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# A Conversation on Anti-Racism Action in Substance Use Services

Speakers: Cassandra Smith, Colin A Johnson

Moderator: Samiya Abdi

March 28, 2022

# About Community Opioid/Overdose Capacity Building

Community Opioid/Overdose Capacity Building (COM-CAP), started in 2019, is a four-year project funded by Health Canada's Substance Use and Addiction Program. The goal of COM-CAP is to support community-led responses to opioid/overdose-related harms in communities across Ontario. The supports focus on strengthening the knowledge, skills, and capacity of the key stakeholders involved:

- The Ontario College of Art & Design University (OCAD U) - Health Design Studio
- University of Toronto- Strategy Design and Evaluation Initiative
- Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
- Chatham-Kent Public Health
- NorWest Community Health Centres
- Drug Strategy Network of Ontario
- The Ontario Network of People Who Use Drugs

PHO collaborates with external partners in developing COM-CAP products.

For more information about COM-CAP, contact [substanceuse@oahpp.ca](mailto:substanceuse@oahpp.ca)

# Land Acknowledgement & Welcome



# Context and Agenda

## Item

Welcome & Opening (5 minutes)

Presentation (5 minutes)

- Rapid Review: Race-based Equity and Substance Use Services

Discussion (45 minutes)

- Panelist Highlight Topic or Focus
- Moderated Discussion with Audience

Closing (5 minutes)

## Speakers

- Samiya Abdi
- Cassandra Smith
- Colin H Johnson

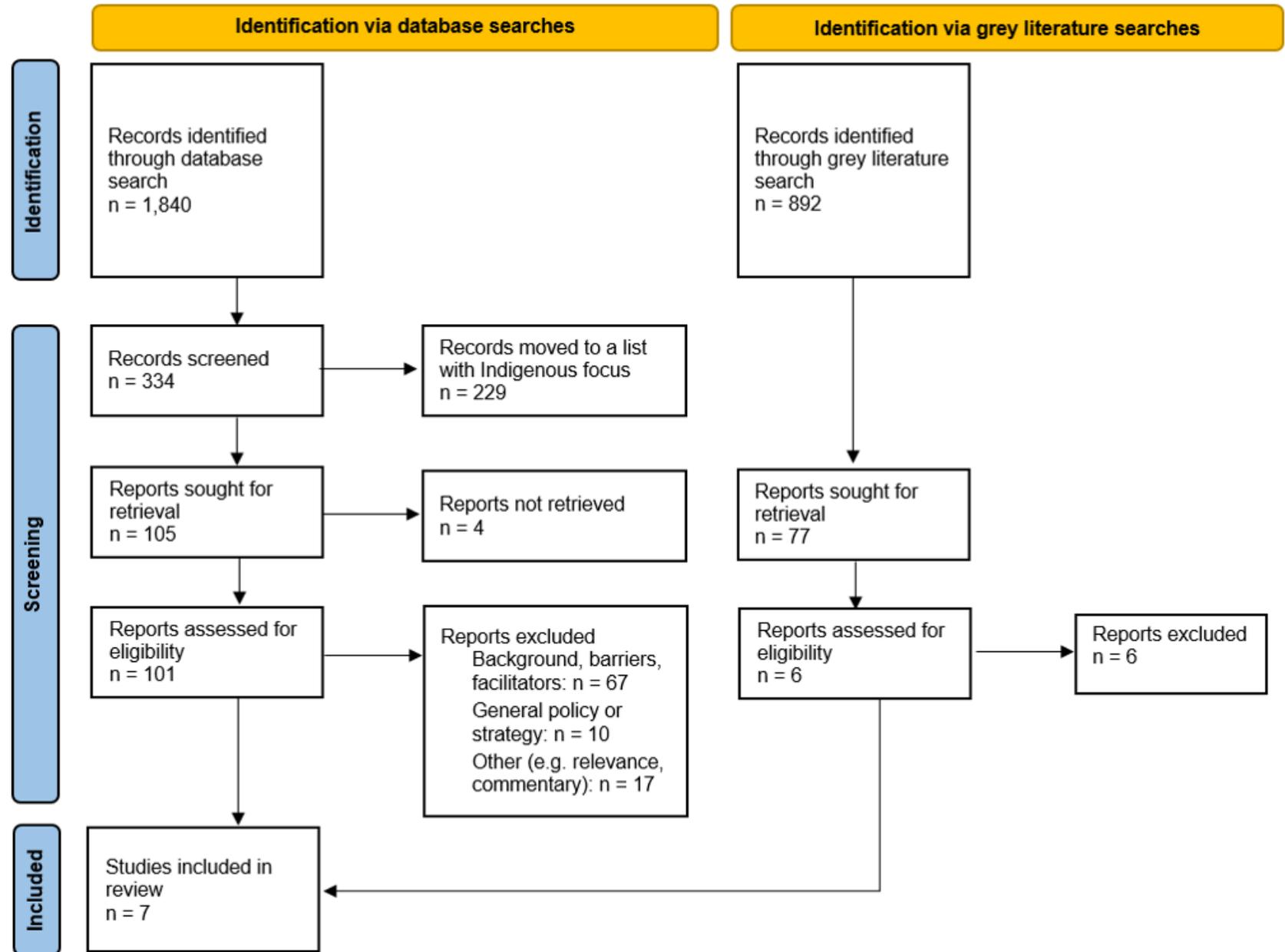
# Presentation: Rapid Review



# Overview

- This rapid review<sup>1</sup> addresses the following question: What are the characteristics of services that apply a racial equity lens in the provision of substance use services?
    - What are the reported impacts of those services?
  - Articles were included if...
    - Published between 2011-2021, in English and from Canada & US contexts
    - Demonstrated intentional adaptation or design for racialized populations
    - Was implemented and included information on impact or outcomes
    - Focused on treatment or harm reduction
- \*\*Alcohol, tobacco, cannabis excluded

