Marking 40 Years in 2026

Despite tremendous progress and changes since 1986, the issue of homelessness remains constant in Toronto. Street Health started with four volunteer nurses and remains an accessible, judgment-free and community-based service for those who lack housing. Our services continue to be guided by the clients we serve and ensure access to healthcare for those who are marginalized, experiencing discrimination and stigma.

ANNIVERSARY 40TH StreetHealth
Reducing the Harms Caused by Homelessness

While our commitment remains strong, we don't do this work alone. We rely on community contributions and support to meet clients' needs.

For 2026 please consider how you can help:

Coordinate an in-kind drive to collect new, unused socks with your neighbourhood, workplace, school or religious group. Street Health relies on contributions of basic personal care and warmth items to meet clients' immediate, health-promoting needs.

Gather a team of family and friends, fundraise and walk with Street Health staff for Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) on February 28, 2026.

Make an anniversary gift — give $40 each month for a 2026 contribution of $480. Direct your gift to our Overdose Prevention Site or our area of greatest need to support life-saving services.

Continue to be an advocate for harm reduction. As governments reduce funding for Safe Consumption Sites and harm reduction programs, be a voice and share why access to services, not an all-or-nothing treatment model is needed to help those who use substances.

Call 416-921-8668, ext 229 (cathy@streethealth.ca) or ext 274 (irsa@streethealth.ca) for more information on giving.

Your support means that Street Health can continue to offer frontline, client requested support for those experiencing homelessness.

Watch for more details on our 40th anniversary activities, including our community lunch event to mark this milestone in 2026! Thank you from Street Health for your continued support and contributions.

2025 TOP 100 CHARITY
Charity Intelligence's Highest Rated Charities
★★★★★

For a 7th year, Street Health has been named a Top 100 Charity by Charity Intelligence. Through rigorous and independent research, Charity Intelligence aims to assist Canada's dynamic charitable sector in being more transparent, accountable and focused on results. Check out Street Health's five-star rating at charityintelligence.ca

StreetHealth

FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER

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Charitable Registration # 11920-0541-RR0001

StreetHealthTO | street-health-community-nursing-foundation | streethealthtoronto

In this issue, we speak with Street Health's Harm Reduction Community Care Workers, Resty and Abel, about their vital work, the challenges they face, and the importance of this new role in supporting Toronto's most vulnerable communities.

Resty (left) and Abel (right) help make the neighbourhood safer for everyone.

1. Can you describe a typical day in your role as a Harm Reduction Community Care Worker?

Resty: A normal day for me starts with stocking my wagon with essentials like snacks, water, naloxone kits, and other harm reduction supplies. Then we head out to walk the community, picking up used needles and engaging with clients we meet.

A big part of our time is spent doing wellness checks to make sure no one is overdosing and referring people to services they might need, whether it's for ID, medical care, or emergency shelter. I also train people on how to use naloxone and safely dispose of needles.

The walk usually takes a couple of hours, but it really varies day-to-day. There's no set number of people we see, it just depends on what the community needs. When we get back to the office, I help support clients who are on our driveway.

Abel: My day as a Harm Reduction Community Care Worker starts with checking on clients in the driveway and the backyard of our building. After that, I fill up my cart with a variety of supplies, including hygiene products, harm reduction kits, and snacks.

Once I have everything I need, I head out into the neighborhood to check on our hotspots. I'll offer supplies and chat with people about the different services or drop-ins we have available. Essentially, my role is to provide as much support as I can to the community around Street Health.

2. What kind of requests do you typically receive regarding discarded harm reduction supplies?

Resty: People will often come up to us to let us know where the used needles are, which is a big help. We also receive a lot of compliments and positive feedback from community members for our needle pickup efforts. It's clear that this work makes a noticeable difference to them.

In addition to pointing out discarded supplies, people frequently ask us for new harm reduction kits and even simple things like snacks. We're not only helping to keep the neighborhood safe by removing used supplies, but we're also building trust and showing that we're a source of support.

Abel: We have built some really good relationships with our clients. Because of that trust, community members often tell us exactly where to find discarded paraphernalia. We've also built partnerships with local spots like Mei's Convenience and Moss Park Community Housing, as well as with homeowners in the area, and the housing at 310 Dundas Street East.

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Conversation with Resty and Abel *continued*

We've been able to distribute sharps containers throughout the community and we always make sure to show people how to use them properly. This helps make the neighborhood safe and cleaner for everyone.

3. Can you share an example of a positive interaction or moment you've had while working in the community?

Resty: I've had some really positive interactions with people. Giving out harm reduction kits is a big part of that. It shows people that our approach is based on helping, not judging. Because of this, people feel comfortable coming to us to ask for supplies and advice. One of the most impactful things for me is when I meet someone who is in crisis. I can sit with them, listen without judgment, and help them calm down. That kind of human connection is what it's all about.

Following up on a referral is also great. When I connect with someone after they've used a service I told them about, and they thank me for letting them know about it, it's a great reminder that we're helping people find the support they need.

