

mesa

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A collaborative approach
to compassionate care



Paramedic Service,
Community Services,
Development and Property

Rural Ontario Municipal Association

Michael Nolan

Director of Emergency Services

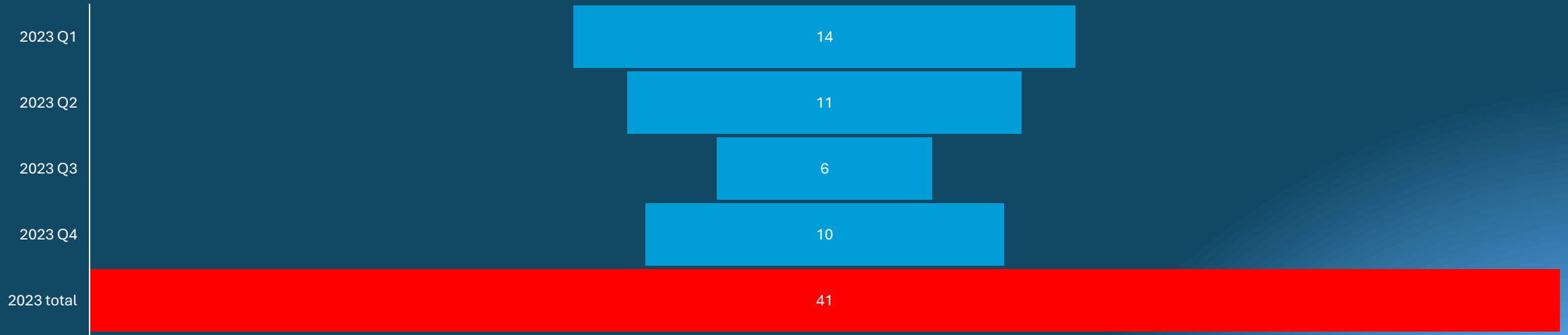
Chief Paramedic

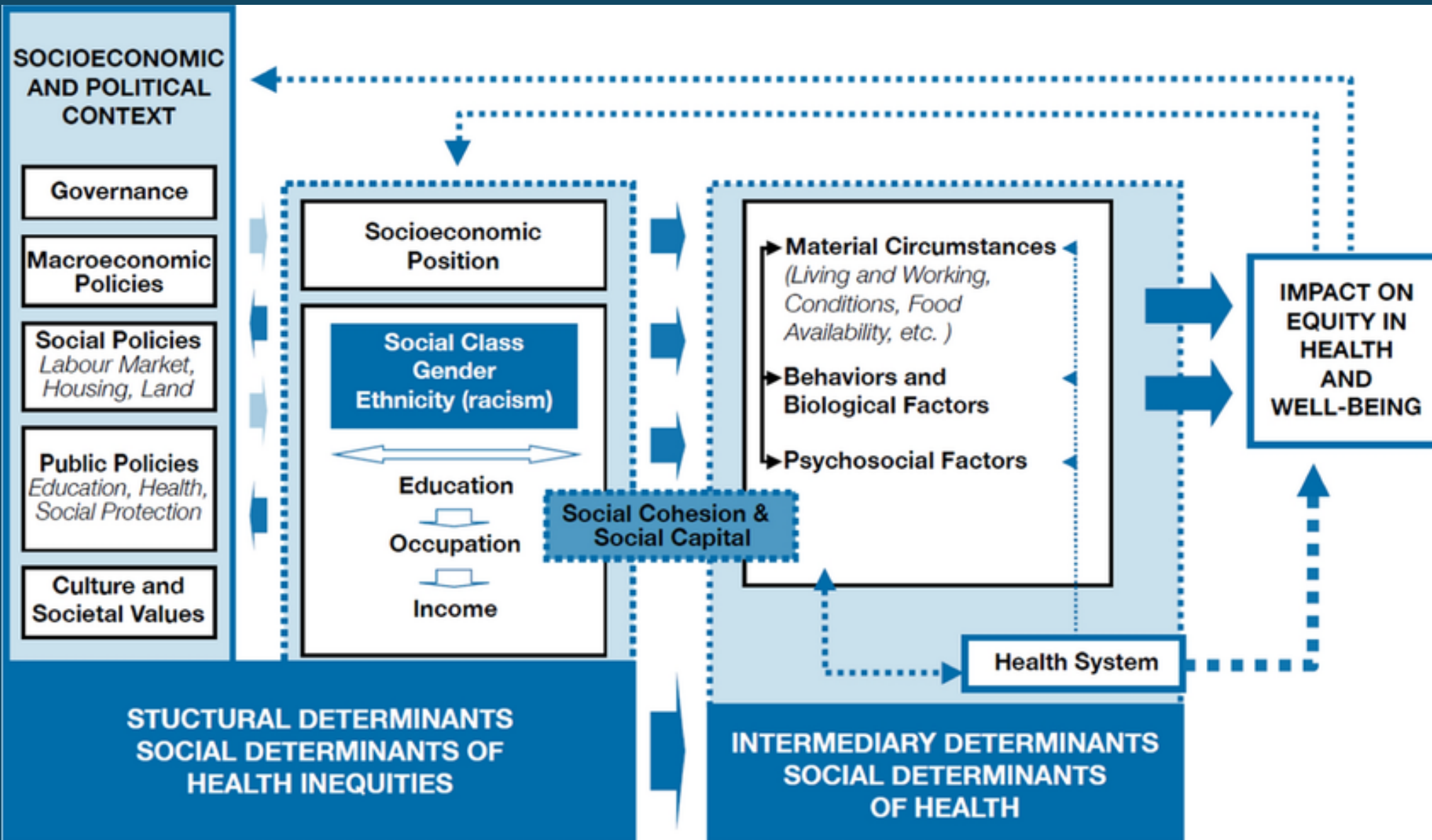
The County of Renfrew

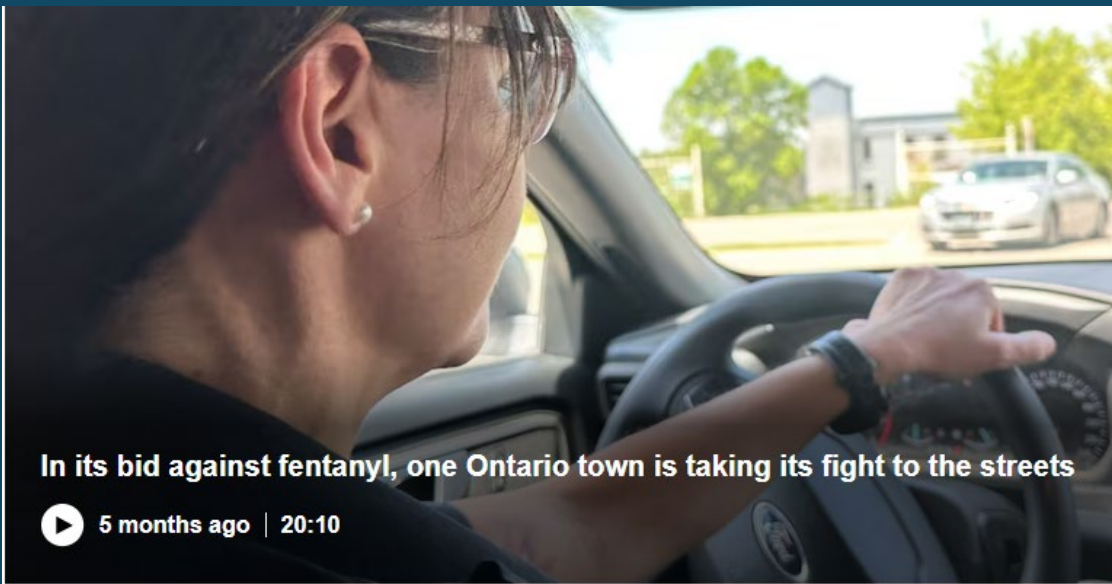


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Suspect drug toxicity deaths 2023







