

Good Shepherd Addictions / Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

What is a Nurse Practitioner?

Nurse Practitioners are Registered Nurses who have gone back to school to learn to diagnose illness, order diagnostic tests (blood work, x-rays etc.), prescribe medications, write referrals, and manage follow-up. NPs practice through a holistic lens focused on health promotion and prevention.

What is the purpose of this new Addictions NP position?

The Addictions NP aims to reduce addictions-related morbidity and mortality through low-barrier addictions support and treatment. Community-based care is provided in several locations throughout central Hamilton. Once stabilized, clients are referred back to primary care for long-term follow-up. The position is funded by the LHIN in response to the current opioid crisis.

What will the approach of this position look like?

- **Non-judgmental, client-centered**
- **Harm reduction** - Aim to reduce the health, social, and economic harms of substance use without requiring someone who is not ready to abstain or reduce their use.
- **Neutralizing Stigma** – stigma is any negative attitude (prejudice) and negative behaviour (discrimination) towards individuals living with social circumstances that are deemed undesirable, often by those in positions of power.
- **Health equity** – everyone has the right to good health no matter what their background (race, gender, age, religion, sexual preference, socioeconomic status or social circumstance)
- **Capacity building** – provide support to staff in their management of clients living with substance use or concurrent disorders; be a clinical resource.

What would an appropriate referral look like?

- Must have current, recent, past history of *problematic* or *chronic dependent* substance use
- Any point along the continuum of change (precontemplation, maintenance, relapse)
- Any clients whom you know have significant barriers to accessing addictions treatment

Figure 1 – Spectrum of Psychoactive Substance Use

(Adapted From: BC Ministry of Health Services. "Every Door is the Right Door: a British Columbia planning framework to address problematic substance use and addiction" 2004)

