



Southwest Ontario
Aboriginal Health
Access Centre



2024 Programs and Services Guide

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In a way, SOAHAC is your friend
and you're not just a patient.
You're taken on as family.

– SOAHAC CLIENT



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Dear Community Members,

It is with great pleasure and a profound sense of responsibility that I welcome you to the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre's Programs and Services Guide. As the Chief Executive Officer of this vital organization, I am honored to introduce you to this resource that reflects our unwavering commitment to enhancing the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities across the region.

Our commitment is firmly anchored in the belief that the best way to address the health disparities experienced by Indigenous communities is through Indigenous leadership and self-determination. The principle of Indigenous health being most effectively advanced when in Indigenous hands is the foundation of our entire organization. This philosophy underpins every aspect of our programs and services, ensuring that the voices, values, and perspectives of our communities are not only heard, but are actively integrated into the design and delivery of healthcare.

This Programs and Services Guide is more than a compilation of offerings; it is a testament to our dedication to providing accessible, culturally safe, and comprehensive health services. From preventive care to specialized programs, we strive to address the wholistic health needs of our clients, recognizing that wellbeing encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

We acknowledge the invaluable partnerships with Indigenous communities, Elders, leaders, and all those who contribute to the success of the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre. Together, we are working towards a future where every Indigenous individual can access healthcare that reflects and respects their unique identity and needs.

As we navigate the dynamic landscape of Indigenous health, this guide serves as a roadmap for our collective journey towards better health outcomes and improved quality of life. It is an invitation to explore the diverse array of services we offer and an assurance that our commitment to Indigenous health remains steadfast.

Thank you for entrusting us with your health and wellbeing. We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts in building healthier, stronger, and more resilient Indigenous communities.

Miigwetch / Yaw[^]ko /Anushiik/ Thank You,

BRIAN DOKIS

Chief Executive Officer, SOAHAC

Providing Quality Health Services for Indigenous Peoples

PURPOSE

SOAHAC’s purpose is to improve access to, and the quality of, health services for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in the spirit of partnership, mutual respect, and sharing.

SOAHAC is part of a group of Aboriginal Health Access Centres (AHACs) that were first created in Ontario in 1995 in response to epidemic, systemic health disparities and inequities within the Aboriginal (now Indigenous) population across Ontario. Recently, AHACs and other Indigenous Health Care organizations have amalgamated under one umbrella as Indigenous Primary Health Care Organizations (IPHCOs). These organizations operate from a wholistic Indigenous health framework that is often referred to by Indigenous people as “the good life” or as restoring the “good mind.” This framework focuses on the restoration and rebalancing of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous people, families, communities and Nations, and understands “culture as treatment.”

VISION

A healthy balanced life through mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing.

MISSION

To empower Indigenous families and individuals to live a balanced state of wellbeing by sharing and promoting wholistic health practices.

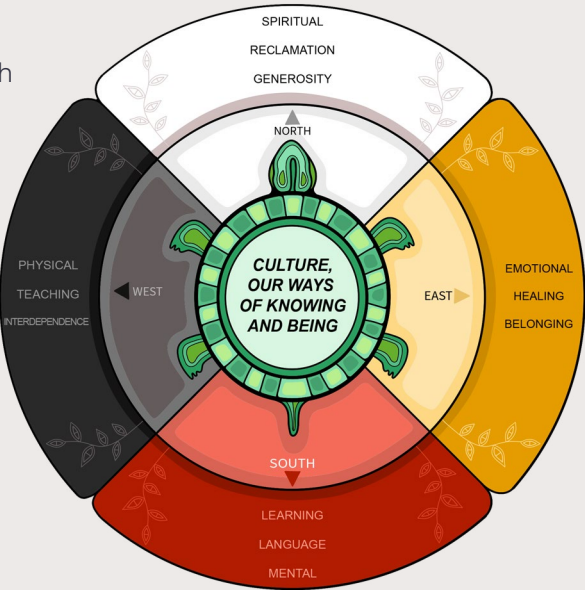
VALUES

- SOAHAC’s culture will be most healthy if these values are intentionally lived out and reinforced on a regular basis:
- Respect for all
 - Compassion
 - Quality in health promotion & care
 - Honouring all traditional values

The Model of Wholistic Health and Wellbeing

The programs and services offered by SOAHAC health are based on the Model of Wholistic Health and Wellbeing from the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council. This model represents an Indigenous perspective of the aspects of primary health care. It stipulates that culture – Indigenous ways of knowing and being – is healing. The model makes it clear that culture-as-healing is necessary to promote wellbeing across all aspects of the self: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

To provide culture-as-healing, as stipulated by the model, SOAHAC provides interdisciplinary, team-based care that is grounded in Indigenous traditions and way of knowing.



OUR COMMITMENT TO CLIENTS OF SOAHAC

We are committed to providing our clients, our communities, and our people with culture-as-healing as outlined in the Model of Wholistic Health and Wellbeing. This commitment is guided by our Indigenous values, our ancestry, the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and other sacred traditional teachings that reflect our diversity. The care we provide will be inclusive and determined by the clients, family, and people we serve. We will be guided by our connections to the land, the plants, and animals it supports, as well as our belief that food is medicine. We will communicate in the client’s language of choice.



Circle of Care

As an Indigenous Primary Health Care Organization, we provide innovative, Indigenous-informed health care to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in Southwestern Ontario from Windsor to Waterloo Wellington and north to Owen Sound.

We do this through a combination of health and social services, including:

- traditional healing;
- primary health care;
- health promotion services;
- cultural programs;
- community development initiatives; and,
- social support services.

Our circle of care recognizes Indigenous rights to determination in health, and Indigenous traditional healers and healing approaches, and blends them with culturally competent, western clinical practices in a comprehensive continuum of care, from health promotion and prevention to treatment and rehabilitation.

Our circle understands the importance of the interconnectedness between individuals, families, Nations, universe, and spirit world within our life support system, which are further defined below.

Individual: One of the most important realms within the circle of life is the realm of the self, or individual. As spiritual beings, we enter into the life cycle through our mother who acts as the doorway to the physical world. As we walk on the life path, we go through various stages – infant, child, young teens to young adults, adults, and as we approach our full circle, we enter into the senior or elder stage.

