

SAFE Program Response Plan

AUGUST 2020

For COVID-19 Second Wave



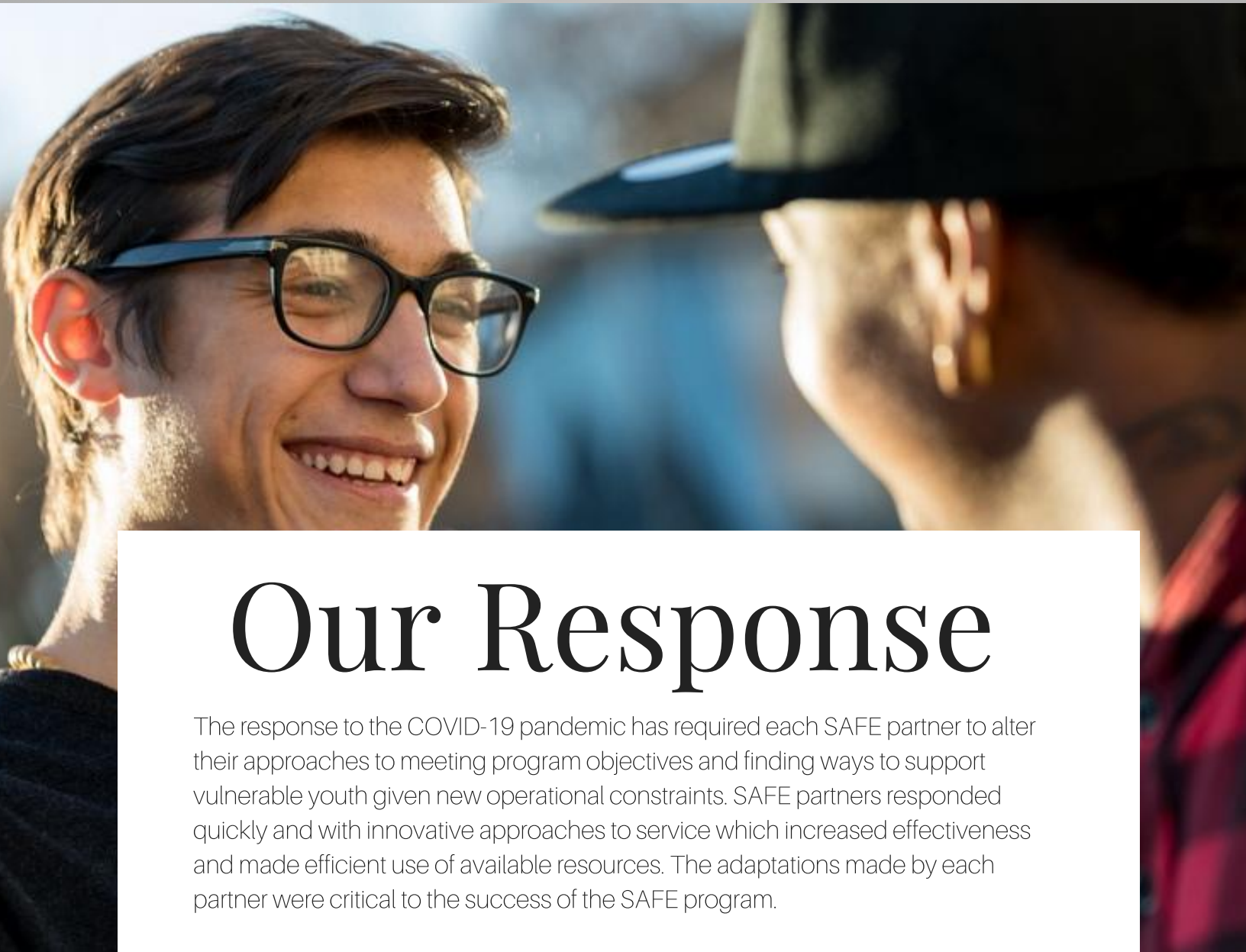
SAFE

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Our Response

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has required each SAFE partner to alter their approaches to meeting program objectives and finding ways to support vulnerable youth given new operational constraints. SAFE partners responded quickly and with innovative approaches to service which increased effectiveness and made efficient use of available resources. The adaptations made by each partner were critical to the success of the SAFE program.

This plan outlines best practices in the response to pandemic conditions by social service organizations and future considerations should a second wave of the virus arrive. Provincial health officials continue to stress the possibility of a second wave of COVID-19 in the late fall or winter, characterized by a sustained rise in the incidence of infections. Factors which may impact the probability of a second wave include: ease of public health orders; lack of social distancing by young people due to schools re-opening in September; people spending more time indoors due to cold weather in fall and winter months; and the onset of the regular cold and flu season.

If a second wave of COVID-19 occurs, SAFE program responses will aim to follow best practices and take special considerations into account when making program changes.



