diverse perspectives, valuable experiences, new research, and best and promising practices. It will also give attendees a chance to network and participate in workshops related to substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, community programs and mental health.

For more information about the conference, visit the [Issues of Substance](#) website.

**Want to share your experience with substance use?
Check out [Personal Experience Submissions](#)
in this document for more information!**



2025 Conference Theme

The theme for CCSA's Issues of Substance 2025 conference is Anchoring Hope.

Hope is an optimistic state of mind that holds expectations for positive outcomes. Exploring substance use health at Issues of Substance 2025 can lead to positive outcomes such as connections and growth.

Yet the challenges and grief in the field cannot be unstated. In recent years, tens of thousands of people from across Canada have died because of the unpredictable drug supply.

In addition to the human impact of losing people we care about, there's an economic cost and a social toll that is affecting our healthcare system, along with the other impacts on individuals, families and communities that cannot be quantified. The depths of suffering and the fact that these issues lie at the intersection of mental health, crime, equity and other social factors have led to increasing challenges and division in Canada.

We need effective, holistic, whole-of-government and community action that is rooted in evidence and compassion. We need to work together to identify and reach common goals. And more than anything else, we need hope — hope for a brighter future with improved health and wellness of all people living in Canada.

In November 2025, close to 1,000 individuals with different experiences and ideas will converge in Halifax to learn, share and develop solutions to substance use health challenges. Coming together to listen and learn from each other will enable us to anchor hope for the future.

Present at the Conference

Our conference provides a platform for all voices to share knowledge and experience. With this in mind, we welcome submissions for presentations on:

- Research, programs or policies related to substance use health; and
- Personal experiences related to substance use health.

Submit your abstracts by **Monday, January 27, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

Refer to the [Research, Program or Policy Abstract Submissions](#) section of this document to learn about submission guidelines, presentation format, evaluation criteria and other details.

Refer to the [Personal Experience Submissions](#) section of this document to learn about submission guidelines.



Research, Program and Policy Abstract Submissions

Presentation Topics

Individuals and teams are encouraged to submit abstracts for presentations that stimulate ideas and discussion, increase knowledge, and promote improvements that will energize attendees to participate in debate. We are seeking presentations, panels, e-posters and workshops on research, policies and programs that cover evidence-informed practices, emerging research and innovative knowledge exchange strategies.

Abstracts are welcome across the continuum of substance use health; the intersection of substance use and mental health; the use and impact of all substances, including alcohol, opioids, cannabis, stimulants and other drugs of legal, illegal or evolving legal status (e.g., novel psychoactive substances, e-cigarettes, psychedelics); as well as overviews, research on and evaluations of programs and initiatives. Abstract submissions focusing on process or behavioural addictions, such as gambling, are also welcome.

Although we will consider all abstracts, we are looking for submissions that support the following subthemes:

- Emerging trends and new or priority issues.
- Local innovations in community-level programming (can go beyond service delivery and include housing access, employment, etc.).
- Policy- and system-level innovation, challenges and opportunities.
- Including people who use substances in building capacity and promoting health (e.g., co-design, user-led support, peer-support, self-directed living).
- Unique considerations for equity-deserving populations (e.g., youth, women, individuals involved in the justice system, older adults, people experiencing homelessness, newcomers to Canada, individuals in the 2SLGBTQ+ community).
- Indigenous approaches to healing.
- Stigma and discrimination.
- Mental health and substance use.
- Supports for people who use substances (e.g., role of family).
- Innovative approaches to delivering care (e.g., virtual care, therapy animals).
- The continuum of care: Promoting health, reducing harms, supporting recovery.

A key intent of CCSA's Issues of Substance 2025 is to stimulate discussion and the exchange of ideas by presenting new or emerging initiatives, policy analyses, knowledge exchange and research.



Presentation Formats

Individual Presentations (10 or 20 minutes)

Single presenters may present for 10 or 20 minutes and must budget time for a brief overview of the major points or highlights of their presentation. Presentations delivered by a team (groups of six 10-minute presentations and groups of three 20-minute presentations) will be followed by 30 minutes of moderated discussion and questions, arranged by the Issues of Substance Program Committee. Presentations on completed work with results or findings to share will be given preference for the 20-minute format.