Family: Our families – immediate families, Clan families, and our extended families and ancestors, surround us with their love, guidance and support as we walk through life’s stages. Everyone is our teacher, from infant to elder. At SOAHAC, we encourage healing of families and Clans, and we invite you and your family to access services together. We support not only individuals, but also their family members, as we work together toward healing and wellness.

Community: Our sense of community is very strong. We are tied not only to our relationships with each other, our friends and multiple families, but we are also tied to the land and environment, rural and urban. SOAHAC works in and with nearby First Nations communities and urban Indigenous and Métis communities to deliver the most appropriate, high quality services.

Nation: Our families belong to various Nations such as the Anishinaabeg, the Haundenosaunee, the Lenape and Métis. All of the Nations of people have a distinct relationship with the land, and the environment, and these are expressed in unique ceremonies, handed down by generations upon generations of our ancestors.

Universe: We are connected to all things in life. The universe is expansive. The stars are our ancestors and we are the stars. We can look up to the sky world and realize that our ancestors are still here to help and guide us on our life path. In this spirit of interconnectedness, SOAHAC serves a diversity of Indigenous peoples with different beliefs, backgrounds, and spiritualities. The stars remind us that although there are many teachings, we are all one.

These Teachings are as described by Doug George, Anishnaabe Elder, in consultation with SOAHAC’s Integrated Care Leads Team.

Our Five Program Pillars

At SOAHAC, we use five pillars to guide our programs and services development.



PERSON-DRIVEN CARE

Care is culturally safe and client driven. Clients will self-determine their own safe, appropriate, informed care that is relationship-based and is orientated to the whole person.



COMPREHENSIVE CARE

Care providers partner with the client to address their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs throughout their health and wellness journey. Care plans are tailored to meet client expectations and goals, offering hybrid options that integrate Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of healing.



COORDINATED CARE

Care providers coordinate culturally-safe care, from birth to end of life, through the provision of Indigenous and non-Indigenous health services and supports.



EQUITABLE SERVICES

Clients can access affordable, high quality, culturally appropriate, wholistic care that is free of discrimination in a timely manner.



ACCOUNTABILITY

The Indigenous community governs the care SOAHAC provides. IPHCOs are accountable to the communities they serve.

Our Integrated Activity Approach

At SOAHAC, we use an integrated activity approach to ensure clients' needs are met through a variety of approaches, understanding that approaches may be used separately or together depending on the client and their needs.

1

NETWORKING

Networking activities use a culture-as-healing approach to promote the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the community. SOAHAC collaborates with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous social service and health care providers to ensure seamless systems of support for clients and smooth care transitions. SOAHAC helps ensure that clients have access to safer care by promoting systemic organizational change with the goal of eliminating anti-Indigenous racism in the local health care system.

2

LAND-BASED

Land-based activities promote physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being by connecting individuals, their families, and the community to the healing properties of the land. They are integrated across all the other activities SOAHAC undertakes (client-based, community-based, and networking activities).

3

CLIENT-BASED

Client-based activities use a culture-as-healing approach to promote the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of individuals and their families by providing preventative, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care. This includes traditional healing practices, primary care, mental health care, and community-based support.

4

COMMUNITY-BASED

Community-based activities use a culture-as-healing approach to promote the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the community by providing group programming that reflects local traditions and teachings, as well as addresses locally determined needs and priorities.



Traditional Cultural Services



TRADITIONAL HEALING

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington, Windsor; Outreach

SOAHAC, rooted in culture and traditional healing practices, embraces the wisdom of our ancestors, who thrived on a wholistic lifestyle connected to all creation.

Our teachings show a harmonious coexistence with spirit, plants, animals, and unseen forces that is integral to our own wellbeing. Falling out of balance with the environment or disconnecting from spirit could lead to illness. Seeking harmony, our ancestors turned to traditional healers, wise in our original ways of healing, to restore balance and wholeness.

SOAHAC acknowledges the colonial impact on cultural knowledge transfer and advocates for essential traditional healing services in health care. As a leader in culturally-safe care, SOAHAC provides a safe space for culturally-appropriate health services that address physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, along with other additional healing services provided by our Visiting Traditional Healers, Elders and Teachers, and Shkaabewis (Helpers).

Elements of ceremony are involved in all of these services, whether you choose a one-to-one session or participate in a group. This may include:

- the use of drums and other sacred items;
- singing of ceremonial or social songs;
- burning of tobacco, sweetgrass, cedar, or sage;
- prayer; and/or,
- healing ceremonies.

You may be expected to adhere to different cultural protocols, such as the importance of presenting tobacco (a small handful, enough to fill the bowl of a pipe) to the Healers or Elders or following specific teachings for men and women.

Traditional herbal medicines may also be recommended for your recovery. These are usually given in the form of herbal teas made from Indigenous plants.

CEREMONIES

You may receive recommendations to attend ceremonies such as:

- Fasting Ceremonies
- Feasting Ceremonies
- Full Moon Ceremonies
- Grieving Ceremonies
- Naming Ceremonies
- Sun Rise Ceremonies
- Sweat Lodge Ceremonies
- Talking, Sharing or Healing Circles

One-to-one visits

These usually begin with the offering of tobacco, followed by a conversation about your health or wellness concerns. Storytelling, teaching, doctoring, guidance, drumming, singing, or smudging may all be part of your one-to-one visit. Often, our Traditional Healers and Elders may require the help of a Shkaabewis, who assists with all aspects of your visit, including note-taking to help you remember your conversation and treatment plan.

Group programs

We occasionally offer specialized cultural teachings, ceremonies, or other learning events, often in partnership with other SOAHAC services. These group activities are an excellent way to learn through direct participation in some of our ceremonies and cultural practices. You can participate as an observer where appropriate.

Outreach

Traditional Healing Outreach Services are offered in surrounding communities and for individuals who lack adequate access to Traditional Healers and Elders.

SOAHAC staff are here to support your journey to health and wellness. Our doctors and nurse practitioners respect your right to choose how you will heal, including the use of Traditional Healing Services. Our Traditional Healers will work in cooperation with all SOAHAC staff and services to ensure you receive the best care possible in a culturally safe and caring way.

If you already access any services at SOAHAC, your service provider can help you access Traditional Healing. For new individuals seeking these services, an intake assessment may be required to assist with service planning, and a conversation with our Shkaabewis (healing helper) is recommended prior to your visit. Please call your preferred location to book an appointment.