In its bid against fentanyl, one Ontario town is taking its fight to the streets

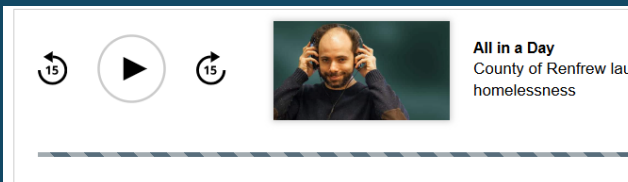
5 months ago | 20:10

In its bid against fentanyl, one Ontario town is taking its fight to the streets

5 months ago | News | 20:10

When you are a town of just 14,000 people, every opioid overdose is personal. CBC's Omar Dabaghi-Pacheco visited Pembroke, which is trying a new solution to combat the rising drug crisis. CBC went behind the scenes with paramedics during life-or-death calls and saw firsthand how their approach works.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/in-small-town-ontario-fighting-opioid-crisis-requires-personal-touch-1.7245177>



County of Renfrew launches compassionate care initiative to address homelessness

8 months ago | Radio | 8:57

The initiative, named mesa, is now focused on developing mobile response teams that will support people experiencing mental health crises, addiction and homelessness. The chief of the county's paramedic...

Stakeholders gather to officially launch County of Renfrew Mesa initiative

Pembroke Observer and News

Published Jun 05, 2024 • Last updated Jun 05, 2024 • 3 minute read

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Mobile team checking in on homeless people in Renfrew County

Team to include paramedic, addictions counsellor and crisis worker roaming streets and encampments

Giacomo Panico - CBC News - Posted: Mar 12, 2024 5:24 PM EDT | Last Updated: March 13



Director of emergency services Michael Nolan hopes this approach will help identify and connect them with supports they might otherwise not access.



‘mesa is a collaborative approach to compassionate care’ (2024).

Borrowing from the Portuguese approach to addictions management and the Finnish Housing First Model, the mesa program represents a novel, Ontario based municipal model of care for people experiencing mental health and or addictions crisis as well as those challenged by precarious housing situations.

Recovering addict credits Mesa initiative for his rehabilitation

By Alex Lambert - November 20, 2024

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To improve the wellness of these people, Community Services (Ontario Works, Childcare and Social Services), Development and Property (Social Housing) and the Paramedic Service have undertaken a unified approach to providing wrap-around care through the formation of two teams dedicated to case finding, case management, psychosocial support and clinical care and housing.

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Two mesa teams are comprised of community paramedics and community mental health professionals from Pembroke Regional Hospital, and addictions treatment partners through the Renfrew Victoria Hospital (ATS) and MacKay Manor.

Supported by municipal Community Services and Development and Property staff, a highly meshed network of carers has been created to service over 7,500 square kilometers of Renfrew County.

Critical to the success of these teams are the compassionate relationships with the people that we serve. A focus on stabilizing immediate needs, providing just in time access to services, offering housing choices, and escalating crisis, stabilization and maintenance of care plans.



