

Balancing Safety and Autonomy: A Practical Toolkit for Legal Substance Use in Continuing Care

Operational Support and Materials

Leadership Implementation Guide

- Safe Consumption Tool Kit Guide
- RACI Exercise
- Communication & Information Materials
- Safe Space Design Guide

Safe Consumption Tool Kit Guide

Tobacco, Non-medicinal Cannabis, and Alcohol
in Continuing Care Programs

One guide. Every site is different.

01 Diverse needs

Adapt policies to resident needs, staffing models, and physical environments.

02 Safer support

Balance safety, autonomy, dignity, and effective substance-use support.

03 Stronger adoption

Build trust early to improve participation and sustainable outcomes.



Four resources. One coordinated approach.

POLICY

Templates and guidance for tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol.

ASSESS

Screening tools, assessments, and practical checklists.

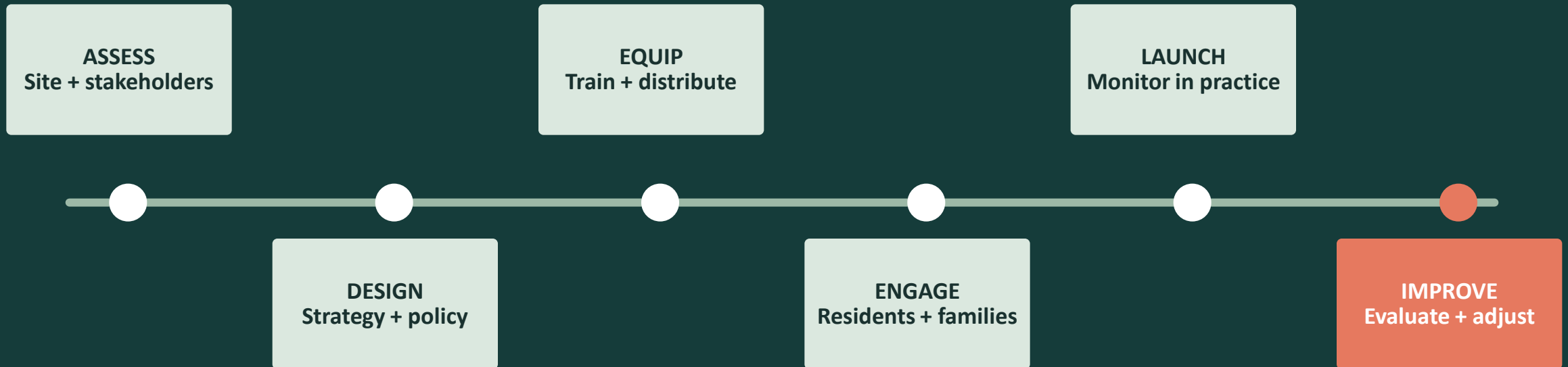
LEARN

Educational materials for staff, residents, and families.

CONNECT

Communication guides, consent forms, and conversation aids.

From readiness to continuous improvement



Clear ownership keeps support consistent

01

LEADERSHIP

Endorse policy
Allocate resources

02

CARE STAFF

Daily support
Monitor + communicate

03

RECOVERY SPECIALISTS

Counseling
Recovery support

04

RESIDENTS + FAMILIES

Participate
Share feedback

Respect is the protocol



“What matters most to you right now?”

Provide regular updates • Invite questions • Document shared decisions

Consent is informed, voluntary, and ongoing



Protect autonomy and legal rights at every stage. A refusal is a decision to respect—
not a barrier to care.

Meet residents where they are

COUNSEL + CONNECT

Counseling and peer support create connection.

INTEGRATE CARE

Coordinate medical, mental health, harm reduction, and recovery goals.