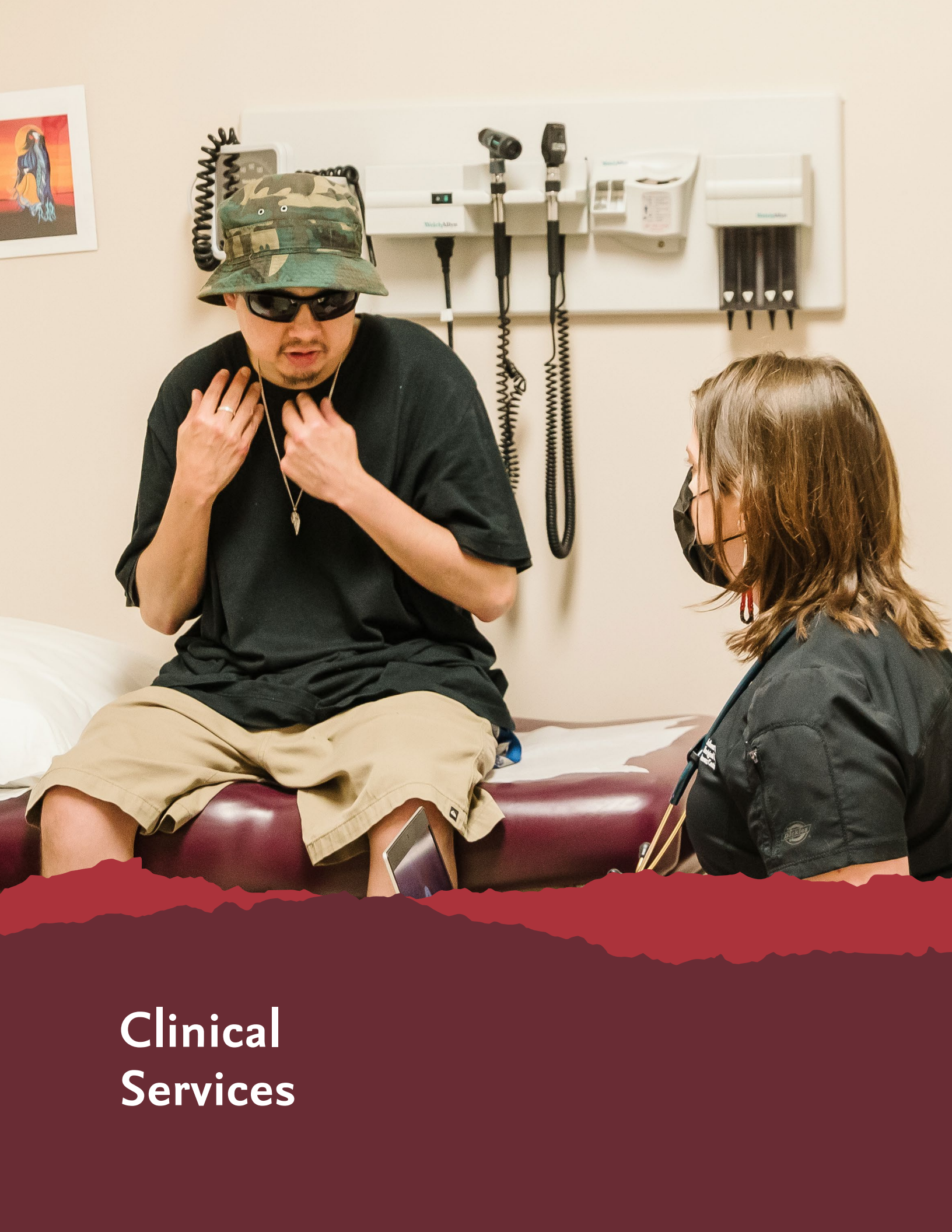
TRADITIONAL HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London

Traditional Healthy Lifestyles services promote health and wellness through cultural-based workshops, groups, and activities. These address a wide range of topics and audiences, and recognize the importance of healing as a family or community. Some groups are designed for full family participation; others promote awareness of diabetes or smoking cessation; and some may focus on access to nutrition and physical activity.

Traditional Indigenous knowledge and practices are incorporated into the planned activities, with access to Elders, traditional knowledge keepers, and events involving the expertise of Indigenous health practitioners. We aim to create an environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their knowledge and experience with others and learners from their respective community members and Elders. The goal is to improve physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing through wholistic activities.

Please call your preferred location to book an appointment or discuss your needs, or visit that location's Facebook page for group session dates and times.



Clinical Services



The Clinical Services staff is a group of health care providers who work together to coordinate the best possible integrated services for your health needs.

The team includes:

- family physicians (doctors);
- nurse practitioners (NPs);
- registered practical nurses and registered nurses (RPNs and RNs); and,
- allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dietitians, health educators, psychiatrists and chiropradists

DOCTOR AND NURSE PRACTITIONER SERVICES

Available at all SOAHAC locations

Unless there is an urgent matter, you will need to fill out an information form and have an intake appointment before being assigned to a doctor or nurse practitioner. You will meet with a nurse so we can learn a little more about you and your health needs. Then you are booked for a physical examination, which may include: blood work and/or routine preventative care and screening depending on age. Common doctor and nurse practitioner services include:

- illness or injury prevention and treatment;
- chronic illness monitoring and management;
- pregnancy care;
- well-baby and well-child care;
- immunizations;
- blood work;
- annual health exams; and,
- referrals to specialists, lab, x-ray and ultrasound testing

The Clinical Services staff works with you to select the healing path of your choice and ensures you are part of decision making in your health and wellness plan. Health providers may work collaboratively with Traditional Healers and Elders so that you have access to both Western and Traditional Indigenous medicines and practices, which promotes high quality, wholistic, and integrated health care.

INDIGENOUS PALLIATIVE CARE TEAM (IN-PACT)

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London

SOAHAC’s IN-PaCT program was developed in March 2018 to provide specific Indigenous-led palliative and end-of-life care to Indigenous people that is culturally safe and responsive to their needs.

IN-PaCT strives to integrate physical, emotional, social, and spiritual care into the services we provide. We honour the connection and relationships that each individual, family and community, have with these elements of care and strive to improve quality of life by ensuring that we are aware of diversity and choice of the clients we serve.

IN-PaCT currently provides services to the members of Oneida Nation of the Thames, Munsee-Delaware, and the Chippewas of the Thames First Nations.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London

As part of a wholistic, integrated approach to physical injury and dysfunction, existing SOAHAC clients may be referred for SOAHAC physiotherapy services.

