



# **MOMS STOP THE HARM**

## **Moms Stop The Harm Handbook for Advocates 2021**

Welcome MSTH Advocate!

Thank you for your interest in becoming an active Moms Stop the Harm (MSTH) advocate.

We know that your interest means that you too may have lost a loved one or know someone who is involved in substance use, or in recovery. We also know that living with grief or providing support can take up a lot of time and energy and that you may not always be able to fully participate as an advocate. Please know that we wholeheartedly appreciate anything you are able to contribute and that we are here to help.

As a start, MSTH has produced this handbook to assist new advocates. It provides an overview of the organization and some advice on being an advocate, everything from informing yourself to sharing our message. However, as we have indicated, there is no pressure to get involved in specific activities. We offer ideas and recommendations, but ultimately it is up to you to decide what and how much you are willing or want to do.

Thank you again for adding your voice to MSTH. Your decision to step forward is greatly valued!

Yours sincerely,

Moms Stop The Harm Board of Directors



# MSTH History, Mission, Values and Goals

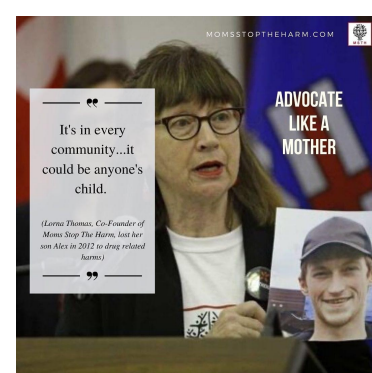
## Brief History of Moms Stop The Harm

Moms Stop the Harm (MSTH) is a network of Canadian families impacted by substance use related harms and deaths. We advocate to change failed drug policies and provide peer support to grieving families and those with loved ones who use or have used substances.

MSTH began with the need to speak out about the ongoing drug poisoning crisis. MSTH co-founders Lorna Thomas and Petra Schulz, both from Edmonton, AB and Leslie McBain, from Pender Island, BC first met in 2016. They came together after an article reporting that Petra's son Danny had died from an accidental fentanyl overdose appeared in the Edmonton Journal. Lorna reached out to Petra because her son Alex had died by suicide after struggling with mental health and substance use. Leslie's brother sent the article to her and she subsequently contacted Petra and they met when Leslie visited family in Edmonton. Leslie's son, Jordan Miller, died from an overdose after becoming opioid dependent on prescription drugs. Petra, Lorna and Leslie started to work together in August 2015 but did not form Moms Stop The Harm until April 2016, after Lorna and Leslie returned from a trip to New York where they had attended the United Nations General Assembly Special Sessions (UNGASS) on drug policy.

Our inaugural meeting that resulted in the formulation of our core beliefs, now reflected in our mission, vision and goals, was held in Summerland BC in October 2015. Most of the fifteen mothers and fathers who were present in Summerland are still with MSTH today and serve on the board and in leadership roles.

What began as an advocacy initiative by three concerned mothers is now a network of several hundred Canadian individuals and families.



## **Our Mission**

We advocate to end substance use related stigma, harms and death.

## **Our Values**

The values represent the core beliefs of Moms Stop The Harm. The values serve to inspire and guide us in the work that we do. They represent what Moms Stop the Harm stands for, and they will inform future generations of leadership.

1. We commit to fostering a caring community for all. We seek to ensure that all people are treated justly and with compassion. We demonstrate dignity, caring and equality for all.
2. We share our passion and commitment to energize, engage, and inspire members and advocates to share their stories and have their voices heard.
3. We value integrity because it keeps us safe with one another, and within the world. Integrity includes the qualities of honesty, courage, and mutual respect.
4. We value our connections with one another. We aim to give a sense of belonging to all those we support.
5. We believe in inclusion for all, and advocate for the creation of a diverse, and accepting community that is free of prejudice, one that receives others with empathy and understanding.
6. We aim to continually learn and educate. In all that we do, we lead the way to a narrative for change, guided by lived experience and evidence-based knowledge.
7. With courage and respect, we uphold the human rights of persons marginalized and discriminated against because of substance use.
8. We value our partnerships and teamwork with other individuals and organizations, recognizing the united family voice for change as an integral part of a greater movement.

