



safe & well

OXFORD COMMUNITIES

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, October 6th, 2025

1:00 p.m.

Oxford County Administration Building – Room 129

1. Call the Meeting to Order
2. Review of Agenda for meeting of October 6th, 2025
3. Review of Minutes of August 15th, 2025 meeting ([attached](#))
4. Business Arising from the Minutes
 - DEI Charter follow-up – Norwich
 - 2025 Summit – Mt. Elgin: November 7, 2025
 - Use of Space Policy
 - Canadian Index of Well-Being Survey
 - Oxford County Grant Program
 - Updated Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
5. Action Coalition Updates (Round Table)
 - Oxford Housing Action Collaborative – Rebecca Smith
 - Oxford Mental Health & Addictions Network - Peter Heywood ([attached](#))
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Coalition - Ayesha Sajid ([attached](#))
 - Domestic Abuse Resource Team – Ashley Brown (no update)

6. Next Steps & New Business:

- iHEAL Program ([attached](#))

7. Upcoming Meeting Dates – Oxford County Administration Building – Room 129:

- October 27th
- Summit – November 7th
- December 1st

8. Adjournment



STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Friday, August 15th, 2025

10:00 a.m.

Oxford County Administration Building Room 129

1. **Call the Meeting to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marcus Ryan at 10:03 a.m. and a quorum was present.

Attendees:

Marcus Ryan, Bernia Martin, Tony Hymers, Tina Diamond, Ashley Brown, Peter Heywood, Ayesha Sajid, Sarah Hamulecki, Amy Humphries

2. **Review of Agenda for meeting of June August 15th, 2025**

Resolution No. 1 Moved by: T. Hymers
 Seconded by: P. Heywood

RESOLVED that the agenda for the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee meeting of August 15th, 2025, be approved.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried

3. **Review of Minutes of June 23rd, 2025, meeting**

Resolution No. 2 Moved by: B. Martin
 Seconded by: P. Heywood

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee meeting of June 23rd, 2025, be approved as presented.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

- Area Municipalities DEI Charter follow-up – Norwich
 - The Warden, CAO and Manager of Strategic Initiatives will be meeting with the Mayor and CAO of Norwich next week for further discussion.
 - Additionally, there will be a discussion about renewing the Plan, including the process and feedback mechanisms involved in its development.
- 2025 Summit – Mt. Elgin: Final date
 - Date has been finalized for November 7, 2025 and will be facilitated by Strategy Corp.
 - The Summit will be used to present a draft of the Plan to stakeholders.
 - Two elected officials will be invited from each area municipality.
- Use of Space Policy Update
 - Processes are being finalized.
- Canadian Index of Well-Being Survey
 - Survey closed June 30, 2025.
 - Information and data are being reviewed and compiled.
- Oxford County Grant Program
 - Applications close August 30.
- Updated Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
 - Currently in the pre-engagement phase, which involves developing an appropriate engagement style with vulnerable populations.
 - Surveys have been sent to CAOs and Councillors.
 - Surveys have been sent to service providers. Several service providers will also be invited to a focus group.
 - Working with rural libraries to engage the rural residents.
 - There was a discussion about the need for an ethical review in order to undertake the surveys.
 - Once the priority risk areas are drafted, they will be circulated to the area municipalities for further consultation in advance of finalizing the areas to give Councils additional input.
 - Warden Ryan and S. Hamulecki will delegate to each municipality in November & December to present the final Plan. The final Plan will be presented to County Council in January 2026. It was noted that the final Plan will not be approved until after the 2026 Oxford County budget has been finalized.

And whereas the report makes it clear that there are many ways that “The way communities are planned, designed, serviced, and maintained has a considerable impact on health”;

Therefore be it resolved that the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee respectfully recommends to Oxford County Council that they direct Oxford Staff to work with SWPH Staff on how the SWPH Public Health & the Built Environment report could be implemented to the benefit of all Oxford residents.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried

7. Upcoming Meeting Dates – Oxford County Administration Building – Room 129

- Remaining 2025 meetings:
 - September 22nd - **rescheduled to October 6th at 1:00 p.m.**
 - October 27th
 - December 1st