Physiotherapists are trained to treat a variety of physical dysfunctions such as joint and muscle injuries, repetitive strain injuries, chronic pain disorders, post-surgical rehabilitation, and sports injuries.

Your care begins with an assessment and the development of a personalized action plan with short and long term goals, your prognosis for recovery, and the types of treatments recommended for you. This is followed by your treatment sessions, which may include manual therapy, exercise, electrotherapy or muscle stimulation, therapeutic ultrasound, hydrotherapy, thermal treatment (ice or heat), taping and bracing, education, and acupuncture, depending on your needs.

SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL SENIORS AT HOME (SASH)

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London, Owen Sound

If you’re a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Senior aged 55 and over, then you’re able to access our Supporting Aboriginal Seniors at Home program, which aims to improve your access to culturally safe health care services, help you manage or prevent chronic conditions, and support you in living safely in your home for as long as possible.

SASH team members vary between locations, but you may work with a Nurse Practitioner, an Aboriginal Patient Navigator, a Seniors’ Health Advocate, or a Traditional Healing Coordinator.

At all locations, the SASH team works collaboratively with you to:

- ensure you have access to culturally safe care;
- provide clinical health services in the clinic or at home, including conducting physical check-ups, providing education and information, diagnosing and treating illnesses and injuries, and supporting you with chronic illness monitoring and management;
- help you find your way through the complex hospital care system by identifying barriers to care;
- help you understand and complete forms;
- help you access community and social services and develop a health care plan for yourself;
- advocate on your behalf to make sure appropriate contemporary and Traditional health services are accessible, including transportation if you’re eligible; and,
- support you in increasing your familiarity with cultural and Traditional knowledge and Indigenous perspectives by connecting you with Traditional Healers and Elders, if you choose.

Please call your preferred location to book an appointment or discuss your needs, or visit that location’s Facebook page for group session dates and times.



NSHWAASNANGONG CHILD CARE AND FAMILY CENTRE

SOAHAC Location: London

Nshwaasnangong Child Care and Family Centre is a place where our young ones, and future generations, thrive. At Nshwaasnangong, we rekindle our languages, honour the teachings of our ancestors, and live in balance with Mother Earth as we care for our community's children.

We offer child care spaces for up to 88 children ages 0-6. With a focus on connections to language and traditional teachings throughout our curriculum, we work together to revitalize our culture in the early years and beyond.

We also operate a Family Centre that is part of London's system of Family Centres. Our Family Centre activities are rooted in culture and language, including opportunities to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing, identity, and family teachings. The programs offered grow from the needs, gifts, and visions of the local Indigenous community. With the help of a Community Connector, families can access information, a range of free or low-cost activities, events, and programs, and also get connected to local resources and services that can help make their lives easier.

Nshwaasnangong is the spirit name given to the centre in an Anishinaabe Naming Ceremony. It means "place of the eighth star" in Anishinaabemowin and references the original eighth star in the Big Dipper that fell to earth and became the Anishinaabe people. The name infers a great responsibility for caring and sharing the gifts of the sky world, including the culture, teachings, and language, for children and families who attend the centre.

NSHWAASNANGONG FOOD PROGRAMING

At Nshwaasnangong, we have a variety of food programming to meet our families' needs, including meals and snacks during our Family Centre programming:

- **Ashamawaaso Food Box Program** | Weekly food box program to help support urban Indigenous families with food security. The box includes a serving of traditional meat, local grains, and fresh seasonal produce from local farmers.
- **Community Meal** | Hosted once a month in the Family Centre and is open to the community; we share a meal and families can learn about our services.
- **United Way-funded Food Cupboard** | Supports our child care families with emergency food needs.
- **Garden Program** | Families can access our garden programs, including learning how to care for plants and grow medicines, learning about creatures that live in the garden, and learning where food comes from - including getting to sample what we grow.

Child and Youth Services

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASD) SERVICES:
DOOKJIIKAHN - A PLACE TO LOOK FOR AND TO FIND ANSWERS

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington, Windsor

The SOAHAC FASD Program provides Indigenous people living with FASD – diagnosed or undiagnosed – with services that promote and support quality of life and positive outcomes. People of all ages, from infant to adult, are invited to connect with SOAHAC staff to access services such as identification and diagnosis, outreach, support, education, and prevention.

Coordinators at each site provide education, screening and referrals for diagnosis related to FASD. We also provide further support to individuals and caregivers who are affected by FASD by assisting you in navigating the diagnostic process through advocacy, referrals, resources, and strategies.

If you have questions about FASD or about the effects that alcohol can have on an unborn baby, please reach out to a SOAHAC staff member or one of our FASD Coordinators. We are happy to answer your questions and support you in your journey to learn more about FASD.

CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington, Windsor

Child and Youth Workers provide educational presentations upon request, and offer arts-based activities that are a fun, hands-on way to explore mental health and wellness, cultural awareness, and self identity. They also provide cultural teachings in schools, and programs to address topics like self-esteem building, mental health, addiction, and life skills.

They provide the following services:

- **Mentorship** | Available when referrals are triaged through a mental health provider within SOAHAC. This involves an intake appointment with goal setting to address the child or youth's specific needs.
- **Outreach** | Community-specific programs, such as workshops, are designed and delivered based on consultation in our outreach communities and urban centres
- **Supportive Counselling** | Available to children and youth who may need someone to talk to.

