SUBJECT: Assignment of an Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Services (ADGS) Social Worker to the Hamilton Family Health Team - BOH08003 (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

a) That the City deliver the Drinkwise program and training at the Family Health Team of Hamilton Inc., one day per week for a one-year term, with a renewal option for an additional one year, and;

b) That the Medical Officer of Health be authorized to execute an agreement between the City and the Family Health Team of Hamilton Inc., in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, to implement the above recommendation, and;

c) That the Board of Health approve a temporary increase in complement by 0.2 FTE for Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Services (ADGS) to deliver the Drinkwise program and training at the Family Health Team of Hamilton Inc.

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Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Family Health Team of Hamilton Inc., operating as the Hamilton Family Health Team (HFHT) provides primary care to patients in 114 medical sites throughout Hamilton. The
physicians have identified that approximately 20 per cent of their patients have early signs of alcohol dependence and require some education and counselling about the risks and side effects of continued problem use of alcohol. Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Services (ADGS) has delivered a program that addresses these issues, called Drinkwise, to the community for over 15 years. Because of this reputation in the community, the HFHT has requested a trained worker from ADGS be assigned to their workplace one day per week to deliver this program and train their mental health workers in methods of assessing the suitability of patients for this program.

**BACKGROUND:**

Public Health Services provides “Drinkwise,” an early and brief intervention through ADGS. Drinkwise involves six sessions that highlight the risks of problematic use of alcohol and the benefits to individuals of maintaining healthy guidelines for alcohol use. Drinkwise gives participants strategies to reduce their drinking and eliminate risks such as driving while impaired or developing further dependence on alcohol in their daily functioning. It is a research-based moderation program targeted at individuals who do not already have a tolerance to alcohol and have not developed the physical and social consequences that heavy dependence on alcohol can produce. The nine month follow up is designed to evaluate its effectiveness and overall the program has excellent outcomes in terms of benefits to clients at reducing the harmful effects of alcohol.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

ADGS adopted a strategy of early intervention for alcohol use in the late 1980s. The Drinkwise program has been used as it is a proven strategy for early intervention and is considered the best evidence model for mild to moderate problems with alcohol use. ADGS is considered a community leader in providing early intervention strategies and therefore is sought out when these strategies are required. It has been recognized that primary health care (rather than addictions' treatment settings) is the most appropriate place to deliver this program, mainly due to the fact that individuals requiring early intervention would not necessarily reach out to an addiction agency but rather to their family physician with their concerns.

This assignment of an ADGS social worker to the HFHT is an excellent opportunity to provide the Drinkwise program in a primary care setting.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Public Health Services would continue to provide Drinkwise at ADGS with no ability to expand the service to additional members of the community.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Adoption of this recommendation will not affect the overall budget. An ADGS social worker will be assigned to the HFHT and their 0.2 FTE will be backfilled with a temporary increase in hours of an existing part-time position. Implementation of this recommendation will require Legal Services to prepare a service contract between the City and the HFHT. Implementation of this recommendation may require that the owners of the Drinkwise program provide their consent to allow the City to deliver the program and training at the HFHT.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

This service agreement will be implemented in accordance to City of Hamilton Purchasing and Finance & Administration policies.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Legal Services was consulted and assisted in the preparation of this Board of Health Report. Initial consultation has also occurred with Finance and Administration and the Drinkwise Program Owners at Homewood Health Centre.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Public services and programs are delivered in an equitable manner, coordinated, efficient, effective and easily accessible to all citizens.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Poverty is reduced

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Improved outcomes for high-risk families should improve these families' individual economic situation, reduce the need for health and social services and improve contributions to community well-being.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☑ Yes ☐ No
Lifelong Learning is supported.