Volunteer Organizations

Youth Programs

Academia



Columbus House

Community Services

Housing

Paramedic Service

mesa client

Social Service Agencies

McKay Manor

ATS / Renfrew Hospital

RC VTAC
Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre
1-844-727-6404

CMH / Pembroke Hospital



Lived Experience Partners

Diverse Cultural and Ethnic Groups



Referral Pathways

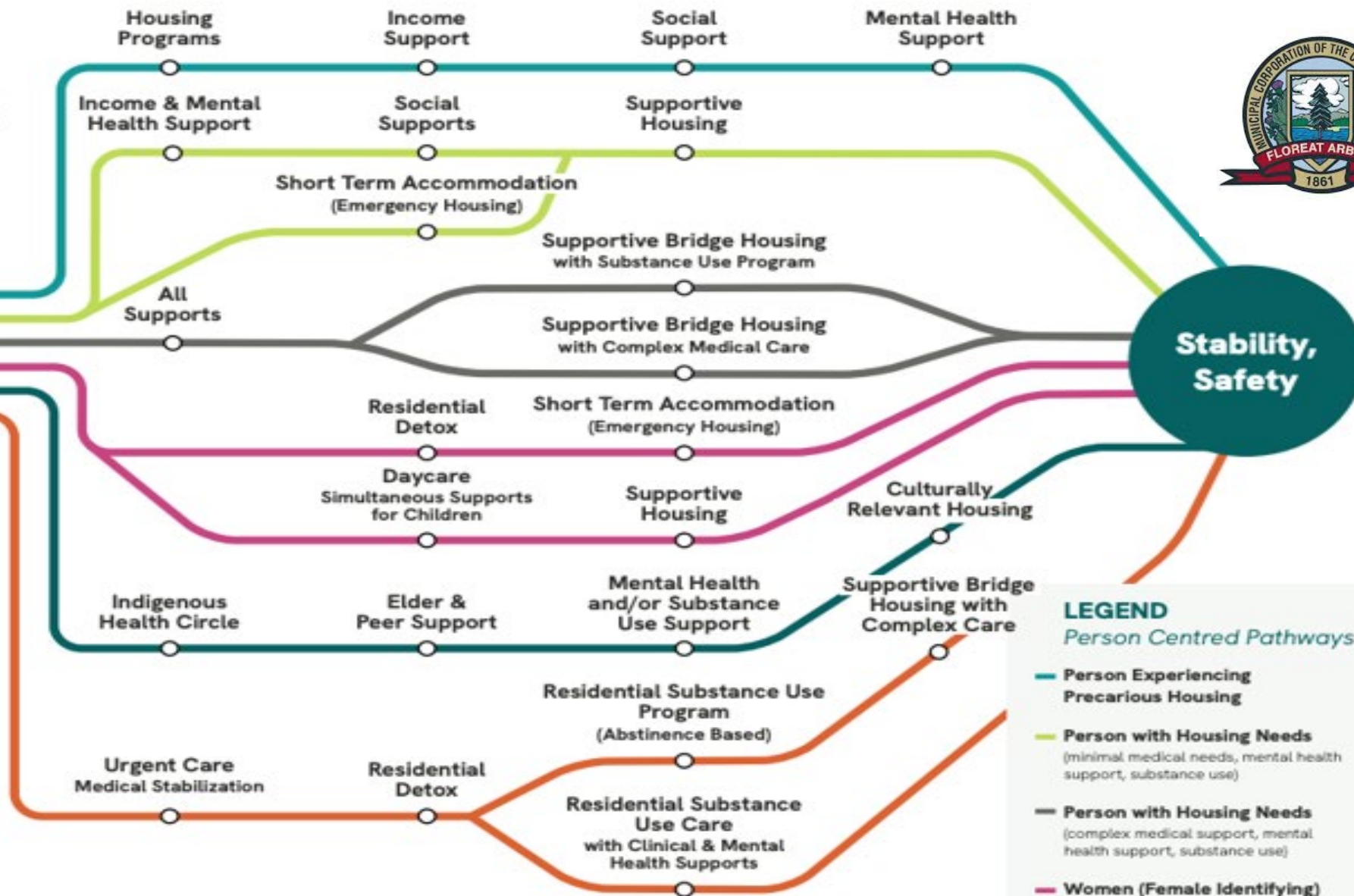


Point of contact may include the following referrals:

- Mesa mobile team connection in an encampment, the Grind, on the street, urgent referral, word of mouth
- Community Services
 - Ontario Works
 - Social Housing
- Community Mental Health team
- Crisis line, victim services
- Allied agency

Intake Process and Protocols

- Compassionate, clear & consistent
- Assessment & triage within 24 hrs
- 24 hr, 7 days a week hub — online and physical landing spot



LEGEND Person Centred Pathways

- Person Experiencing Precarious Housing
- Person with Housing Needs (minimal medical needs, mental health support, substance use)
- Person with Housing Needs (complex medical support, mental health support, substance use)
- Women (Female Identifying) with and without children
- Indigenous identifying person with housing, mental health, substance use and/or community support needs*
- Person Needing Detox/Withdrawal Management

Foundation of trust, equity, inclusion, culturally relevant care and safe spaces. Each pathway is supported by psychosocial support, wellness clinics, primary care, mental health and peer support. Co-ordination and navigation is aligned, continuous and informed by shared data, measurement and effective collaboration.

