
HOW TO BE IN THE ROOM

MODULES FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS TO BE ENGAGED IN EFFECTIVE DRUG POLICY



AN INTRODUCTION INTO THE ROLE WE PLAY IN DRUG POLICY

The overdose crisis is killing 14 people every day in Canada¹. It has never been more urgent for PWUD to be a part of developing and implementing new drug policies. This is because our personal experiences are one of the most valuable tools that can be utilized to end this crisis.

Our lives have and continue to show the scars of ill-informed public drug policy. We see this in the marginalization, criminalization, grief, violence, stigma, and discrimination that we experience². And when decision-makers make public policy without learning from PWUD and our experiences, it often results in something called [negative externalities](#)³. This is a term borrowed from the field of economics and describes the unintended negative consequences of a policy change. For example, when the opioid OxyContin™ was delisted, there was an increase in overdose deaths because people started replacing their Oxy usage with heroin and fentanyl. Without the input and feedback of PWUD, policy with negative externalities or unintended consequences is more likely to be implemented. So while our presence ITR can be threatening to those in decision making roles, it is important that we are there so we can end harmful policy, and make sure that real solutions that will benefit PWUD are put into effect.

WAYS TO BRING ATTENTION TO YOUR COMMUNITIES NEEDS



Direct Action

When the government would not implement a proper overdose response, PWUD and their allies took things into their own hands and created unsanctioned OPSs. This form of direct action transformed policies, expanded overdose prevention services and changed laws. It garnered national attention and the media helped to bring the issues to people's attention.



Letter-writing Campaigns and Writing to Decision-makers & Politicians

If other members of your community are concerned about the same issue, collectively you can start a letter-writing campaign. This technique has been used to show support for the unsanctioned OPS in Ottawa, when hundreds of people wrote to Ottawa's mayor, city council, and public health unit. See Appendix B of the guidebook for contact information for your federal or provincial Health Minister.

GETTING ATTENTION TO GET INTO THE ROOM 1/3

Writing a Letter to the Editor or an Opinion Editorial (OPED)

Writing a letter to the editor or an OPED can increase your ability to reach both the public and decision-makers. An opinion¹⁸ piece is an article usually around 600-700 words that uses facts to persuade the general public about an issue or need for the community. Controlling the narrative is one of the best ways we can change the societal stigma. A lot of editors are willing to work with PWUD to share their stories.



Rallies, Demonstrations, Protests, & Awareness Days

Hosting a rally can be a powerful way to show public support for PWUD and their human rights. Seeking out like-minded community organizations to organize and participate can increase publicity and attendance at your rally.

Also, a lot of our demonstrations are raising awareness for international days for a variety of intersectoral topics for PWUD. These are days to get out and make some loud noise in your community advocating for change. This is a great way to show your community you have formed a group for PWUD.

GETTING ATTENTION TO GET INTO THE ROOM 2/3



Reaching Out to Media

If you follow your local news, reach out to reporters covering the overdose epidemic and make them aware of issues that you think need publicity. Reporters can be allies or enemies, so it is good to build a relationship with the supporting reporters. Keep in mind that a lot of reporters may not be covering the story for the right reasons and often use stigmatizing language. If that is the case, you need to contact the editor and request for the language be amended.



Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter²⁰ can be powerful tools to get the general public's and the government's attention. Since these platforms are used by so many people, they can be used to raise public awareness about issues or causes in your community. The government generally does not shift their positions unless they have public support on an issue, and social media is a great tool for building public support.

GETTING ATTENTION TO GET INTO THE ROOM 3/3

Start a Facebook Page

Use it to share local news and to provide a platform for discussion about these issues impacting PWUD.

Use Instagram

Using Instagram to publish photos, art, and images can help amplify your voice. Instagram is a great platform to share images and gain attention.



Figure 3: Examples of graphics from CAPUD's Facebook page

Get a Twitter Account

If you do not feel comfortable using your name real name, use an alias. Learn to tag the local media and politicians in your tweets to get their attention.