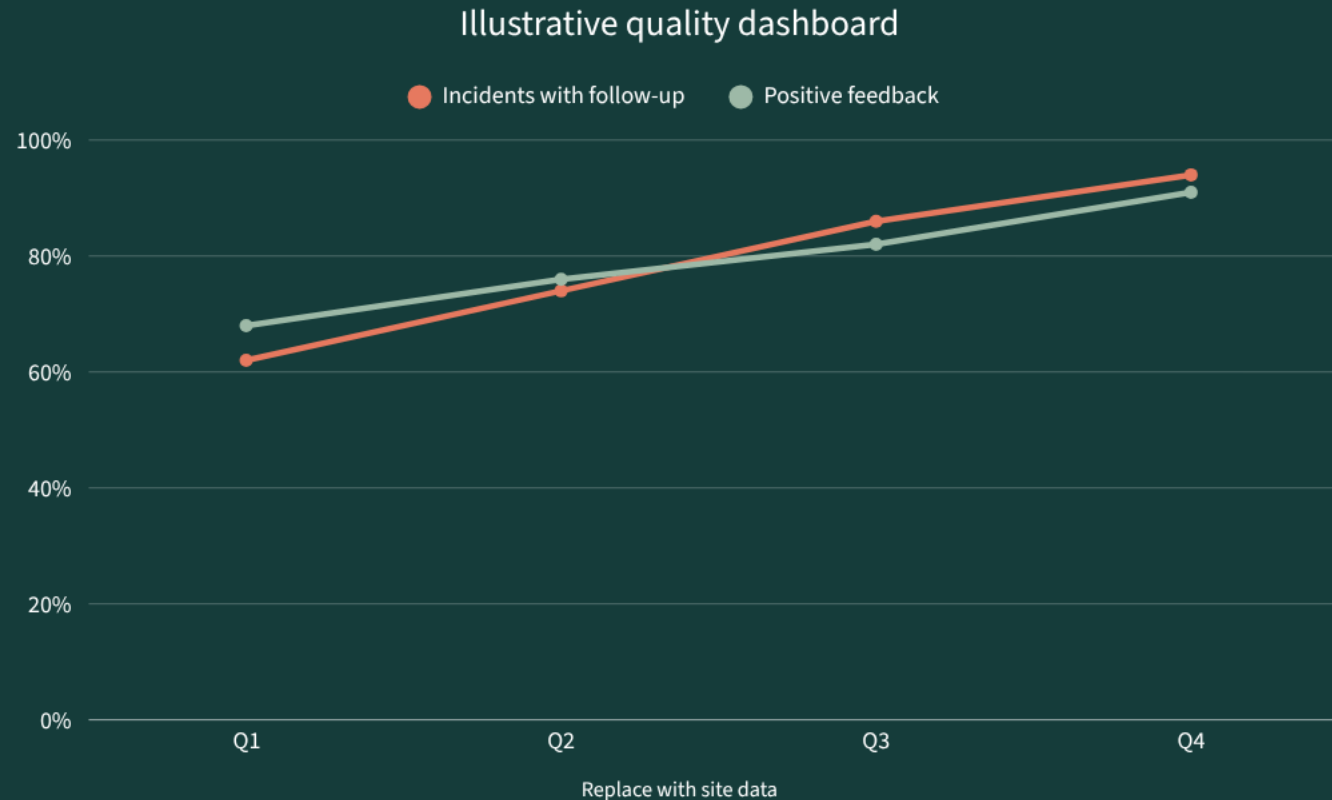


Stabilize. Document. Learn.



The immediate goal is safety—not blame. Every review should strengthen the system around the resident.

Measure what helps the program improve



COLLECT

Incidents + outcomes

LISTEN

Resident, family + staff feedback

AUDIT

Indicators + practice reviews

Built through collaboration

PROJECT TEAM

Site leaders
Clinical and care teams
Recovery specialists

PARTNERS + STAKEHOLDERS

Residents and families
Partner organizations
Program and quality advisors

Start with your site.