The Mesa team coordinates services, negotiates and charts a pathway for vulnerable people to receive the right support and resources at the right time and in the right place.

1,140 people have been cared for in the first 9 months of Mesa program

- 980 people now have care plans with Mesa Community Paramedics
- **Wellness Clinics and vulnerability assessments across County Housing Units**
 - 40% of these individuals have called 911 in the last 6 months
 - 99% of these individuals are now enrolled in the community paramedic program
- **160 people with complex mental health and/or addictions in crisis, many of whom were homeless have received 3,320 encounters with the Mesa team providing crisis intervention, stabilization, treatment, accommodations and connection to community-based programs and services.**

Mesa Program Evaluation

May-December 2024

Mental Health Services

65 high risk Mesa clients are now regularly accessing mental health services.

Community withdrawal

130 high risk Mesa clients are actively engaged in community withdrawal treatment.

Over 100 Mesa Clients have accessed residential treatment programs.

Community Paramedicine

4292 Mesa client interactions and/ or treatment.

>282 911 & Emergency Department Diversions (6 months)

482 referrals

Community Service

308 people are now regularly receiving community support coaching.

50 high risk people with short-term accommodations with social contracts and care plans.

Addictions Treatment

802 people interacted with this program through the Mesa Team referrals.

364 outpatient treatment sessions completed.

26 referrals to residential treatment.

Addictions Supportive Housing (ASH) program

46 formerly high-risk homeless people are now living independently with rent supplement and ongoing Mesa Team support.