## **Our Goals**

Our Goals are to:

1. To achieve equity in health care for people who use substances, including those with problematic substance use or substance use disorder (SUD).
2. To ensure all levels of government work together to change drug policy to an evidence-based approach that respects and supports the human rights of people who use substances, specifically to ensure:
  - a. access to a safe supply of pharmaceutical-grade substances
  - b. decriminalization of people who possess illicit substances for personal use
3. To ensure access to a complete spectrum of fully funded harm reduction services and supplies in all communities, including
  - a. the overdose-reversal medication Naloxone,
  - b. supervised consumption and overdose prevention services,
4. To ensure access to all evidence-based treatment options and multiple pathways to recovery, as defined by the person.

5. To support families and friends of loved ones affected by substance use to help them understand and navigate the system, including treatment options and individual pathways to recovery.
6. To reduce the stigma faced by people who use drugs by sharing our stories and advocating on their behalf.
7. To provide emotional support to those who mourn a loved one, and provide awareness, hope, and education to those struggling with substance use and those with lived experience.
8. To educate the public on current research and evidence-based approaches to substance use.
9. To promote age-appropriate education for youth, and to promote mental health and harm reduction based approaches to prevent drug harms.

## The relationship between local advocates and the MSTH national network

You are part of the nation Moms Stop The Harm (MSTH) network. MSTH's main goal in advocacy is aimed at drug policy reform and ending the war on drugs that is a war on our loved ones, as indicated in our mission and vision statements.

To connect with our provincial and regional groups, including your regional director, please contact [Info@momstoptheharm.com](mailto:Info@momstoptheharm.com).

## MSTH Advocate's Guiding Principles

As a MSTH advocate, you agree to the following guiding principles, and were asked to confirm your agreement on a form that was sent to you when you joined the MSTH advocates group.

These principles set out the values that lead us in our advocacy work.. They provide a set of operating principles that shape our work and the way our team members interact with one other. The following guidelines establish clear, agreed upon conduct, and how advocacy will proceed.

1. MSTH advocates agree with and abide by the MSTH Mission, Vision and Goals (see <https://www.momstoptheharm.com/mission-vision>)
2. MSTH advocates will treat one another with dignity and respect, and will always communicate with honesty and openness.
3. MSTH advocates will strive to be open minded and practise positive intent, active listening and empathy.
4. MSTH advocates will work to maintain a climate of cooperation and collaborative problem solving.
5. MSTH advocates will support and encourage one another in the development of MSTH advocacy.



6. MSTH advocates will discuss planned advocacy activities in their community with my RAG leader (if available) and/or Board members and provide updates.
7. MSTH advocates will always conduct themselves with integrity and respect in speech and action, while representing MSTH on any and all public forums.
8. MSTH advocates will conduct any fundraising and all other activities in keeping with MSTH policies and procedures.
9. MSTH advocates are encouraged to participate in an "Orientation to Advocacy " on-line seminar.

**Upon expressing your interest in becoming a MSTH Advocate and before joining the MSTH Advocate communication's channel in the Slack platform, you agreed to these principles.**

## Staying in Touch with MSTH

Your provincial Facebook groups or MSTH Advocate Slack channel is a way for you to stay in touch with the MSTH board and other advocates in the country.

There will also be regular on-line meetings and webinars allowing MSTH Advocates to connect and stay informed.

## MSTH Board of Directors 2020/21

As an advocate please reach out to your regional director or contact [info@momsstoptheharm.com](mailto:info@momsstoptheharm.com) with any questions you have. A current listing of our board of directors is on our website. <https://www.momsstoptheharm.com/regional-network-leaders>



# What we do: Advocacy and Peer Support

There are two basic streams to our work: (1) Advocacy to advance our goals to change drug policy and; (2) Peer support. We have learned that in order to be effective as advocates, we need to be strong and that requires self care.