Create Graphics

If you are creating graphic art definitely look into creating an Instagram account to spread your message to the world. For graphic examples check out CAPUD's [Facebook](#) page, it has dozens of examples. Designs can be as simple as white text on a black background. Software programs, like Microsoft Paint, PowerPoint and Canva can be used to make simple, effective graphics that spread the word very quickly as well.

WE NEED TO BE LEADING POLICY MAKER MEETINGS

INCLUSION IS NEVER ENOUGH

EMPOWERMENT IS

THINGS TO KNOW WHEN PLANNING POLICY MAKER MEETINGS 1/2

WHAT'S THE EVENT? IS IT A CONFERENCE, ROUNDTABLE, SYMPOSIUM, FACE TO FACE MEETING, ETC.

WHAT'S THE TOPIC? CANNABIS, OPIOIDS, OVERDOSE CRISIS, RESEARCH, MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT, WORKPLACE, ETC.

**WHAT TYPE OF POLICY MAKERS ARE GOING TO BE THERE?
LOCAL/PROVINCIAL/FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, FUNDERS, POLITICIANS, ACADEMICS,
DOCTORS, ETC.**

THINGS TO KNOW WHEN PLANNING POLICY MAKER MEETINGS 2/2

ASK HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN ATTEND THE MEETING...ALWAYS PUSH FOR AS MANY AS POSSIBLE, WE NEED DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, MEMBERS OF THE 2SLGBTIA+, PEOPLE FROM GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUNDS INCLUDING REMOTE/RURAL AREAS.

WHEN YOU KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE YOU CAN BRING...START INVITING THEM AND CONFIRMING THEIR INTEREST. IT'S BEST TO DO THIS WAY BEFORE THE MEETING AND NOT LEAVE IT TO THE LAST MINUTE.

WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR LIST OF ATTENDEES, SCHEDULE AN IN-PERSON MEETING (OR ON ZOOM) TO DISCUSS WHAT MEMBERS WANT TO TALK ABOUT AT THIS MEETING. ONCE YOU REACH A GENERAL CONSENSUS, MAKE A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO SEND TO THE POLICY MAKERS.

KNOW WHERE THESE MEETINGS ARE!

Conferences

Generally, the organizers of a conference or a third party (Health Canada for example) will pay for your airfare, accommodation, entrance fee to the event as well as issue a cash or cheque per diem (daily expense allowance) upon your arrival. The per diem amount is usually not open to negotiation. In most cases, the amount is based on the cost of 3 meals per day, local transit, taxis to travel to and from the event, and small incidentals. Between \$100 - \$150 per day is fairly standard, but if you feel the amount is less than needed, keep all your receipts and speak to the organizers when appropriate.

International conferences are the exception to this. Once you become involved in drug policy, you may get invited to places all over the world. Some may pay for your travel and per diems but know that this is rare. That said, if their hands are tied on covering daily expenses but they will cover your flight and hotel costs, it may still be worth going.

Meetings & focus groups

Professionals in meetings and focus groups often make more than \$30 per hour. Your participation is work and therefore you should be paid a comparable wage for comparable work. Generally speaking, when negotiating stipends or honoraria, you should never be receiving less than the **living wage amount**^{9,10} in your area. The hosts should pay you in honorarium through a method that works for you not offering you a gift card.

British Columbia Centre for Disease Control published guidelines¹⁰ that recommend \$25/hour for meetings, document review and advisory roles. We follow the same guidelines for our employees and members at CAPUD. They also published a best practices document for drug user engagement¹¹, we are looking to create an updated pan-Canadian version similar to this document.

It is important to have clear communication with the people who are asking you to participate. Many of us have done this work for a long time without being properly compensated for our work, time and expertise. CAPUD and others advocate that changing this starts with us. When being asked to participate in meetings or focus groups, use the [BCCDC Peer Payment Standards for short term engagements](#).

PAYMENTS & HONORARIUMS

CAPUD PAYS ALL OF THEIR MEMBERS FOR ANY OF THE WORK THEY DO AT THE VERY MINIMUM \$25 PER HOUR.