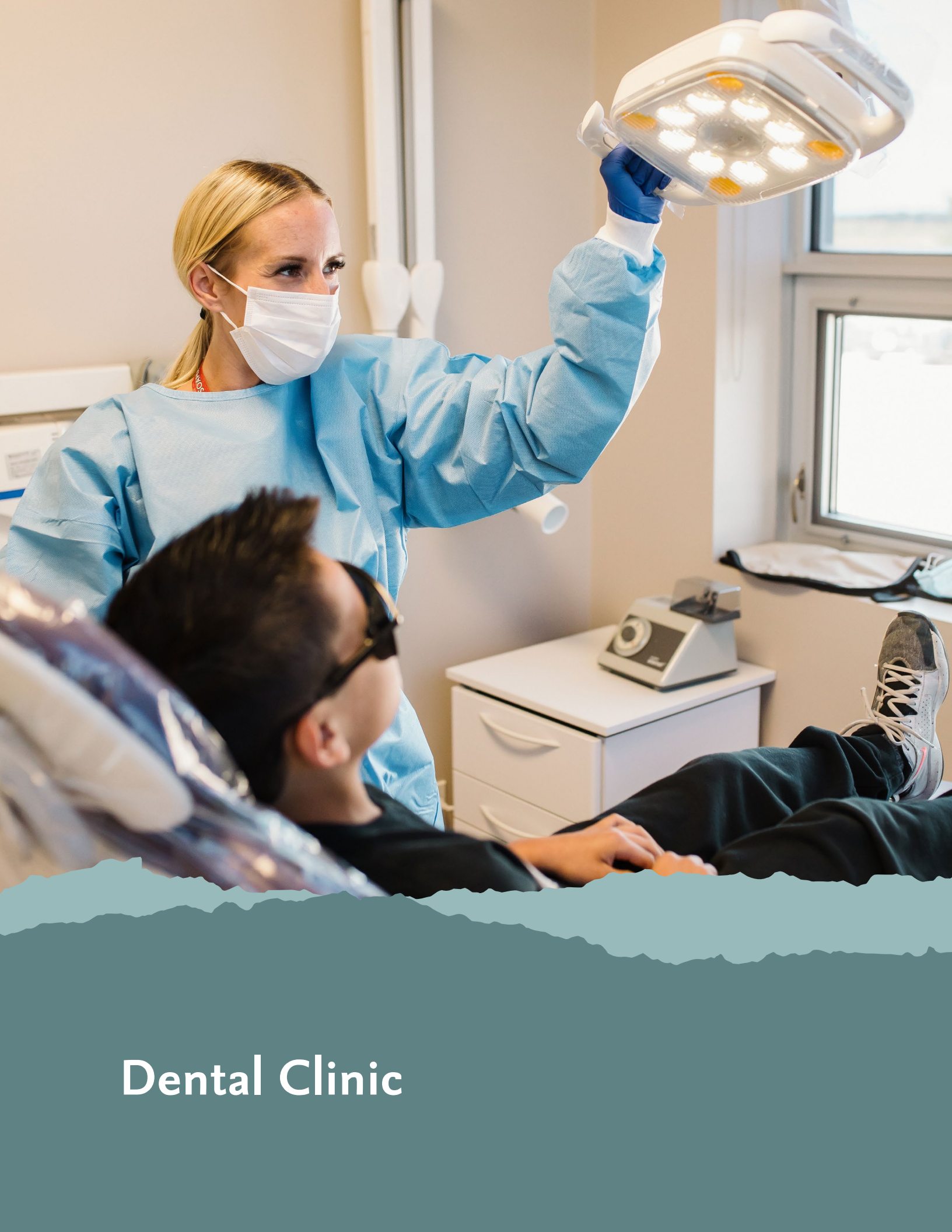
JORDAN’S PRINCIPLE - NAVIGATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

SOAHAC Locations: London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington, Windsor

SOAHAC has partnered with Indigenous Services Canada to offer professional navigation and family support with Jordan's Principle applications and systems. Jordan's Principle is a child-first and needs-based principle that is rooted in a cause put forth by Jordan River Anderson and his family from the Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. This public policy ensures that First Nations children living on and off reserve have equitable access to all government funded public services. It holds that First Nations children with status, entitled to status, recognized by their band, or have at least one parent/guardian with status should not be denied access to public services while governments fight over who should pay. In order to ensure substantive equality, this can also include services that are not ordinarily available to other children.

The Jordan's Principle Team at SOAHAC aims to help facilitate more opportunities for families living off reserve to access emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs for their children, and direct them in the Jordan's Principle process put in place by the Government of Canada. This could include help filling out an application, assistance in obtaining documentation, referrals and support letters, and support navigating the Jordan's Principle system. SOAHAC also has a contribution agreement with Indigenous Services Canada to be able to efficiently set up services or purchase products on behalf of your family once the application is approved by Indigenous Services Canada.

If you have questions about eligibility, or would like more information about Jordan's Principle, please reach out to the Jordan's Principle team via email at JordansPrinciple@soahac.on.ca.



Dental Clinic



The SOAHAC Dental Clinic provides oral health care services to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit adults and children with preauthorized dental coverage.

The clinic also provides services to all others that carry dental benefits through private insurance carriers or pay for dental care directly. The clinic is able to direct bill to most insurance providers for those who have dental benefits.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit clients: our clinic staff will get the preauthorization on your behalf and begin services based on coverage with one of the following: private benefit card, status card/Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB), ODSP dental card, Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP), Healthy Smiles Ontario card, Children’s Aid Society, Ontario Works statement of assistance/drug benefit card for the current month. If you are eligible through one of these, you do not have to pay upfront for services. If you are not sure if you or your family has coverage, please contact us for assistance.

SOAHAC DENTAL CLINIC SERVICES

The SOAHAC Dental Clinic team includes a community dentist, a dental hygienist, and a dental assistant who provide oral health care for you and your family. We look at the whole mouth to get the bigger picture. Depending on the reason for your visit, you might meet with one or more members of the team.

Examples of our oral hygiene and dental services include:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| • tooth and gum exams | • root canal therapy |
| • cavity risk assessments | • single crowns |
| • oral cancer screening | • full and partial dentures |
| • cleaning and polishing teeth | • referrals to specialist |
| • fluoride treatment | • support to stop smoking |
| • white fillings | • consultation and instructions for oral health care at home |
| • tooth extractions | |



Food and Nutrition Programming



DIABETES EDUCATION SERVICES

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington

Diabetes Education Services at SOAHAC are available for Indigenous adults living with Type 2 diabetes, pre-diabetes, or who are at high risk for developing diabetes. **You do not need to have a doctor or nurse practitioner at SOAHAC to access these services.**

Our diabetes nurse educator, registered dietitian and chiropodist (foot care specialist) can support you in living well with diabetes and provide information and education on things like:

- blood sugar control;
- home blood sugar monitoring;
- medication and insulin;
- exercise;
- meal planning;
- managing stress;
- foot care; and,
- diabetes-related complications.

We aim to prevent diabetes or its related complications by helping you self-manage your condition through individual counselling and our Healthy Lifestyles Workshops, which you can attend with your family, friends, and other support people. We can provide education and support in-person, by phone or by email to make care more accessible to you.

