Sex and Gender Diversity and Substance Use

Substance use and an individual's gender and sexual identities can create compounding difficulties during COVID-19. Knowledge of these unique difficulties may inform substance use policy and treatment plans during and after COVID-19.

FEMALES:

- Develop a safety plan or harm reduction strategy specific to the unique needs of females (e.g., a way to escape violence or forced substance consumption provoked by abuse).
- Advocate for appropriate drug treatment programs and safe spaces that are sensitive to the unique needs of females, including gender-based counseling and coping mechanisms.

LGBTQ2S+:

- LGBTQ2S+ individuals are statistically less likely to seek medical treatment due to negative experiences with healthcare systems. Create a safe space. Display a pride flag, provide treatment options that are not binary, and use stigma free non-heteronormative language.
- Discuss the unique trauma that LGBTQ2S+ individuals may experience. Provide support that aids in reduced substance use, such as for suicidal ideation.

MALES:

- Males are less likely to seek addiction, mental health, or medical treatment, as asking for help is not seen as ‘masculine’ behaviour. Treat and reduce the stigma of males seeking mental health support and of substance use being associated with masculine behaviour.
- Educate on healthy communication to reduce violent behaviours associated with substance use, particularly gender-based violence.

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