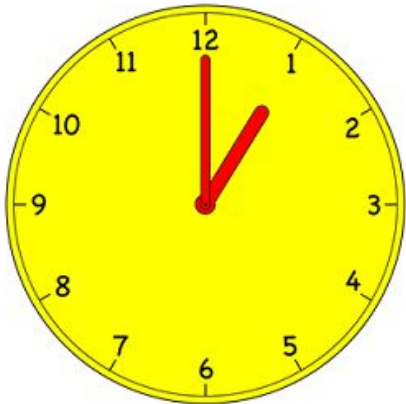
FOR ADVISORY ROLES, WE PAY OUR MEMBERS \$50 PER HOUR.

IF A MEMBER OF OURS IS ASKED TO SPEAK WE PAY THEM \$200, \$50 PER HOUR X 4.

HAVE VARIOUS PAYMENT METHODS WITH CASH, E-TRANSFER, OR DIRECT DEPOSIT BEING THE TOP THREE.

FINDING A TIME

SET MEETINGS IN ADVACNCE.



FINDING A TIME THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE MAY BE ONE OF THE MOST COMPLICATED ASPECTS. IT'S IMPORTANT WE KEEP IN MIND WORK HOURS, MEDICATION HOURS, DRUG USING HOURS AND ALL ON TOP OF MULTIPLE TIME ZONES.



SEND OUT A DOODLE POLL!

THE DO'S & THE DON'TS

The Dos



- ✓ Speak your mind
- ✓ Tell them what time is best
- ✓ Practice your presentation
- ✓ Ask about confidentiality
- ✓ Ask about pay methods
- ✓ Speak up if something is unclear
- ✓ Let them know about language
- ✓ Ask for breaks
- ✓ Bring naloxone and safe supplies
- ✓ Use your voice
- ✓ Know how to say no

The Don'ts



- ✗ Hold back
- ✗ Show up late
- ✗ Wait until the last second to prepare
- ✗ Share information that may harm you
- ✗ Assume you will be paid in cash
- ✗ Be ashamed of not knowing a term
- ✗ Assume they know person-centered language
- ✗ Burn yourself out
- ✗ Assume they have drug use supplies
- ✗ Limit other's sharing
- ✗ Take on too much
- ✗ Burn bridges

WHAT TYPE OF MEETING?

FACE TO FACE.



VIRTUAL MEETING.



TELECONFERENCE.



KNOW WHAT IS NOT OKAY!

Know What Is Not Okay

Tokenism is the practice of inviting or asking PWUD to participate only to prevent criticism for not having done so, and to give the appearance that PWUD are being treated fairly. If you feel like you are being tokenized and not taken seriously, speak to the decision-makers responsible for the meeting.

In some cases, your participation at these meetings can be used to validate or approve a specific policy intervention or to make a funder believe that a project is helpful. This is a classic example of tokenism. To help identify when tokenism is taking place, keep these questions in mind when ITR:

- Does it feel like you were invited to a meeting only to validate or approve a specific policy intervention?
- Is the meeting only updating you on the progress toward pre-selected goals and projects?
- Does it feel like the hosts of the meeting did not properly inform you of what the meeting is actually about?
- Did the hosts spend a lot of money to bring you there?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, you are experiencing tokenism. **Feel free to quit.**

COMPENSATION FOR YOUR EXPERTISE



Compensation for your expertise

What honorarium will I receive for participating: _____

- *Good amounts for presentations: minimum \$200*
- *Good amounts for conferences: per diems ranging from \$100-\$150*
- *Good amounts for meetings/focus groups: \$25/hour*

Can I receive this via:

Cash	Y	N
Cheque	Y	N
E-transfer	Y	N
Direct deposit	Y	N

Per diems for the day: _____

FOCUS GROUPS, MEETINGS, AND/OR RESEARCH GROUPS.



Who is attending and running the session?

What organization is running the session? _____

What is the purpose of the session? _____

Is it a one-time session, or an on-going working group? _____

How is confidentiality being handled? _____

How many people are attending the session? _____

Will other PWUD be in attendance? _____

Can I invite other PWUD? _____

SCHEDULING AND LOGISTICS



Scheduling & Logistics:

Session topic: _____

Session format: Online In-Person Other _____

Session address: _____

Time of engagement: _____

Will breaks be provided?: Y N

Transportation provided to and from? _____