Advocacy activities include:

- Meetings with political leaders
- Media and social media work
- Talks and presentations
- Anti-stigma anti-discrimination and drug policy reform campaigns
- Groups, committees & commissions - all levels of government as well as professional organizations
- Research projects (CRISM, BCCSU)



Peer support includes:

- Facebook groups focused on a common lived experience:
  - MSTH Private Group - a peer-support group for all members with direct or indirect lived or living experience
  - MSTH Healing Heart Group - a peer support group for members who have lost a loved one
  - Holding Hope group - a peer-support group for families who have a loved one living with problematic substance use or in recovery
  - Sibling group - a Facebook group for siblings

- Stronger Together programs - Stronger Together BC and Stronger Together Canada are two projects led by Moms Stop the Harm to develop and enhance peer-led support for families impacted by substance use. For more information on Stronger Together visit <https://www.momsstoptheharm.com/stronger-together>

We offer and support

- Healing Hearts Groups (for families who have lost loved ones) <https://www.healingheartscanada.org/>
- Holding Hope Groups (for families whose loved ones are using substances) support groups
- Local and regional MSTH groups

We support each other in our grief and we support families with loved ones in or seeking recovery. While an advocate's focus is on active advocacy, peer support is also part of what we do. If your region has a Healing Heart or Holding Hope group (see website), please get to know the group leaders and refer members to these groups as needed. If your region does not have a group contact [strongertogether@momsstoptheharm.com](mailto:strongertogether@momsstoptheharm.com) (in BC) or [strongertogethercanada@momsstoptheharm.com](mailto:strongertogethercanada@momsstoptheharm.com) (in the rest of Canada outside of BC) if you are interested in starting a group.

You do not have to be active in advocacy or be a member to access peer support, although some groups may become involved in activities, such as helping with International Overdose Awareness Day.

## How to become active as an advocate?

MSTH is a grassroots organization that empowers members to engage in advocacy on their own terms but based on our organization's goals and core beliefs. When you start to engage in activities, please let your regional board member or RAG know if you need support.

### Social Media

Social media is one of our most powerful tools for getting our message out to an audience we would otherwise not reach. It allows us to share our stories and show the general public that those who live with substance use and those we lose are real people who are loved. It also allows us to inform our audience about our mission, vision and the need to change drug policy.

We are active on Facebook with 12,000 followers, Instagram with 2,000 followers and Twitter with 2,800 followers. Our handle or username on three platforms is [@momsstoptheharm](#).





You can help MSTH with social media by:

- Following us on any platform you use and perhaps joining a platform new to you like Instagram or Twitter.
- Liking our posts to make sure more people see them.
- Sharing posts to your personal pages, maybe with an explanation of your connection to the information and personal thoughts or feelings.
- Commenting on posts and engaging with others. We welcome comments from those who think differently as long as the posts are respectful and add to the conversation. A stated agreement/disagreement is a good way to start. Others will chime in.
- Helping advertise upcoming events to your social media profile.

## Share your story

Sharing the story of your child or children - who they were and how they struggled - is powerful. You can do this in a variety of ways. Please choose what feels comfortable to you.

If you would like to give a formal presentation using PowerPoint slides or Google Slides, please contact us at [info@momsstoptheharm.com](mailto:info@momsstoptheharm.com), as we have a number of presentations that you will be able to work from.

- **Friends and strangers:** If people ask about your child, or children, you could choose to speak openly about your loss or your child's struggle, depending on how you feel.. Every conversation you have is an opportunity for engagement and may help reduce stigma and increase openness to better drug policies.
- **Local media:** Write an opinion piece, first person essay or agree to be interviewed by the media. The media is very interested in the overdose crisis and open to featuring local stories of how this issue has impacted families and loved ones. They provide an opportunity to highlight the gaps that are missing in terms of harm reduction, medical supports, and treatment options. Don't be afraid if you cry while being interviewed It is not a sign of weakness but one of love. See below for our media tool kit.
- **Your provincial Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA):** Consider meeting with your MLA to share your child's story. It is a MLA's job to address the concerns of constituents and a meeting is a good way to raise concerns, certainly better than a letter. You can also request that your MLA introduce you at the legislature. This will give you another opportunity to highlight the services and supports that are needed by those struggling with addiction.
- **Other government:** Write letters! It is critical that we all put pressure on those who are able to make change happen.. You can share your story with an emphasis on advocating for funding for harm reduction measures that can save lives. You can send letters to your MLA, MP, provincial Premier, provincial Health Minister, federal Health Minister and the Prime Minister. If you live close by, consider dropping the letter off in person.

