

Counselling Centre
of East Algoma



Centre de counseling
d'Algoma Est

9 Oakland Blvd., Suite 2
Elliot Lake, ON P5A 2T1
Phone: 705.848.2585
Fax: 705.848.9687
www.counsellingcentre.org

Press Release – CCEA Expands Harm Reduction

The Counselling Centre of East Algoma (CCEA) has historically been known for providing counselling services to the community and surrounding areas, but in the past few years we have expanded our services to provide outreach, harm reduction and more.

CCEA is proud to announce we offer HIV Testing Kits and Fentanyl Testing Strips at the agency. This critical initiative aims to address the growing public health concerns associated with HIV transmission and the alarming rise in Fentanyl related overdoses. By offering these two new services, CCEA aims to safeguard the wellbeing of individuals as well as our community.

Our HIV testing is done on site with a counsellor to provide wrap-around services for individuals. We believe in shattering barriers for our community members and are committed to protecting the anonymity of testers.

Our agency also recognizes the growing epidemic of Fentanyl overdoses and death within our community and surrounding area. By offering Fentanyl Testing Strips, CCEA empowers individuals who use drugs to detect the presence of Fentanyl and take necessary precautions to prevent overdoses, as well as allowing users to make informed decisions about substance use.

“Having low-barrier access to Fentanyl testing strips will reduce the harm on our community members and will reduce the exhaustive strain that the opioid epidemic has on our emergency services,” stated CCEA Executive Director Robbyn Zwaigenbaum. “Opioid use is on the rise, and many are not educated on the dangers of interactions—including the lethality of mixing opioids with other opioids. Fentanyl is now being found in non-opioid substances, thus blindsiding potential victims. These strips will empower substance users and reduce fatalities.”

We cannot overstate how important access to these services helps protect individuals and communities. Early HIV detection can improve health outcomes living with the virus and prevent transmission. Fentanyl testing has the potential to save lives. These services also bridge the gap between marginalized communities, health care providers, prevention resources, and counselling services. Therefore, enhancing public health and safety overall.

“Anonymous testing is exceedingly important when working with individuals at-risk of HIV contraction,” continued Zwaigenbaum. “The Ministry of Health has mandated that all confirmed HIV+ diagnosis will be reported to Public Health. However, the conflation of HIV status with practices of homophobia, racism and dehumanization of specific demographics confirms the need to create opportunities where individuals maintain ownership of how that information is used, and who has access to it. CCEA does not have access to traditional anonymous testing. However, through our Point of Care testing, we can provide pre and post HIV counselling, sexual health education and most importantly ensure that how and when they are ready to have their HIV status disclosed, is exclusively their decision.”

These services can be accessed at the Counselling Centre of East Algoma, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can access the building by coming through the main doors. For more information on harm reduction supplies we offer, please visit our website at www.counsellingcentre.org.