# Search Process



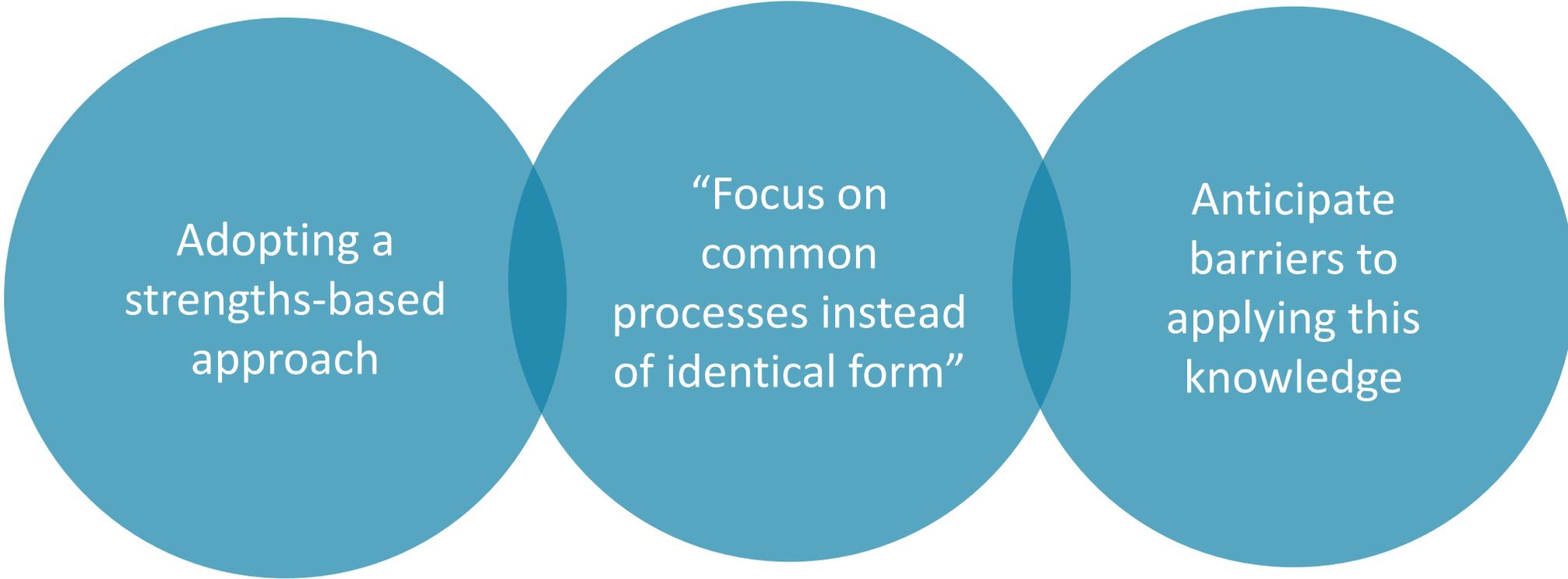
## Key Findings

- Literature discussed drivers of inequities + barriers/facilitators → limited actionable strategies for service planning and delivery
- Imbalances in the literature:
  - Strong focus on treatment → limited discussion on harm reduction
  - Frequent reference to culturally-informed practices → limited reference to explicit anti-racist approaches
  - Primary focus on practice development → secondary focus on staff development
- Equity components in substance use services were:
  - Integration of culturally-informed approaches (Dominant theme)
  - Leveraging community strengths
  - Building or strengthening staff capacity and skills

## Close Look: “Culturally-Informed Approaches”

Dimension	Translation to Practice	Examples of Articles
Holistic Care within individual, kinship, family	Draw from world views, strengths and community practices	Participants tied reported improvements in their sense to wellness to the improvements they saw in their community as a result of available education and support <sup>2</sup>
Representation in staff/organization	Capacity to match service providers with clients’ lived experiences	Representation is critical from mitigating power imbalances, where all-White staff can trigger past/ongoing experiences of being controlled and monitored <sup>3</sup>
Spirituality or religiosity	Integrating spiritual elements and/or collaborating with faith-based groups	Worked with church staff to train and mentor facilitators on working with people who use drugs while promoting choice, trust, and autonomy <sup>2</sup>
Language	Services delivered in languages of communit (ies) served.	Bilingual therapists important not only for therapy, but also to enable connection with client’s family and community <sup>4</sup>

# Practice and Areas for Further Discussion



Adopting a strengths-based approach

“Focus on common processes instead of identical form”

Anticipate barriers to applying this knowledge

# Discussion



# Sharing Circle: Areas for Growth and Learning



Source: Getty Images

# References

1. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Rapid review: race based equity in substance use services. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2022. Forthcoming.
2. Achara-Abrahams I, Evans AC, Ortiz J, Lopez Villegas D, O'Dell J, Ali O, et al. Recovery management and African Americans: a report from the field. *Alcohol Treatment Quart.* 2012;30(3):263-92. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07347324.2012.691049>
3. Bellamy CD, Costa M, Wyatt J, Mathis M, Sloan A, Budge M, et al. A collaborative culturally-centered and community-driven faith-based opioid recovery initiative: the Imani Breakthrough project. *Social Work Mental Health.* 2021;19(6):558-67. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332985.2021.1930329>
4. Burrow-Sánchez JJ, Minami T, Hops H. Cultural accommodation of group substance abuse treatment for Latino adolescents: results of an RCT. *Cultur Divers Ethnic Minor Psychol.* 2015;21(4):571-83. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000023>

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