8. Adjournment

Resolution No. 4 Moved by: P. Heywood
 Seconded by: T. Diamond

RESOLVED that the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

DISPOSITON: Motion Carried

Action Coalition Update

Meeting Date:	October 6, 2025
Action Coalition:	Oxford Mental Health & Addictions Action Coalition
Representative:	Peter Heywood
Update:	Oxford Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Refresh Workshop On September 10, the Oxford Mental Health and Addictions Action Coalition (OMHAAC), hosted a pivotal workshop to advance the refresh of the Oxford County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy. This session marked a significant step in ensuring our local approach to substance use and mental health remains relevant, evidence-based, and responsive to emerging community needs. Workshop Overview The workshop brought together a diverse group of community partners, service providers, and individuals with lived and living experience. Facilitated by Brooke and Ashley, participants were encouraged to engage in open dialogue and explore key issues in depth. Purpose and Goals The refresh aims to: • Integrate a mental health promotion lens for a more holistic, person-centred approach. • Revalidate the eight core themes of the strategy. • Review over 80 existing recommendations, identifying completed actions, outdated items, and new priorities. • Incorporate innovative practices and address emerging trends in substance use and mental health. • Update local data and trends using resources like the Community Health Profile reports. Key Focus Areas Discussed Participants engaged with questions designed to shape the refreshed strategy, including:

	• Overall Direction: What's changed in Oxford County? Where are the gaps in services, interventions, and policy? How can the strategy better align with other local initiatives (e.g., housing, poverty, youth wellness)? • Action and Implementation: Which actions have been successful, and what new steps are needed? • Prevention and Early Intervention: What strategies are most needed, and which populations require more support? • Low-Barrier Supports and Access: How can we reduce barriers such as transportation, intake requirements, and waitlists? What would a truly "low barrier" system look like? • Treatment and Wraparound Services: How can treatment better integrate substance use and mental health supports, including peer support and trauma-informed care? • Community Safety and Partnerships: How can partnerships be strengthened to promote safety and reduce harms? What role should first responders and community agencies play? • Integration of Mental Health Promotion: How can resilience-building and trauma-informed education be embedded into prevention initiatives, especially for youth and families? Next Steps All feedback from the workshop will be compiled into a stakeholder engagement summary report, which will directly inform the updated strategy. The refreshed Oxford County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy will provide clear direction for the years ahead, supporting both current residents and future generations. It is expected that the refreshed strategy will be published in the second half of 2026.
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Action Coalition Update

Meeting Date:	Oct 6th ,2025
Action Coalition:	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Coalition
Representative:	Ayesha Sajid
Update:	The Coalition members have approved the DEI Postcard draft. These postcards will be used at the Summit to promote DEI and the DEI Action Coalitions' work. In previous DEI Action Coalition meetings, concerns were raised by the community regarding recent interactions with local police services. After conversing with Rod and Tony and focusing on the Coalition members' interests, we planned on inviting police services to our meeting in September. But that has been postponed to October's meeting. The Coalition members agreed on switching from monthly posting of Article of the Month to bi-monthly.



NEWS FROM WESTERN UNIVERSITY, MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT AND SOUTHWESTERN PUBLIC HEALTH

AUGUST 15, 2025

Western expands iHEAL program through partnerships with Middlesex-London Health Unit and Southwestern Public Health

Registered nurses to deliver evidence-based support to over 300 women experiencing intimate partner violence

Starting this fall, eight registered nurses from the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) and Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) will be equipped to offer the iHEAL program, which helps women who have experienced or are experiencing intimate partner violence. iHEAL was developed by researchers at Western University, in partnership with the University of British Columbia and University of New Brunswick.

iHEAL is a free program for women who have experienced or are experiencing intimate partner violence by connecting them with a nurse who can help them manage common issues to improve their health, safety, relationships, connections, personal growth or access to basic resources.

“iHEAL is an evidence-based program that is grounded in more than 20 years of research, including feedback from women themselves,” said Marilyn Ford-Gilboe, iHEAL project lead and professor at Western’s Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing in the Faculty of Health Sciences. “The implementation of this program in two public health units will help bridge important gaps in supports for women’s longer-term healing and recovery, including in rural areas.”

The Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services recently granted \$2.4 million in funding for iHEAL as part of the National Action Plan on gender-based violence. The investment will help launch the program for the first time at SWPH, which serves residents in Elgin County, Oxford County and the City of St. Thomas, and increase capacity at MLHU, where it has been running since 2021, supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

“This research project has the potential to be transformative for women in our region,” said David Smith, Healthy Foundations program director at SWPH. “We know intimate partner

violence has long-term effects on a woman's health, safety and overall well-being. Through iHEAL, women who need support will receive personalized, one-on-one public health nursing support to help begin to rebuild their lives."

The launch and the expansion provide a chance to learn how a complex program, such as iHEAL, can be effectively embedded into a service organization, said Nadine Wathen, professor at the Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing. It also allows researchers to better understand the scale of the program's impact in the community. The ultimate goal is to find ways to expand iHEAL so it can be offered to women in communities across Canada.

Participant-led, flexible, health-focused care

For one participant, Gwen (*a pseudonym has been used to protect her privacy*), the program was a turning point.

"iHEAL is so critical for somebody in my situation. I think without this program it would have been a much longer recovery, healing and growth process. It enhances existing supports and services rather than duplicating them and it offers tools beyond counselling or therapy. The program really amplifies the entire healing process in a positive direction."