NUTRITION SERVICES

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington

In Ontario, a registered dietitian is a health professional who gives advice on nutrition, food, and healthy eating choices, as part of your overall health and wellness. At SOAHAC, you can meet with a dietitian even if you do not have a doctor or nurse practitioner at SOAHAC. Our dietitians can support you in planning healthy meals through confidential, judgment-free, nutritional counselling sessions. Both individual and group education may explore topics such as:

- grocery store tours and budgeting tips;
- cholesterol and heart health;
- weight management;
- preventing and managing illness with diet;
- portion sizes and label reading;
- tips for eating out or in a hurry; and, alternative diets.

Please call your preferred location to book an appointment or discuss your needs, or visit that location’s Facebook page for group session dates and times.

MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH NUTRITION

SOAHAC Location: Owen Sound

The goal of Maternal Child Health Nutrition is to increase participants’ access to nutrition and culturally-specific resources. This is done in group settings that promote wholistic health and wellness, skill development and increased knowledge. These groups are held in various communities, and are open to all gender identities, adults, infants, children, youth, parents, caregivers and support people, and include:

- knowledge and awareness about nutrition during pregnancy and childhood;
- skills and knowledge for feeding families; and,
- fun, interactive activities like games or hands-on food preparation.

Groups can be booked upon request, and can range from small to larger community or public events.

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It’s been a hard trip, but I can’t believe how well I’m treated by all these people. It’s really overwhelming for me. Amazing!

– SOAHAC CLIENT



Mental Health and Addiction Services



ADULT MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES

SOAHAC Locations: *Chippewa, London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington, Windsor*

Mental Health and Addictions Services at SOAHAC are provided by counsellors, transitional case managers (TCMs), social workers, and addictions counsellors. In a preliminary consultation, either in person or over the phone, we will discuss your mental health and wellness concerns and any safety concerns. These consultations are available to anyone, including other agencies or families with young children. If you are in crisis or require immediate help, we will link you to appropriate internal or external services or agencies, and emergency services as required.

We assist you in achieving balance, harmony, and wellness using a wholistic model of care that is person-centred, trauma-informed, strength-based, and culturally safe. Services are offered in a manner that is sensitive to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history and family life. There is an opportunity to learn both culture-based strategies and teachings, and therapeutic western practices. We hope all clients will feel better in mood and spirit, more confident, and hopeful as they gain strength and knowledge, additional coping skills, and the capacity to continue making positive changes.

Please note that not all mental health and addictions services are available at all sites. To access any of the services described below, or for more information, please call your preferred location to discuss your needs.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING

Services include screening and assessment, some crisis intervention and planning, community referrals, client advocacy and follow-up, and the development, implementation and monitoring of wellness plans. Counselling may be short term or long term, and addresses things like:

- healing from and coping with abuse, personal or intergenerational trauma, and other impacts of loss of culture and identity;
- difficult life challenges;
- mental health issues like anxiety or depression;
- management of emotions like anger, stress, guilt, grief and loss;
- identifying personal strengths and other resources to help you; and,
- learning techniques to manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

TRANSITIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT

Your transitional case manager (TCM) provides short term support services related to mental health and addictions to help you move through complex systems such as hospitals, treatment centres, or the justice system. They ensure the stability of care, relationships, and information between different settings, including from hospitals to home; home to treatment centres; institutions back to community as part of discharge planning; and from child services to adult services.

TCM services may include short term counselling and support, crisis intervention and prevention, care and treatment planning, service coordination, collaboration with community services, referrals, and advocacy.

SOCIAL WORKER

Social workers provide a variety of social work services to SOAHAC clients and are focused on assisting families in improving their wellness, achieving stability, and increasing their resilience. This may include: care planning; assistance with housing, employment, or income needs; brief counselling; crisis intervention and prevention, treatment, and aftercare.

Social work services may include:

- screening and assessment;
- one-to-one counselling and wellness planning that includes a range of approaches, from harm reduction to abstinence;
- referrals and applications to Treatment Centres and Healing Lodges;
- help identifying group and family support options; and,
- group support such as: Wellness Support Circles based on White Bison Teachings; Traditional Healing and Educational Support Groups; Support Groups for Women; and Support Groups for Men.

CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS (AGES 6-18 YEARS)

SOAHAC Locations: Chippewa, London, Owen Sound, Waterloo Wellington, Windsor

Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions services are delivered by a team of workers who have a strong foundation in culture and tradition and are available for children and youth ages 6 to 18. Our goals are for children and youth to live well, gain knowledge and skills for mental wellness, and increase their ability to overcome challenges. These services support clients to explore their natural gifts and purpose in life, and build their identity as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

After completing a SOAHAC intake, families are referred to Child and Youth services after discussion with a Mental Health Worker. Services may be delivered through SOAHAC or a supported referral to an external partner and include mental health assessments, advocacy, or referrals.

We endeavour to use a family-oriented approach, and invite parents, siblings, extended family and caregivers to participate in healing and wellness along with child/youth participants.

TELE-MENTAL HEALTH

Sometimes a child or youth with complex mental health challenges needs cannot be served locally. The Tele-Mental Health service uses existing videoconferencing technology (Ontario Telemedicine Network) to connect Indigenous children and youth to a mental health specialist or child psychiatrist as close to home as possible. The consultations are live and interactive, and the psychiatrist and child or youth, along with their family or caregiver, can see and hear others on a video screen. At the end of the consultation, the psychiatrist prepares a report that may include diagnosis and treatment recommendations.

Indigenous children and youth can be referred to this service by any SOAHAC staff, or other service provider who works with them (including professionals from schools, hospitals, friendship centres, and health services or youth workers in the justice system). If you would like to learn more about accessing this service, please call SOAHAC and ask to speak with the Tele-Mental Health Coordinator.

Accessing Our Services

Services are provided to First Nation, Inuit, Métis people and their families, living on and off-reserve, in rural areas, and the urban Indigenous communities in London, Windsor, Owen Sound and Waterloo Wellington, as well as surrounding First Nation communities. A variety of outreach services are provided on location in the communities, which include:

- **Aamjiwnaang** (Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation)
- **Deshkan-Ziibiing** (Chippewas of The Thames First Nation)
- **Eelünaapéewi Lahkéewiit** (Delaware Nation at Moraviantown)
- **Nalahii Lunaapewaak** (Munsee-Delaware First Nation)
- **Neyaashiinigmiing** (Chippewas of Nawash First Nation)
- **Onyota’a:ka** (Oneida Nation of The Thames)
- **Wiiwkwedong and Aazhoodenaang** (Kettle and Stony Point First Nation)
- **Zaaga’iganiniwag** (Caldwell First Nation)
- **Zaagiing** (Saugeen First Nation)

SOAHAC is continually growing services in all areas, however, not all services are offered at all locations. If you are interested in accessing a service, please call the location of your choice for more information, or visit soahac.on.ca for more information.



CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR SOAHAC SERVICES

All registered Indigenous people (First Nations, Inuit, Métis), as well as children under their legal care (up to age 18), regardless of status, are eligible for SOAHAC services. Non-Indigenous spouses are not eligible for SOAHAC services. We welcome and respect all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.

There may be specific eligibility requirements for some programs (for example, an age criteria); however, you do not need to have a doctor or nurse practitioner at SOAHAC to access most other services or participate in groups.

There is no cost for you to access SOAHAC’s services, with the exception of cosmetic dental.

When necessary, the following priority is given to triage new clients:

- 1. vulnerable children such as those under of the care of external agencies (i.e. Nimkee Nupigawagan Healing Centre and Eagle’s Nest Foster Care)
- 2. pregnant women without a primary care provider
- 3. infants or children without a primary care provider
- 4. medically complex individuals without a primary care provider
- 5. anyone else without a primary care provider
- 6. anyone else with a primary care provider but who wishes to switch to SOAHAC for their medical care.

ASSISTING THOSE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR SOAHAC SERVICES

SOAHAC staff will provide appropriate support to all community members (even those who are not active or eligible clients) who contact our services areas for guidance, crisis support and information. Appropriate information and guidance is given and linkages made where possible and deemed necessary. Efforts are made to find immediate response to local emergency services as required.

Contact Information
by Location

All locations are open Monday to Friday from 8:30am - 4:30pm, with some programming available on evenings and weekends, depending on the site.

CHIPPEWAS OF THE
THAMES FIRST NATION

77 Anishinaabeg Dr
Muncey, ON N0L 1Y0
Phone: 519-289-0352

LONDON

493 Dundas St
London, ON N6B 1W4
Phone: 519-672-4079

NEWBURY

1824 Concession Dr
Newbury, ON N0L 1Z0
Phone: 519-916-1755

OWEN SOUND

733 9th Ave East, Unit 3
Owen Sound, ON N4K 3E6
Phone: 519-376-5508

WATERLOO WELLINGTON

745 Coronation Blvd, Unit #102
Cambridge, ON N1R 7R1
Phone: 226-476-3672

WINDSOR

1405 Tecumseh Rd West, Unit 2
Windsor ON N9B 1T7
Phone: 519-916-1755

A Client's Right to Care

Wholistic, integrated care means we work with you to achieve your health and wellness goals for the betterment of individuals, families, communities, and nations. We see our relationship with you as a partnership that honours all Indigenous ways. You hold power for your own health, healing, and wellness. At your request, SOAHAC staff are helpers who can support you in making choices related to health and wellbeing.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Integrated Care Managers, Directors, and CEO are responsible for ensuring that clients' rights are respected throughout the organization. Please contact the Integrated Care Manager at your location if you have any issues or concerns. .

SOAHAC will:

- Provide health care in a culturally and physically safe and secure environment.
- Recognize your right to select the healing path of your choice and be part of decision-making in your wellness plan.
- Provide information about the risks and benefits of participating in any of SOAHAC's services.
- Keep personal information private and only shared with your permission and consent, unless disclosure is required by law (for example, where there are concerns about real or possible harm to another person or yourself).
- Ensure that your service providers will provide culturally safe services while following best practices.
- Treat you in a manner that respects your dignity and promotes your autonomy.
- Treat you in a manner that recognizes your individuality, and that is sensitive to and responds to your needs and preferences.
- Inform you about, and provide access to, the programs and services for which are eligible.
- Honour your decision to consent or refuse services that are recommended, unless there is a concern that your ability to make decisions is impaired and this decision could result in harm to yourself or others.
- Provide a safe space for you to express your concerns and inform you of how to use the agency complaints process.
- Provide you with a copy of the Rights and Responsibilities of the Client at your intake.

As a SOAHAC client, you will:

- Take an active role in your health and wellness plan.
- Ask questions when you don't understand.
- Provide accurate and important information that is necessary for your care.
- Respect SOAHAC's values by honouring and respecting the rights of the staff, other clients, and community members and property of SOAHAC and the services provided.
- Behave in a manner that contributes to a peaceful environment for SOAHAC staff, clients, and community members.
- Recognize the risks and consequences of refusing treatment or leaving services against the advice of the service provider.
- Make every effort to arrive on time for appointments and contact SOAHAC 24 hours in advance if you cannot attend a service appointment.
- Inform your worker if you decide to end service, where possible.
- Report harassment, discrimination and/or complaints of any kind by others to the Integrated Care Manager of your designated site.



I look at SOAHAC and those people saved my life.

– SOAHAC CLIENT



Client Privacy and Personal Health Information

Privacy is your right to decide “who knows what” about you, and what that person does with this information. At SOAHAC, we respect your privacy and work hard to meet our obligations related to your privacy rights. We are committed to protecting the privacy of clients/participants in accordance with the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA) standards, the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).

Personal information is anything that identifies you as an individual such as your name, phone number, or birthday. Personal health information is information about your health or health care history, such as a test result with your name on it.

SOAHAC is committed to protecting your privacy rights.

- We have responsibility for personal information. SOAHAC is responsible for the information it holds about you and has policies about the confidentiality of this information.
- We are clear about why we collect information from you. SOAHAC collects information about you so that we can provide you with health care services as well as meet our reporting and legal obligations.
- We work in a team model where traditional healers, physicians, nurses, counsellors, dietitians, community workers and a variety of other skilled staff are part of providing high-quality services to you and to the community. Your information may be shared among our health care staff who are involved in your care in order to be able to help you most effectively.
- We ask you for your consent (agreement) to collect, use, and share your personal information. Every client/patient (or his/her legally authorized representative) will sign an agreement about how we can use your personal information.
- We will limit the collection of personal information. SOAHAC will only collect information that is necessary to provide good service to you and to our community and to meet our legal and funding obligations.
- We use personal information only for the purposes you have agreed to unless the use or sharing is permitted or required by law. SOAHAC will not use your personal information for purposes other than care or services to you, evaluation, or managing and planning of services unless you agree or unless we are required by law.
- We take steps to safeguard your personal information. SOAHAC will protect your information and ensure its privacy.
- You can ask about our privacy policies and practices. A staff person can provide you with information about our policies and practices related to the management of personal information if you ask (and we will respond within a reasonable period of time).
- You have a right to know what personal information we hold about you and you can ask to see your records. You have the right to request access to the information we have about you. You can request access to your information by simply writing us a note and signing it. The appropriate staff member will follow-up on your request.
- We respond to concerns and questions. If you have any questions or concerns about the way SOAHAC is carrying out these principles, please contact our Privacy Officer by calling **519-914-1858 x 1** or emailing privacyofficer@soahac.on.ca.