- **Schools:** Offer to share your story with students, teachers and any parent advisory body.
- **Local colleges and Universities:** The students in nursing education and social work discuss problematic substance use. Telling your story could have an big impact on their future work.
- **Service clubs and community organizations:** Offer to share your story at a meeting or event (e.g. Rotary Club, community association, protest, information day, etc.) You may belong to a local community group that is willing to entertain speakers, or know someone who does. Start with small groups of people you know to build up your confidence.

## The importance of self-care

You will find that sharing your story is rewarding and can help you in your grief, as you get to speak your loved one's name, but it is also exhausting emotional labour. Some media opportunities or speaking engagements come unexpectedly, and we take those opportunities if we feel able. If you can plan, be sure not to do too many interviews or speaking engagements on the same day or close succession (experience will help you determine this). If possible, leave a day of rest or a day to engage in other work after intense advocacy.

We all feel exhausted and emotionally drained after media work and giving presentations. It is normal to feel that way, and you need time to recover and take care of yourself, so repeated exposure to these feelings does not become traumatic. Be sure to share your experience with other advocates, family or close friends who will understand your feelings. Reward yourself with something you love to do. You might need some alone time to remember your loved one.

Importantly, never hesitate to turn down an opportunity if you feel you are not ready or not a good time for you. To be effective as an advocate, you have to look after yourself first.

## Community Based and National Initiatives

You may want to start by engaging with other members in your community locally, either with an event that is only local or by participating in provincial and national initiative.

### Local Initiatives

Regional members may initiate a “giving back” event, such as collecting warm clothing for the local street community, organizing food drives for the local food bank, distributing hand sanitizer to those in need and sewing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) masks.



If you want ideas about different ways of taking action, please consult the document “198 methods of nonviolent action” at

<https://www.brandeis.edu/peace-conflict/pdfs/198-methods-non-violent-action.pdf>

Other event ideas or actions:

- Public Naloxone training session
- MSTH display and information table at public events
- Memorial Photo (see image from the Vancouver event in 2019)



## National Initiatives

Some of these events are drug policy initiatives, while others are related to our cause, for example support with mental health or grieving. Events that are not directly related to drug policy, but important to many of us personally and an opportunity to bring our message to an audience that would not otherwise hear.

- **Black Balloon Day (March 6)**. Black Balloon Day has become a national and international event, bringing awareness to overdose deaths.  
<https://www.overdoselifeline.org/events/black-balloon-day/>  
*Note that for environmental reasons we do not release actual balloons, but try to creatively represent them instead. We have used paper mache balloons, printed black balloons on posters, have used window paint and sidewalk chalk to paint black balloons.*
- **International Bereaved Mother’s Day (first Sunday in May)**, one week before Mothers Day). Watch for announcements on social media engagement and suggestions for local activities, such as walks and gatherings.

- **CMHA Mental Health Week (First full week of May)**. Provincial CMHA organizes events that we can attend and/or take part in. It is also an opportunity to draw attention to the fact that many of our loved ones use or used substances to help them deal with mental health conditions. Many workplaces also participate in mental health week, which presents another opportunity to share our information.
- **Support Don't Punish Global Day of Action (June 26)** Every year, on 26 June, the Support. Don't Punish campaign mobilises in reaction to this violence and this loss, to build sustainable alternatives that end cycles of punishment and marginalisation, and rather advance our communities' health, human rights and well-being..  
[supportdontpunish.org/take-action/](http://supportdontpunish.org/take-action/)
- **International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) Events & Evening Vigil (August 31)**. Watch for national announcements and plan for local events, such as vigils, walks, protests and creative displays, such as the “Lost Soules” shoe display on IOAD 2020 in Edmonton, Vancouver and Winnipeg.
- MSTH Annual “**Tie A Purple Ribbon**” Event for IOAD (throughout August leading up to IOAD)
- **Recovery Day (in September)** is an annual event, first held on September 30, 2012, which demonstrates and celebrates the ability of those with drug, alcohol and behavioral addictions to achieve recovery. Check for provincial and local initiatives.  
*Note that some “recovery groups” are not supportive of harm reduction. We try to collaborate with anyone who has evidence based aims, but do not support initiatives that question life-saving services. We need ongoing dialogue to bridge that gap.*
- **National Bereavement Day (3rd Tuesday in November)** On this day, CHPCA encourages Canadians to engage the government and all sectors of Canadian society in a national dialogue to identify and support access to the necessary resources for those living with grief and bereavement.  
<https://www.chpca.ca/campaigns/bereavementday/#:~:text=The%20third%20Tuesday%20in%20November.living%20with%20grief%20and%20bereavement>
- **MSTH Christmas tree of photos (December)** in various communities. White Christmas trees with ornaments containing photos of our children are displayed in public spaces, such as malls, hospitals, civic buildings and educational institutions.
- **World Candle Lighting Day** by Compassionate Friends (2nd Sunday in December). For this day we have held social media events and virtual remembrances. You could also plan an event locally, maybe in collaboration with a local Healing Heart Group.  
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/wcl/>