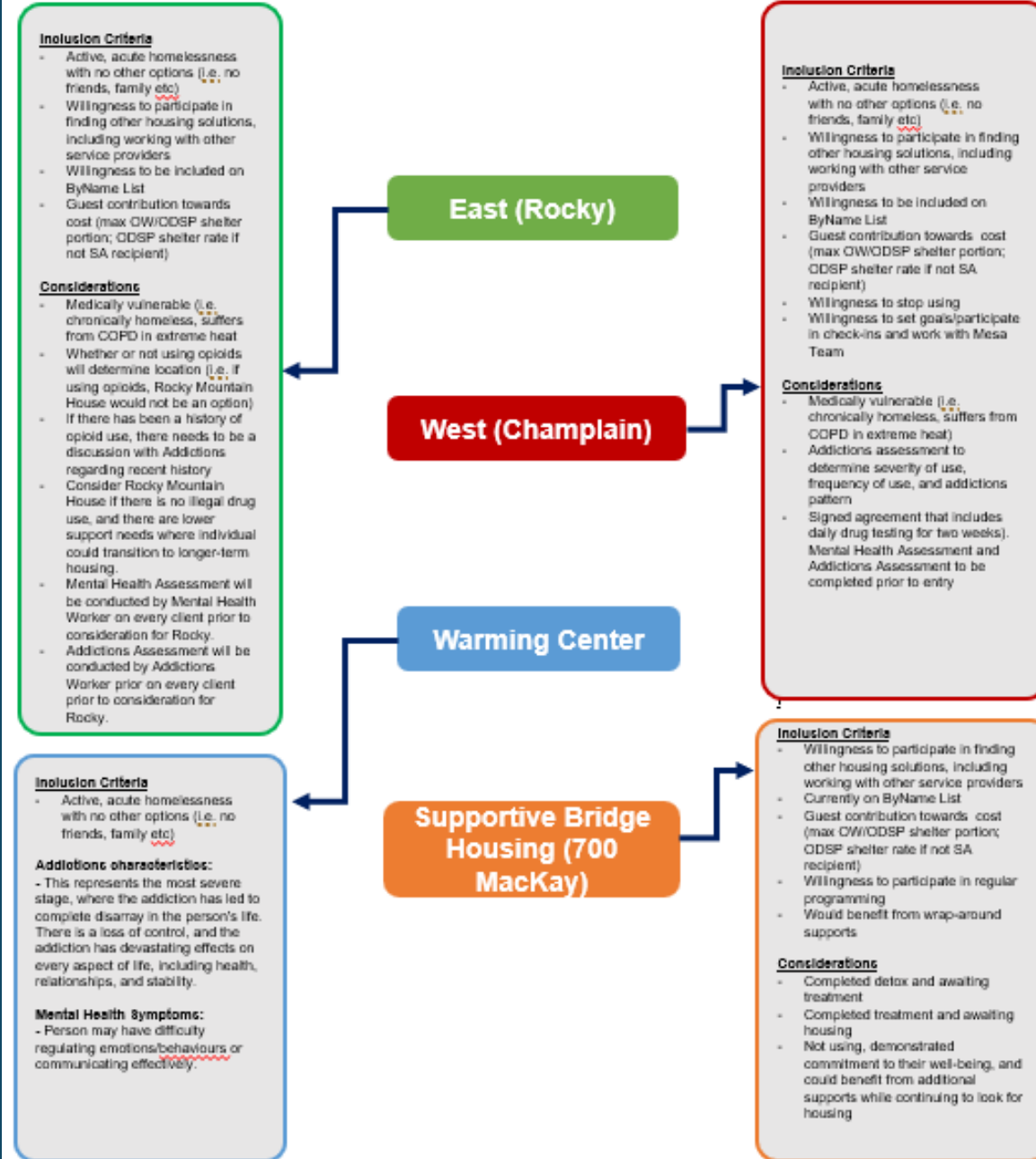
Ending Homelessness

The Mesa program and partner organizations have escalated many individuals that previously required a warming center into temporary and secure housing over the later part of 2024.

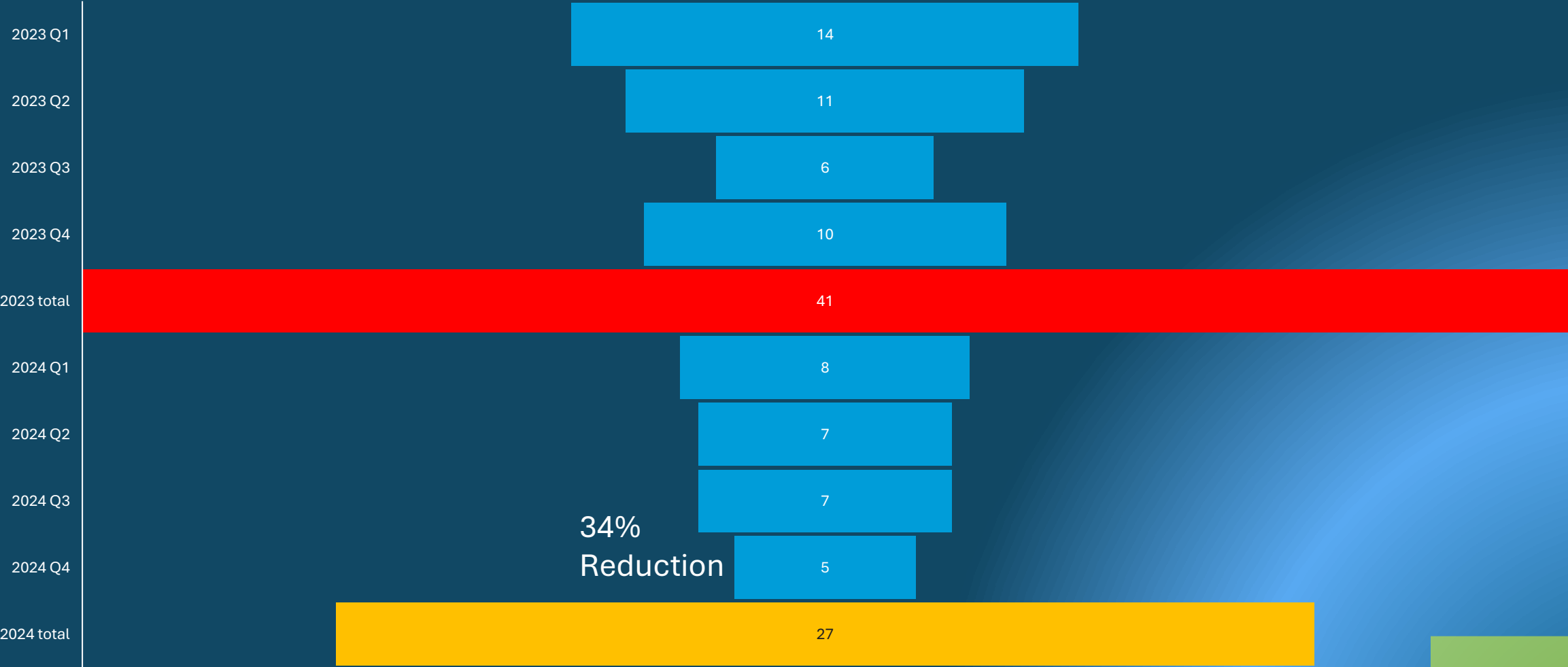
Short-term and long-term stays are based upon an agreed upon social contract between the mesa program and the people choosing housing options.