PRIVACY BREACH

If you have any concerns regarding a breach of confidentiality, please contact the SOAHAC Privacy Officer. You may also ask them any questions or provide comments about how we handle personal health information by calling **519-914-1858 x 1** or emailing **privacyofficer@soahac.on.ca**.

If you can't resolve your complaint by working with the Privacy Officer, you may contact the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario for more help by mail:

Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario
2 Bloor Street East, Suite 1400, Toronto, ON M4W 1A8

CONSENT AND SECURITY

Providing personal information is always your choice. If you do not wish for your personal health information to be used or shared, you have the right to refuse or withdraw your consent. We will let you know if your refusal to share part or all of your information impacts your ability to access our services.

We secure our files, our computers, and other locations where information might be kept or used. We ensure that all our staff, students and volunteers have signed a confidentiality statement and have received training on the organization's policies and procedures to protect client privacy. If there is a security breach and your personal information is stolen, lost or accessed by unauthorized persons, you will be notified immediately.

REQUESTING YOUR HEALTH RECORD

You have the right to a copy of your own health record. You can ask for a copy by submitting a written request, to which we are required to respond within 30 days. If your request requires more time, we may ask for another 30 days. You may also ask for changes to the personal health information in your file by providing us with more information and explaining why these changes should be made.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

If you have something to share about a program, service, or experience at SOAHAC, you can speak with a staff member directly, contact the Integrated Care Manager at your location, or fill out a client experience survey available at the reception desk at all sites. You can also access Client experience surveys electronically through the SOAHAC website or on your preferred site's Facebook page.

All clients have the right to express dissatisfaction with a service provided. We encourage clients to bring these concerns forward by completing a client complaint form or discussing their concern with a trusted member of the SOAHAC team. SOAHAC actively works to address client concerns in a professional and culturally safe manner. If you indicate a concern and provide your contact information, a staff member will work with you to address it.

“

**We're taught that you have to
take care of all aspects of health...
it's like a medicine wheel.**

– SOAHAC CLIENT

After-hours Resources to Support Your Wellness

ADULT HELP AND CRISIS LINES

Talk 4 Healing	A culturally grounded, fully confidential helpline for Indigenous women available in 14 languages across Ontario. Call 1-855-554-HEAL or visit talk4healing.com
Hope for Wellness	Immediate, 24/7 help for all Indigenous peoples across Canada by calling 1-855-242-3310 or by using the online chat at hopeforwellness.ca
Métis Nation of Ontario Crisis Line	A 24-hour mental health and addictions crisis line that offers culturally specific mental health and addiction supports for adults, youth, and families in Ontario at 1-877-767-7572
Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women	A Support line for family, friends, and community. Available by calling 1-844-413-6649 or visiting mmiwg-ffada.ca
Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line	A 24/7 support line for anyone who was directly or indirectly affected by residential schools, day schools, or the 60s scoop. Call 1-866-925-4419 or visit irsss.ca
Canada Suicide Prevention Services	1-833-456-4566 crisisservicescanada.ca/en
Wellness Together	Mental health and substance use support where you can connect with a trained volunteer crisis responder. Call 1-866-585-0445 or text WELLNESS to 741741. Self-guided tools, access to free counsellors, peer to peer support and coaching are available via: wellnesstogether.ca

CHILDREN AND YOUTH HELP AND CRISIS LINES

Kids Help Phone	24/7 support by calling 1-800-668-6868 or texting CONNECT to 686868. Visit kidshelpphone.ca for more information.
Youthline	Provides 2SLGBTQ+ Peer Support. Available Sun-Fri by PHONE 6-9pm 1-800-268-9688 or 4-9pm by TEXT 1-647-694-4275 or 4-9:30pm by ONLINE CHAT st.youthline.ca
NATIONAL OVERDOSE RESPONSE SERVICE	An operator will stay on the line with you while you use alone and they will call emergency responders if you don't respond after using. Call 1-888-688-6677 or visit nors.ca for more information.
CONNEX ONTARIO	If you or someone you know is in distress, crisis, or needs a supportive listener, please call the appropriate helpline for assistance:
Mental Health Helpline	1-866-531-2600
Drug & Alcohol Helpline	1-800-565-8603
Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline	1-888-230-3505

Crunch crunch crunch crunch
Wispy biting wind swipes my cheeks like sandpaper and salt
It tingles in a refreshing way
I like it – but not too much
There is no hiding or sneaking up on anything in this crispy cold snow
I like that sound
It's alive and I am here
I am included
I stop, breathe and take him when I am often too busy to see and experience
Looking, feeling, listening, and sensing
Thoughts go quiet
Attention to sounds insights
It's often the little things that we exclude that we don't look at or feel
Fast blueness covers the sky and it's chillingly deceiving –it looks summery
Blue skies and cold air flow in an invisible icy veil
The wind bites my face in the snow would turn my toes block if exposed
Rays of sunshine line my face and send warmth that allows forgiveness at the biting cold
Beautifully powerful and powerfully deadly
Duality 's exist all around us
Spirit is here new line I feel creation
I know I am part of creators web
Creation will teach and guide for life's inclusion – we must listen

POEM BY DR KATHY ABSOLON,
Authored from her spirit, heart, mind and body.

Accreditation

SOAHAC is proud to be accredited by the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA) which offers a third-party review process that is tailored to community-based organizations. CCA accreditation is based on widely accepted best practice standards that promote ongoing quality improvement and responsive, effective community services.

In 2019, SOAHAC was granted a four-year accreditation by the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA) in recognition of our continuous improvement efforts. CCA accreditation supports excellence and quality in our provision of community-based programs and services.

SOAHAC will be participating in the accreditation process again in the Spring of 2024.





**Southwest Ontario
Aboriginal Health
Access Centre**

1-877-454-0753
info@soahac.on.ca
soahac.on.ca