## Write letters to the editor

Follow media stories and write letters to the editor if there is something you disagree with or an issue where you can offer your perspective. Keep it short and keep the message clear (See Appendix II for the media tool kit).



## Contribute to our blog

If you want to share information or your opinions, write a blog post and send it to us through Slack. We'll put it up on our website <https://www.momsstoptheharm.com/personal-blog>

## Attend or co-organize an event

You may want to start by engaging with other members in your community locally, either with an event that is only local or by participating in provincial and national initiative local and community based events.

## Alliances with other like-minded individuals and organizations

We find that working together with local groups and organizations, either formally or informally, is an effective way to build support in the community.

MSTH works closely with like-minded organizations and considers them to be allies. Our friends include drug user groups (e.g. Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs), harm reduction policy organizations (e.g. Canadian Drug Policy Coalition), Me professionals, health and social service providers, academics and politicians who support our aims.



Find out who the key players are locally and get in touch to offer your support and figure out ways of working together and supporting each other.

## Resources and supports from MSTH

We have a number of resources available to you, such as a tri-fold brochure, postcards and information on our Stronger Together projects, stickers and even large banners.

If you need any materials or supplies, please contact us before ordering or purchasing anything. As you can imagine, our budget is limited and we have to support groups across the country.

For some events and activities you may be able to fundraise locally, but once again we ask that you check before you do, as all funds donated to us, as well as expenditures need to be accounted for to comply with revenue Canada rules and regulations.

We thrive on and foster local initiatives and want to support you as much as possible. In order to do so, it is important that you reach out and let us know what you plan and find out what kind of help is available.

For all questions you have please write to our Program Manager Jennifer Howard at [info@momsstoptheharm.com](mailto:info@momsstoptheharm.com). She will be happy to respond or put you in touch with the right person.

## Inform yourself

### MSTH Website

Visit our website [www.momsstoptheharm.com](http://www.momsstoptheharm.com) to learn about our organization and drug safety, and explore additional resources, including videos and our personal blog.

### Social Media

Personal stories and photos, media reports, government updates and research is shared on our social media platform on a daily basis and is a good way to stay current. As noted above, we use the @momstoptheharm handle on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

### Recommended books

**Overdose Heartbreak and Hope in Canada's Overdose Crisis** by Benjamin Perrin.  
<https://overdosebook.ca/>

We recommend this book as a primer if you are new to advocacy, as it covers important issues such as harm reduction, including supervised consumption, safer supply and decriminalization of people who use drugs.

**Fighting for Space: How a Group of Drug Users Transformed One City's Struggle with Addiction** by Travis Lupick

This book is about a revolutionary approach to drug addiction that is saving lives. It tells the story of a grassroots group of drug users in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside who waged a political street fight for two decades to transform how the city treats its most marginalized citizens.

**Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs** by Johan Hari

This book documents the reasons behind the war on drugs, the devastating effects and the solutions practiced in other countries. See [chasingthescream.com](http://chasingthescream.com).

## **Unbroken Brain: A revolutionary new way of understanding addiction** by Maia Szalavitz

Maia has also published several good articles you can find by Googling her name.