Each Social contract is reviewed and adjusted as necessary for each person's needs at the time of entering the program and is reviewed and adjusted on an ongoing basis by the mesa team.

Hospital Ward	Provincial Jail Costs	Shelter	Supportive Housing
\$32,500 per month	\$15,000 per month	\$7,500 per month	\$3,500 per month



Suspect drug toxicity deaths 2023-2024



While Renfrew County's rural and remote communities face unique challenges that significantly strain health and social services, many communities across Ontario could benefit from this fully integrated and novel approach to solving one of our most pressing crises.

The success of Mesa's clients demonstrate the power of innovation and collaboration, building pathways to dignity, trust, and self-reliance.

Considerations:

- Programs such as Mesa need **stable financial support** from the Government of Ontario for team development, operations, expansion and sustainability.
- Outreach programs are ideally positioned to support the development and expansion of **Hart Hubs**.
- A coordinated approach to compassionate care must acknowledge the **intersection of mental health, addictions and homelessness** as representing some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario.
- The Structural Determinates of Health; Governance, Policies, Culture and Values, must be examined by policy makers to reduce barriers and promote wellness.

SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Governance

**Macroeconomic
Policies**

Social Policies
*Labour Market,
Housing, Land*

Public Policies
*Education, Health,
Social Protection*

**Culture and
Societal Values**

Background

Our communities are facing urgent housing, mental health, substance use, overdose and addiction crises, challenging service capacity to deliver basic health and social services and profoundly affecting people's lives. In addition to the pressure on our systems, many of our communities are rural, remote and often isolated from services. In response to the urgency of these complex challenges, Mesa was initiated in early 2024 as an emergent response to address critical needs of our most vulnerable populations.

The County of Renfrew through the Mesa initiative has partnered with the Pembroke Regional Hospital (PRH) as represented by the Mental Health Services of Renfrew County (MHSRC), McKay Manor as represented by Community Withdrawal Management Service of Renfrew County (CWMS), and the Renfrew Victoria Hospital (RVH) as represented by Addiction Treatment Services (ATS) among several other community organizations and allied agencies.

Vision

The Mesa team works collaboratively to coordinate services and navigate a pathway for vulnerable community members to receive the right support and resources at the right time and in the right place.

Collaboration: Utilizing a multidisciplinary approach to support the vulnerable population of Renfrew County with equitable and sustainable resources in order to improve the quality of ****life****

Sustainability: Operational efforts revolve around a holistic approach integrating community engagement, financial and resource capacity planning, and adaptive and innovative strategies guided by shared decision-making.

Equity: Provide easily accessible, inclusive and respectful services that promote autonomy

Evidence-based: Applying community-based, research-driven health promotion and prevention models/ strategies to guide community outreach efforts and program monitoring/ evaluation for continuous quality improvement.

Person-Centred: Ensuring that every client feels valued and understood and welcomed at every interaction, fostering trust and effective support, as if it were their first time engaging with the service

Low-barrier access: Creatively providing individually tailored client services in an equitable manner with honesty and integrity by setting transparent goals and eliminating barriers to service and care access.