Abel: My most positive moments often come from the smallest interactions. For example, I've had people approach me and tell me they haven't spoken to anyone in days, and our simple conversation really helped them. It's those moments when you can make someone feel seen and heard that stick with you.

Just being there to offer some water, or a pair of socks can make a huge difference. Those basic items can change someone's entire day. It's also incredibly rewarding when I can provide supplies and help someone feel a little bit safer. Those are the moments when I know I'm making a positive impact.

4. Looking ahead, what do you hope this project and your role achieves for the community?

Resty: By the end of the project, I hope to see a few key things happen. First, I want to see more people using our services. If we can increase the number of referrals we give, it means we're successfully connecting people with the help they need.

I also hope we can expand our community engagement activities. I'd love to see us set up a tent to connect with people, create more awareness about Bill 6 and its impact on the homeless. Continuing to offer naloxone training is also a big part of this.

Overall, the main goal is to build trust with community members so they feel comfortable coming to Street Health to access our services.

Abel: I'm hoping to have a much deeper understanding of the community members we serve. This experience will help me figure out the most effective ways to support people in the future. On a personal level, I see this as a significant advancement in my career and my overall knowledge of harm reduction.

Mary Breen (centre) with Women's Drop-in participants.

We Were Here

The toxic drug supply continues to impact communities across Canada. The closure of safe consumption sites (SCS) on April 1, 2025 has removed vital service. Street Health's Overdose Prevent Site (OPS) is one part of our community effort that needs your support and advocacy.

If you haven't already, please view some of artist and author Mary Breen's impactful *We Were Here* short videos at maryfairhurstbreen.ca/we-were-here-project/

Mary attended our Women's Drop-In to help participants tell their stories of community grief and resilience. It is only with a wide range of awareness and support that more tragic deaths will be prevented.

Community Partnerships Build Access to Identification and Connections

Street Health's staff have a passion for advocacy and sharing their knowledge about the issues impacting clients. This happens through a range of efforts including nursing, mental health and harm reduction, and providing university and college student internship opportunities to ensure the next generation of service providers gain real-life awareness on how to deliver accessible and inclusive services. For the Identification (ID) service, sharing expertise and best practices happens in community clinics. These clinics help reduce the impact of lost and stolen ID, as well as ensure community partner agencies can meet client needs. Street Health's partnership with Native Child and Family Services (NCFST) is part of our commitment to provide services for Indigenous community members who are frequently overrepresented in the homeless population.

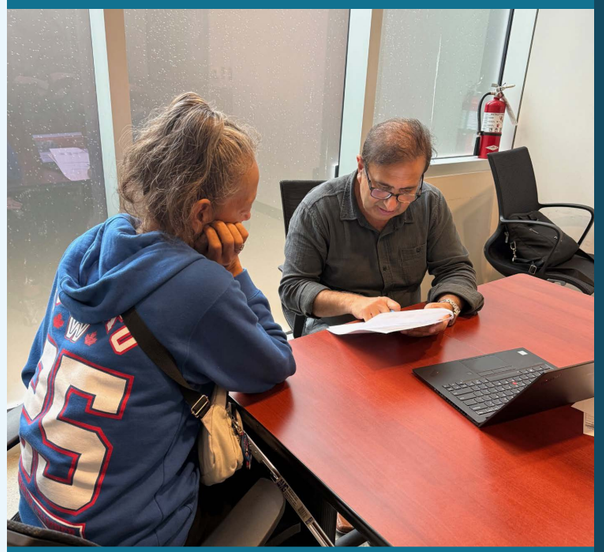
For more than four years, this monthly clinic has helped Indigenous parents/caregivers with children obtain a Certified Copy of Birth which supports application for a Status Card.

"Street Health's ID Team have connections with the Office of the Register General and significant experience making sure that documents are completed to meet review requirements," states Narinder Ohri. Narinder is part of the team that conducts clinics throughout Toronto. For example, downtown Community Health Centres (CHCs), which serve homeless populations, and the Toronto South Detention Centre for those who need ID upon release from incarceration.

The clinic at NCFST is one of the highest demand ID locations. Each month 15-20 caregivers and children receive support at this location. This clinic ensures that ID is not a barrier for Indigenous community members receiving healthcare and support services.

"The Indigenous Community is connected to a variety of programs offered at NCFST and are familiar with coming here for services. I've worked with clients who couldn't access ID due to a family name change, and clients who were disconnected from their band or family and needed some help to document names," notes Narinder. "As an ID Worker, I meet with each person and learn about their situation. I'm often the connection to ensure that government workers receive the details and understand of an applicant's situation, so ID processing isn't delayed." It doesn't matter how simple or complex someone's situation is. The ID team has the skills, knowledge and years of experience to advise and help create positive outcomes.

Eva, Native Child and Family Services, with Narinder, Street Health's ID Worker



Narinder with a client. Last year, Street Health processed 4,581 pieces of identification.

At Street Health's location (338 Dundas street East), in encampments, in shelters and at community partner locations - Street Health's ID Team help community members build their wellbeing through ID support and advocacy.

Through our dedicated team and vital partnerships, Street Health continues to break down barriers and connect community members to the essential identification and support they need to improve their wellbeing and to thrive.