## **Beyond Addiction: How Science and Kindness Help People Change** by Jeffrey Foote (Author), Carrie Wilkens (Author), Nicole Kosanke (Author), & Stephanie Higgs (2014)

Beyond Addiction eschews the theatrics of interventions and tough love to show family and friends how they can use kindness, positive reinforcement, and motivational and behavioral strategies to help their loved ones change. Drawing on forty collective years of research and decades of clinical experience, the authors present the best practical advice science has to offer.

## **Drug Use for Grown-Ups** Carl Hart (2021)

From one of the world's foremost experts on the subject, a powerful argument that the greatest damage from drugs flows from their being illegal, and a hopeful reckoning with the possibility of their use as part of a responsible and happy life.

## Movies, videos, podcasts

Check our website and Facebook page for current videos

(<http://www.momsstoptheharm.com/videos/>) on many related subjects including:

**Crackdown Podcast** - CRACKDOWN is a monthly podcast about drugs, drug policy and the drug war led by drug user activists and supported by research. Each episode tells the story of a community fighting for their lives. The podcast is also about solutions, justice for those we have lost, and saving lives. <https://crackdownpod.com/>

**Painkiller – Inside the Opioid Crisis by Matt Embry** - This is a documentary that features MSTH and tells the human story behind the opioid epidemic in Canada. The documentary seeks to raise awareness and end the stigma of addiction by educating and informing viewers on what Fentanyl is and how it is affecting our country. <https://youtu.be/nLrUHrpjd2o>

**Flood – The Overdose Epidemic in Canada** - This is a documentary film that aims to reduce the stigma around substance use disorder (SUD) and inspire others to take action. Documentary film maker Adam D'Addario and his team travelled across the country to explore the impact of the overdose epidemic and search for solutions. Several MSTH members were interviewed and participated in the making of the documentary.

## Appendix I: DISCLAIMER

MSTH is a volunteer organization and members are not able to provide professional advice. We speak from our personal perspective only and share what we have learned or experienced.

1. The MSTH website and our social media pages - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @momstroptheharm - act as online communities and information resources for individuals and organizations seeking information on drug policy reform and substance use. The content of the website and social media is provided for information purposes only. MSTH has made its best endeavours to ensure that the content of this website is correct and current at the time of publication, but makes no warranty, express or implied, that the material is accurate, authentic or complete and takes no responsibility for any error, omission, or defect.
2. MSTH does not accept any liabilities for any loss, damage, cost, or expense you or others might incur as a result of the information, advice (or the use or uptake of such information, advice or volunteering opportunities) provided on our website and Facebook page, or incorporated into it by reference.
3. The information on these websites is provided on the basis that all people accessing the site undertake responsibility for assessing the relevance and accuracy of its content.

Adapted from: I can do that (2015) Disclaimer. [www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/disclaimer](http://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/disclaimer)



## Appendix II: Media Toolkit

### Resource:

You might want to begin by watching this webinar “Media Training for Advocates” that the communications professional Andy Watson presented to MSTH on April 10, 2021

<https://youtu.be/yL6Sm8pimo8>

### Prepare to talk to media

- Find out in advance what topics the media wants to focus on.
- Find out if it is a live or taped interview. Live interviews are more challenging, but also provide opportunities to say exactly what you want, as they will not be edited. Recorded interviews take much longer and, in the end, media may only use a short clip, often not the one you want them to use.
- Stay focused on your loved one’s story. Talk about your loved one’s life, their qualities, achievements and why you loved them., their
- Create an image of your loved one as a person.
- Transform your wounds into wisdom. What have you learned from your experience? What would have contributed to a different outcome?
- Speak about our main asks: See MSTH mission, vision and goals. <https://www.momsstoptheharm.com/mission-vision>
- Give your opinion on the topic being discussed and have a few statistics ready (check government reports, prior media coverage, or ask professional allies for the numbers).
- Use non-stigmatized language. People first. See Appendix III
- Pick just one or two photos to use with the media.
- If possible, fact check written articles before they’re published and ask to have a story changed if there’s an error.
- The most important part is to tell your loved one’s story. You’ll do great.

### Media Dos and Don’ts by Andy Watson

Anytime you represent Moms Stop the Harm in a public setting, a news reporter could be present. The following tips are intended to help you if approached by media.

DO...

Prepare - Before you attend a public event, or speak to media, review your messages and key facts, and prepare what you want to say.