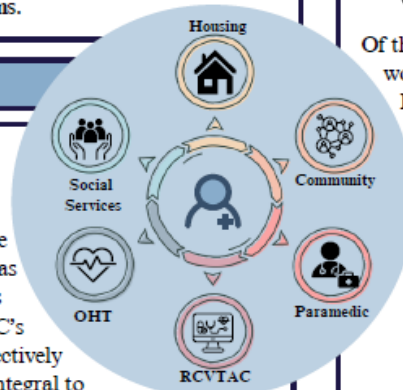
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A collaborative approach to compassionate care

Mesa is a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to address the intersections of the mental health and addiction, housing and homelessness crises. It is an innovative and evidence-informed collaborative model that focuses on compassionate, trauma-informed care and local needs. This interdepartmental municipal approach aligns Emergency Services, Community Services and Development and Property resources with community partners' expertise and programs.

Our Story

Telling the human stories behind these crises is essential to shifting the narrative and changing both the stigma and trajectory of addiction, mental health, and homelessness. Unique in our collective and compassionate approach, the transformative work in Renfrew County was documented in the [CBC mesa documentary](#), and captures the impact, passion and emotion behind the struggle. CBC's Omar Dabaghi-Pacheco and producer Ryan Garland effectively share the stories of compassion and connection that are integral to the success of the Mesa program. Humanizing the work is an essential part of understanding and healing the root causes behind the addictions, mental health struggle and homelessness. This is upstream work that understands the need for connection, trust and a coordinated approach to help navigate existing health and social systems and simultaneously create new pathways and structures. Disrupting the trauma cycle requires both understanding and compassion as well as supportive systems and health care services.



2024 Outcome Overview

Within 6 months of implementation (beginning in May 2024) the Mesa approach is having a significant impact on our most vulnerable populations and our structural systems is profound. It diverts calls from high cost emergency department trips, saving lives and providing appropriate, compassionate care in the community. The cost savings is being tracked and already demonstrates success through diversions, avoiding hospitalization, providing appropriate and local mental health and addictions interventions and prioritizing housing. Since its inception, the Mesa team has built trust and connection with our region's highest risk population. Mesa works collaboratively with clients and multi sector service partners, including health, social, private sector developers, plural sector, not for profit, financial, legal and community expertise, to coordinate immediate access to health, social, financial and housing needs. Together, we determine what is possible.

Community Outreach Data

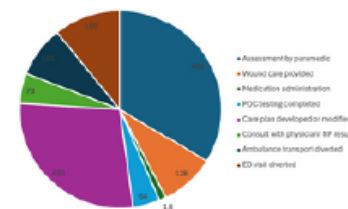
Since March 2024, Mesa Paramedic outreach teams, with the County of Renfrew's Emergency Services Department, have had approximately 1480 encounters with individuals. Of these encounters, approximately:

- 1257 occurred in the City of Pembroke
- 1229 were with an individual who identified as experiencing homelessness, addictions, and mental health challenges
- 96 were follow-ups post 911 activation
- 282 resulted in 911 and emergency department diversions

Of the 1480 encounters with individuals and Mesa Paramedics, who are working in collaboration with Caseworkers from Mental Health (Pembroke Regional Hospital), Addictions (MacKay Manor, and Renfrew Victoria Hospital), and the Department of Community Services, care coordination outcomes included:

- 482 encounters of collaboration with organizations (including but not limited to Department of Community Services, Community Mental Health, and Food Banks) to provide immediate resources to individuals)
- 157 referrals made to Community Services
- 49 referrals to Addiction Treatment Services (ATS)
- 27 referrals to Community Withdrawal Management Services (CWMS)
- 27 referrals made to Renfrew County Housing

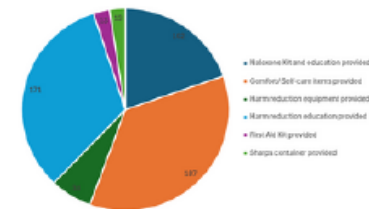
Clinical Outcomes from Outreach Encounters (Mesa)



Care Coordination Outcomes from Encounters (Mesa)



Harm Reduction Outcomes from Encounters (Mesa)



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