She also appreciated the ease of accessing iHEAL. Knowing the program was developed through robust evidence helped her trust the process as she progressed, too.

"What makes iHEAL unique is the focus on health and the impacts that it has on women who experience intimate partner violence," said Jody Shepherd, associate manager of the nurse-family partnership & early years group programs team at MLHU. "We address health outcomes – including physical and mental well-being – and the fact it's delivered by registered nurses makes it truly distinctive."

iHEAL-educated registered nurses meet with participants weekly or biweekly for approximately six months. The meetings are tailored to each woman's priorities and situation, and are held in-person at a safe, convenient location or virtually. Additionally, nurses often introduce women to the [iHEAL app](#), a resource available to the general public in English and French, which provides resources and ongoing support between sessions, and after the completion of the program. They also incorporated a community of practice where the nurses meet together monthly to share new approaches to care and best practices.

The registered nurses work with women to build their capacity to manage issues that affect their health – concerns that are identified by the participants themselves – including:

- improving physical, emotional and psychological safety

- managing basic resources such as housing, childcare, access to health care)
- economic stability such as building a resume and/or going back to school/work)
- managing health symptoms that are often the effects of trauma, violence and toxic stress
- building a positive social support network, including connections with services
- caring for themselves – and their hopes and dreams for the future

Leanne Field, a public health nurse with MLHU, has witnessed similar beneficial outcomes in other participants.

“I have seen improvements in women's safety, their health and well-being, their sense of self, their self-confidence and control. In collaborating with their health-care provider to address health concerns, I’ve seen women build positive coping skills, improve sleep practices and healthy eating habits,” said Field. “The expansion of the program will allow us to offer even more support in a timely manner and reach more women in our community who would benefit from this program.”

The innovative program is one of only a few in existence to show sustained, long-term benefits for both women’s health and their safety, said Ford-Gilboe, Women's Health Research Chair in Rural Health. The tools and resources participants gain from the program are intended to last beyond its completion. iHEAL nurses also link women to community support and services if they wish to enhance wrap-around support.

“They gave me the skills and knowledge and everything I needed to be able to get back on my feet,” said Gwen. “Even half a year later, I'm still using the resources, the knowledge and expertise that my nurse gave me.”

If you are experiencing violence in a relationship or feel you are at risk of violence

- In an emergency, call 9-1-1.
- In London, Ont., [Anova](#) offers counselling and various other support such as emergency shelter and second-stage housing. [Atlohsa Family Support Centre](#) provides support for Indigenous women and families. The [London Abused Women’s Centre](#) provides community-based programming and counselling.
- In Elgin County, [Valora Place](#) offers community-based counselling, support and housing help.
- In Oxford County, [Domestic Abuse Services Oxford](#) provides services for women and children who have been impacted by gender-based violence in Oxford County.

- In the City of St. Thomas, [St. Thomas-Elgin Second Stage Housing](#) provides transitional supports and safe housing to women with or without children, who are leaving abusive relationships.
- Nationally, Canadians can find a suite of family-violence resources and services at this [link](#).
- To access the free and bilingual iHEAL app: <https://ihealapp.ca/>
- For more information about the iHEAL program and research: contact Marilyn Ford-Gilboe at mfordg@uwo.ca.
- For more information about the iHEAL program at MLHU: <https://www.healthunit.com/iheal>
- For more information about the iHEAL program at SWPHU: <https://www.swpublichealth.ca/iheal>

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About Middlesex-London Health Unit

The Middlesex-London Health Unit protects and promotes the health of 520,000+ residents of the County of Middlesex and the City of London by delivering programs and services legislated under [Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act](#). [We have locations in both London and Strathroy](#). Like the 28 other local public health units across the province, the work of the Middlesex-London Health Unit is defined by [Ontario Public Health Standards](#). We are governed by a [Board of Health](#) made up of municipal and provincial appointees, and we are primarily funded by the Government of Ontario, the City of London, and the County of Middlesex.

About Southwestern Public Health

[Southwestern Public Health](#) works with its partners to ensure the health of the whole community. Our programs respond to public health emergencies; promote healthy lifestyles; help prevent injuries, illness, and disease in the community; and promote positive change and social conditions that improve health. Southwestern Public Health

delivers mandated programs under the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) and is legislated by the [Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act](#). The health unit maintains primary locations in Woodstock and St. Thomas. For more information, visit www.swpublichealth.ca.

About Western

Western University delivers an academic experience second to none. Since 1878, the Western Experience has combined academic excellence with life-long opportunities for intellectual, social and cultural growth in order to better serve our communities. Our research excellence expands knowledge and drives discovery with real-world application. Western attracts individuals with a broad worldview, seeking to study, influence and lead in the international community. For more information, visit <https://uwo.ca>.