Breathe - When a reporter asks a question, take a deep breath. Breathing helps you relax and gives you a few seconds to think about your answer.

Remember your audience - The reporter is not your audience; they are a conduit to the people who will read, listen to, or watch what you are saying.

Keep it simple - A story may only use one or two quotes, so keep your answers brief and jargon-free.

Embrace repetition - It's OK to repeat a message(s) during the interview, where appropriate. This can actually increase the chances of a message being used.

Refer the reporter to another source - If a question is outside your expertise, or you are not authorized to speak to media, let the reporter know they should contact the right organization – if it's outside your comfort related to MSTH business, you can redirect to [info@momsstoptheharm.com](mailto:info@momsstoptheharm.com) for help.

DON'T...

Say something you aren't sure about - Stick to what you know. It's ok to tell a reporter you don't know the answer and will have to get back to them.

Speculate - Reporters will sometimes ask you to speculate. Simply tell the reporter you are not going to speculate on that and bridge back to key messages.

Repeat negative language - If the reporter asks a question using negative or loaded language, don't repeat the language back in your answer. Stick to your messages.

Fill dead air - When you finish your sentence and the reporter doesn't say anything, don't feel the need to fill the dead air. Let the reporter restart the conversation.

Speak "off the record" - Nothing is really off the record; don't say anything you wouldn't want to be public.

Say "No comment" This is a cliché for trying to hide something. Instead, redirect to the appropriate agency

Suggestions for engaging media

*Note: This section is adapted from: Alberta Hate Crimes Committee (2012). Beyond Hate. A Resource Toolkit. <http://www.albertahatecrimes.org/resources>*

**Letters to the Editor:** Newspapers and magazines have a "letters page" that gives readers the opportunity to express their view or correct previously published information they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. Letters are widely read and provide a good opportunity to promote your cause. They should be short and concise. Well-written letters of no more than 100 words can be very effective. A letter to the editor should aim to make one main point and end on a challenging note, with a call to action. It can also be signed by a number of signatories, representing various organizations or interests, which may increase its impact.

**Opinion pieces:** Most newspapers print opinion editorials (OpEds) or guest columns. OpEds are an expression of opinion rather than a release of news. They tend to be lively, provocative and sometimes controversial. OpEds are a good way of registering your concern about an issue and informing communities about why they should care about addressing it. They are usually around 600 to 1,000 words. It is best to call the newspaper first and request their guidelines for submitting an op-ed, but you may also be able to get this information from their website. If possible, speak to the appropriate editor to alert them that you intend to submit an op-ed and briefly explain the importance of the issue. Sometimes sending a letter to the editor will result in an invitation to write an OpEd.

**New advisories and press releases:** If you are planning a larger event that may attract press, contact the MSTH office and ask for help with a **media release**.

**Contacting journalists:** If you have met journalists through previous interviews, contact them directly and alert them to your release. Media may also contact you once they get to know you, and ask for a statement on a topic or issue.

**Please post any media reports to our Facebook page and email a link to [PetraSchulz100@gmail.com](mailto:PetraSchulz100@gmail.com) so that it can be added to the media blog on our website.**

## Appendix III: Language & Stigma

We can change the way people who use drugs (PWUD) are perceived, see themselves and are indeed treated by the health, social and justice systems and by society at large with the language we use.

Instead of stigmatizing labels, use person-first language. This means that the word person always comes before any diagnosis or identifying condition. This is highlighted in the table below. This being said, it is important to note that a person with lived or living experience may choose not to use person-first language and instead self-identify as an “addict”. While it is essential that we respect individual choice and identity, others should use person-first language.

### Changing the Language We Use

Changing The Narrative is a network of reporters, researchers, academics, and advocates concerned about the way media represents drug use and addiction (Changing the Narrative, 2019)

TIRED NARRATIVE	INFORMED NARRATIVE
addicted babies addict, user, junkie opioid epidemic substance abuse disorder shooting gallery  criminal, convict, felon clean/dirty needles clean/dirty drug test	Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome person who uses substances/drugs (PWUD) overdose crisis substance use disorder overdose prevention site/supervised consumption site (OPS, SCS) was incarcerated, experience with justice system used/unused syringe tested positive/negative for drugs

Adapted from Changing the Narrative (2019) Overdose Crisis Reporting. Retrieved from <https://www.changingthenarrative.news/style-guide>. This website offers “Tips and Information for Evidence-Based, Meaningful Reporting” and language use, as well as other topics that may be helpful in your advocacy.