Panel Presentations (60 minutes)

The 60-minute panel presentations typically feature three 20-minute presentations that are thematically linked, followed by 30 minutes of moderated discussion and questions. Consideration may also be given to one 60-minute presentation that requires a longer format such as storytelling. Only one abstract should be submitted that clearly describes all of the topics that will be addressed by the panel. Do not submit separate abstracts for each of the topics to be included in the panel.

Interactive Learning Workshops (90 minutes)

Workshops are interactive learning opportunities that demonstrate the real-life application of techniques and skills. The abstracts for workshops must include a clear explanation of how participants will be engaged and actively participate in learning. Participation cannot be limited to simple question-and-answer or group discussions.

E-Posters

E-posters visually showcase the key points or highlights of a particular research project, program or policy. E-posters must be digitally formatted. (CCSA will provide specific instructions upon accepting an abstract.)

E-posters will be presented on screens in a specified area of the conference venue. During designated times (to be determined before the conference), the authors must be available to engage with conference participants about their e-poster and respond to questions about their work.

Use our [Tips for Writing an Abstract](#) or contact us for help:
ios-info@ccsa.ca or 1-833-235-4048.

How to Submit Your Abstract

Submit your abstract online through the [call for submissions portal](#) by **Monday, January 27, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

You can submit no more than two abstracts as a primary presenter and must be listed as an author.



The Issues of Substance Program Committee reserves the right to limit the number of abstracts or submissions accepted for review. The committee has final authority in selecting presenters and will inform you whether your submission has been accepted in March.

Who Should Submit an Abstract?

Individuals and organizations with expertise on substance use and addiction, public health, mental health, substance use health and behavioural addictions are invited to submit abstracts that showcase their initiatives, research, programs, or best or promising practices for addressing substance use harm.

Appropriate disciplines include, but are not limited to, addiction specialists (e.g., treatment providers, addiction medicine practitioners, clinical staff, counsellors, social workers), allied professionals (e.g., hospital staff, nutritionists, teachers), public health professionals (e.g., public health nurses, health promotion program staff), policy and service planners, program managers, academic and clinical researchers, students, postdoctoral researchers, residents, harm reduction and peer support workers, and private sector professionals. Individuals with lived and living experience who contributed to research projects, programs or policies are welcome to submit a research, program or policy abstract.

For individuals with lived and living experience, including affected family and friends, who are interested in submitting an abstract based on personal experience, please refer to the [Personal Experience Submissions](#) section below.

Information to Include in Your Submission

Abstracts should be 250 words or fewer in English or French and fit one of the formats described above. This word limit does not include the 100-word summaries on sex, gender and equity considerations nor on engagement with specific groups. Provide these summaries separately when submitting your abstract.

Required Information

Before submitting your abstract through the [online submission portal](#), ensure that you can provide the following information:

- Description of how your work has considered or could consider issues related to sex, gender, equity, diversity and inclusion.
- If applicable, a description of how a specific population was engaged in the work.
- Preferred presentation format.
- Primary and alternate subtheme that best applies to the abstract (this information will only be used to assist in reviewing abstracts).
- Language of presentation (English or French).
- Full name, title, organizational affiliation and email addresses of the presenter and all co-authors (up to nine).
- If the work has been previously published, the publication name and year.



- If the work has been presented at another conference, the title, location and year of the conference.

You must include the following information in your abstract using the headings provided:

For individual presentations (10 and 20 minutes), panel presentations (60 minutes) and e-posters:

- Title
- Presenters and Co-Authors
- Learning Objectives for the Presentation
- Background
- Objectives of Your Project or Program
- Methods
- Results or Findings
- Conclusions and Impacts

For interactive learning workshops (90 minutes):

- Title
- Authors or Facilitators
- Learning Objectives for the Workshop
- Description
- Interactive Formats or Processes

Sex, Gender and Equity Considerations

Considering sex-, gender- and equity-related factors will contribute to more useful evidence, guidance and perspectives for all people living in Canada. As such, please include these factors into your presentations. Information on different approaches can be found in the following Government of Canada resources: [Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research Practice and Design](#) and [How to Integrate Sex and Gender into Research](#).