Best Practices

Collaboration and Flexibility

Importantly, many of the successes in overcoming barriers to service were found in collaboration between multiple partners. Whether through the development of new programs, the provision of necessary technology or emergency financial assistance, or the pivot to providing services not previously offered, a major strength of the SAFE program is the collaboration between partners and this has been patently evident throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This collaboration and flexibility should continue to be encouraged in order to fill identified gaps in service.

Rapid Response

Research shows that gaps in service can be particularly detrimental to at-risk youth, exacerbating existing risk factors and contributing to developmental effects that may continue well after the pandemic. At the same time, organized crime has the potential to fill these gaps by providing peer networks and financial and physical security. By emphasizing staying connected with clients and having plans in place to minimize gaps in service in light of increased physical distancing, SAFE partners can continue effective program delivery.

Maintain or Increase Client Engagement

The disruption in service caused by COVID-19 presents an opportunity to use client engagement to tailor programs to clients' changing needs, both during the pandemic and in the future. For youth and adolescents in particular, many of the detrimental effects of the societal response to COVID-19 – from effects on mental health to disruptions to education and development – will affect them disproportionately, and giving them more of a voice in programs and services of which they are the beneficiaries will help programs be more effective and create more buy-in.

Provide Necessary Technology

The availability of the technology required to access services remotely has been identified as a major barrier to service and the foremost obstacle to ensuring service can be provided equitably. In addition to laptops required for remote conferencing, cell phone and internet service can be lifelines for at-risk youth and families. Soliciting donations from businesses and from the community at large – whether financially or in the form of used laptops and phones – can be low-cost ways of acquiring and distributing the necessary technology to those in need.

Promote Self-Care for Professionals

There is an increased risk of employee stress or burnout as professionals creatively and flexibly adapt services to the emergency environment. Self-care for professionals should be emphasized under these conditions. This can take the form of the development of self-care plans or the implementation of flexible schedules. While much of the focus on the detrimental effects of COVID-19 has rightfully been on the recipients of programs and services, professionals are also experiencing major disruptions to their lives and should be supported.

Response Plan In Action

In addition to potentially disrupting the delivery of social services and programs directed toward at-risk youth, the COVID-19 pandemic and the societal responses to it may also exacerbate the risk factors experienced by the targets of those programs

Our Plan

Implement responses utilizing best practices:

- ✓ Review Best Practices
- ✓ Collaborate with SAFE team
- ✓ Respond quickly
- ✓ Plan to maintain or increase client engagement

Strategy

- Review client caseload to identify youth who may be particularly vulnerable (see special considerations)
- Provide necessary technology
- Adapt services to most current health orders mandated by the Provincial Health Officer
- Communicate activities to find efficiencies between SAFE organizations and reduce staff burnout.

Objective

To continue the provision of collaborative and case specific interventions through a second wave scenario that is substantiated by research, meets program objectives, and complies with provincial health orders.

Deliverables

1. Activities reflect the implementation of best practices
2. CHART referrals and client engagement continues
3. Service continuity is maintained

Special Considerations for a Second Wave



Increased vulnerability because of family isolation and stigma.

With the restrictions on travel that will inevitably be associated with a second wave, many newcomer families will be separated by oceans from their loved ones due to changing policies. Also people originating from certain countries may face stigma depending on global pandemic responses.

Indigenous Communities are particularly vulnerable

In Canada, even in our community, Indigenous people experience health disparities. These disparities are exacerbated in a pandemic situation. Our indigenous clients must be supported fully because they may feel second wave impacts more quickly, and differently than others.

Bolster Food Security

Families that rely on community sources to supplement their groceries will become increasingly food insecure as some organizations pare back service or close all together. With the first wave, children who relied on school breakfast programs were heavily affected by school closures.

Increase in risk factors and concurrent disorders

Many risk factors will be exacerbated by a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research shows that high-risk clients are susceptible for developing concurrent disorders during times of isolation and states of emergency due to increased incidences of anxiety, decreased access to medical services/ professionals, and unhealthy coping mechanisms involving drugs and alcohol.

Positive Actions

Cultural Supports are Key

- Whole-of-family approaches for support and risk interventions
- Tools provided to parents to help deal with changing status of youth/ children
- Services provided in preferred languages

Detection of Hidden Risk

- Go back to case files and read risk factors to determine which youth and families can be proactively supported before risk increases drastically.
- Identify youth who may be currently stable but likely won't manage change well and offer family supports.
- Connect with Indigenous families early as they may be affected by changing pandemic conditions first.

Anticipate Development of High Risk Situations

- Identify and support clients that have de-escalated from a state of concurrent disorders and make a support plan to maintain/ decrease current risk levels.
- Make early referrals to addiction intervention programs
- Know the supports available for quick interventions/ referrals.

Let's work together to #stopthespread



- 01** Wash your hands frequently
- 02** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- 03** Cover your mouth when you cough using a tissue or the bend of your elbow
- 04** Avoid crowded places and close contact with anyone who has fever or cough
- 05** Stay home if you feel unwell
- 06** Seek medical care early if you have a fever, coughs, and difficulty breathing—but call first
- 07** Get information from trusted sources