### Additional Resources on Stigma and Language

Government of Canada (2020). Reducing substance use stigma in the Canadian health system (infographic). Available from the Government of Canada website:



<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/reducing-substance-use-stigma-health-system-infographic.html>

Government of Canada (2020). Communicating about Substance Use in Compassionate, Safe and Non-Stigmatizing Ways. Available from the Government of Canada website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/communicating-about-substance-use-compassionate-safe-non-stigmatizing-ways-2019.html>

Government of Canada (2020). A Primer to Reduce Substance Use Stigma in the Canadian Health System. Available from the Government of Canada website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/primer-reduce-substance-use-stigma-health-system.html>

Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction Resources on stigma. Available on the CCSA website <https://www.ccsa.ca/stigma>

Julie (2017, June 21). Why You Shouldn't Use the Word "Addict". *Partnership for Drug Free Kids*. Retrieved from

[https://drugfree.org/parent-blog/shouldnt-use-word-addict/#.WVhE45\\_MK7w.facebook](https://drugfree.org/parent-blog/shouldnt-use-word-addict/#.WVhE45_MK7w.facebook)

## Appendix IV: Policies

Listed here are some of our policies that are most relevant to your work as an advocate.

### 4.04 FUNDRAISING/DONATIONS

#### PURPOSE

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To ensure ethical fundraising activities that are in alignment with MSTH Mission and Values. To ensure the fulfillment and acknowledgement of donors' wishes and accurate and complete reporting of donations.

#### DIRECTIVE

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Moms Stop The Harm (MSTH) encourages and gratefully receives donations from the community. Moms Stop The Harm membership on occasion, participates in fundraising activities that benefit the mission, values and goals of the organization.

#### PROCEDURES

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When soliciting donor support, MSTH Board Members and advocates shall maintain values and professional standards which include the following:

- MSTH welcomes donations that are in alignment with its mission and value statements.
- Avoidance of activities and/or dialogue harmful to MSTH
- Fundraising and promotional activities that advocate for the health and well being of those we mandate to serve
- Maintenance of consistent, appropriate and positive images of individuals who have a Substance Use Disorder
- Full and effective disclosure of potential and actual conflicts of interest
- Compliance with all applicable local, provincial, federal, civil and criminal rules and regulations
- Fundraising materials and publications which accurately represent MSTH mission and the disposition of funds.
- Provision of informed, ethical, accurate and complete advice regarding the tax implications of "gifts"
- Disposition of donations and contributions in accordance with the donor's wishes, where appropriate.
- Obtaining donor consent prior to altering the conditions of a gift.
- Maintenance of confidentiality when in discussions with unauthorized parties.
- Consistent application of the principle that donor information created by or on behalf of MSTH remains the sole property of MSTH and that use of said information shall be with the consent of MSTH only.
- Generally accepted accounting principles shall be used to report on donated funds.

- The MSTH Member or Treasurer will appropriately acknowledge donations. Acknowledgements may include letters, listings on annual or other MSTH reports, MSTH Facebook or web site, etc.

#### Fundraising & Applying for Grants by MSTH members locally and regionally.

- All MSTH members planning to fundraise for local and regional initiatives are required to inform the MSTH Board of the event prior to it taking place.
- All MSTH members applying for Grants must notify the board. These funds must be accounted for within MSTH book keeping
- MSTH board reserves the right to deny the request for local and regional fundraising activities, if these activities are not in keeping with the values and professional standards outlined above or not in keeping with MSTH Mission, Vision and Goals.
- All MSTH members organizing a fundraiser will be given a “records of expenses & donations form” to record funds coming in and out of MSTH. This is to be handed in to the Treasurer at the completion of the event and must include receipts for all expenses.

#### Donations will not be accepted where:

- The donation is made on the condition that MSTH perform an illegal act.
- The donation is or may appear to be inconsistent with MSTH’s mission and vision statement and goals .