It would also be helpful to describe how you meaningfully engaged with participants and how you involved them in the research process, interpretation of the results or both. If your research, program or policy you're presenting on focused on an equity-deserving population (e.g., older adults, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, youth), describe your engagement with that group.

As part of your abstract submission, please provide a brief summary (100 words or fewer) about how your project considered or could consider sex, gender, equity or diversity (e.g., ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, culture, religion). Please also provide a separate brief summary (100 words or fewer) about how your study, program or policy engaged or could engage target populations, if applicable. If your project did not include these considerations, please provide an explanation of why they were not applicable.



Evaluation Criteria

Each of the following evaluation criteria will be given equal weight in the assessment of abstracts:

- Strength and appropriateness of evidence or knowledge base for the abstract content.
- Potential to stimulate discussion and learning (workshops only).
- Significance and potential impact of findings or conclusions on the substance use and addiction field.
- Consideration of sex, gender, equity, diversity and inclusion as part of the work.
- Engagement with a relevant population if that was the focus of the work.
- Overall quality and clarity of the abstract.

Upon Acceptance

- CCSA will email all communications about an abstract submission to the applicant (primary presenter), who is responsible for distributing information to their co-authors.
- Due to limited space in the program, CCSA may offer applicants a different presentation format (i.e., shorter presentation or poster) than what was requested. Note that the longer presentation formats (i.e., panels, workshops) typically have an acceptance rate of approximately 20–25 per cent.
- If you end up being unable to attend the conference, you must provide CCSA with the name of an alternate speaker who is a co-author of your original abstract, or the presentation will be withdrawn from the program.
- You must disclose any real, potential and perceived conflicts of interest at the beginning of your presentation or workshop, or on your e-poster, as well as the funding sources of your work.
- You must register for the conference and pay the registration fee by **Friday, April 25, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

Personal Experience Submissions

Guidelines for Personal Experience Submissions

If you would like to contribute to the conference by presenting your direct or indirect experience and perspectives on substance use health or your substance use health journey, please submit your presentation idea through the [online submission portal](#) by **Monday, January 27, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

Personal experience submissions will be integrated throughout the conference program.



We're happy to help with your submission!
Contact us at ios-info@ccsa.ca or 1-833-235-4048.

Presentation Formats

We encourage different types of submission formats, such as posters, artwork (e.g., poetry, music, drawing, paintings), storytelling or other types of presentations. Indicate your presentation format on the submission form.

Presentation Topics

The conference audience will include healthcare professionals, researchers, policy makers, people with direct and indirect lived and living experience with substance use, and many others. Your presentation should be relevant to substance use health and should be presented clearly to the audience, so they can learn from you.

Consider an idea or message that could improve substance use health professionals' work and understanding about people with lived and living experience of substance use. If you are actively using substances, helping people understand the pros and cons of your experience could be helpful. If you are a person in recovery from substance use, your recovery practices may open a door to possibilities others have not considered yet.

Example topics include:

- The challenges and successes of providing support to people who use substances;
- The use and impact of different types of drugs;
- Managing wellness while using substances, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Substance use and mental health;
- Stigma and discrimination;
- Experiences of meaningful involvement in research or policy making;
- Alternative or new approaches to providing support to people who use substances; and
- Alternative recovery stories and practices.

Conference Subsidies

CCSA is committed to facilitating the participation of as many people as possible who need financial support to attend the Issues of Substance 2025 conference. Priority will be given to presenters and individuals with lived and living experience with substance use or family and friends affected by substance use. For more details and instructions on how to apply, please go to the [Conference Subsidies](#) page on the conference website.



Other Information

Late-Breaking Submissions

CCSA will add a select number of late-breaking submissions to the program in early fall 2025. The call for late-breaking submissions will open during the summer. Additional details will become available on the Issues of Substance 2025 conference website.

Audio-Visual Equipment

Session rooms will be fully equipped with computers and projectors. If additional audio-visual equipment (including flipcharts) is needed, the presenter will be responsible for those costs.

Bilingual Requirements

Presentations can be in English or French. Simultaneous interpretation will be available for all keynote and some concurrent sessions. Translation will not be available for workshops.

About CCSA

CCSA was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.

CCSA activities and products are made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views of CCSA do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

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