Roles and Responsibilities for Site-Specific Safe Consumption Processes

RACI Activity, Implementation Roadmap, and
Quality Monitoring



Context and Objectives

Strengthening safe consumption services through collaboration, clarity, and data-informed decisions to enhance client experience and staff competency.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Develop clear roles and responsibilities via a RACI activity

Implement a site-specific strategy informed by data and team input

Establish a measurement and quality monitoring framework

Define governance and continuous improvement processes



RACI Framework and Role Map

Clarifying who does what, who decides, and who stays informed.

RACI MODEL

R	Responsible performs the work
A	Accountable decision maker, ultimate owner
C	Consulted provides input and expertise
I	Informed kept up to date

KEY ROLES IN SAFE CONSUMPTION SERVICES

Executive Director, Director of Care, Clinical Lead	Provide leadership, set direction, and oversee outcomes
Attending Physician, Most Responsible Person	Clinical oversight and regulatory accountability
Regulated Nurses, Health Care Aides, Pharmacist, Allied Health	Deliver care, support clients, and apply professional expertise
Site Quality & Performance, Site Educator, Security, Housekeeping, Facilities & Site Maintenance	Maintain quality, safety, education, and site operations
Client / Alternate Decision Maker	Participate in decisions and care planning



Communication & Information Materials

- Substance Use Agreement
- Letter to the Residents and Families
- Smoking Brochures
- Standard Signage Guide for Consumption
- Staff Communication Scripts



Substance Use Agreement

Resident Choice & Commitment

Safety Expectations

Support & Resources

Reassessment & Compliance

Next Steps

Substance Use Agreement – Carewest Programs

Clients who choose to consume Substances Tobacco, Alcohol, Cannabis while residing in or participating in Carewest programs must meet the criteria for safe consumption. Carewest will support clients in doing so within the parameters outlined in this agreement.

Agreement Parameters

1. I will only consume legal substances in designated areas on Carewest property.
2. I will not share my substances with any other person including residents, staff, or visitors.
3. I will access designated consumption areas only during posted hours of operation.
4. I can enter and exit the designated areas without staff or volunteer assistance.
5. I can independently manage my supplies and safely light, extinguish, and dispose of smoking/vaping materials. If not, I will only smoke/vape when supervised by family or friends.
6. I will cover all costs related to my safe consumption supplies.
7. I will store substances securely in my room, unless otherwise directed by my care team. I will not provide access to my secure lockbox to any person.
8. I will not bring food, alcohol, or illegal substances into designated smoking/vaping areas.
9. I will respect posted guidelines outside designated consumption areas, other residents using the designated areas, occupancy limits and will leave when asked to allow others access, and that designated areas are for residents only; hosting visitors is not permitted.
10. I will use assistive devices (e.g., smoking apron) if advised by my care team.
11. If I use portable oxygen, I will leave the tank outside the designated area and understand the associated risks.

Reassessment and Consequences

- My ability to safely consume substances will be reassessed, including annually at care conferences, with any material change in health status, or as needed.
- If I fail to follow these parameters, the following steps may be taken:
 - Education and alternative interventions to support safer consumption.
 - My privilege may be suspended until supports are in place.
 - My privilege may be removed, and cessation support initiated.

Acknowledgment

I choose to consume legal substances while residing in or participating in Carewest programs and agree to the above parameters.

Client Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Letter to Residents and Families

Clear communication.

Shared responsibility.

Supporting safe, respectful communities together.



Dear Resident of Carewest XXXXX,

Today's date

We are reaching out to you as our records indicate that you currently choose to consume legal substances—such as alcohol, tobacco, or cannabis—while residing in our facility. At Carewest, we are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all residents, and we recognize your right to make personal choices regarding substance use.

To support this, Carewest has developed a Substance Use Agreement, which outlines the parameters for safe and responsible consumption of legal substances within our programs. This agreement is designed to ensure that substance use does not pose a safety risk to yourself or others, and that it aligns with our shared goal of promoting health and well-being.

We understand that substance use may be an important part of your routine, and our care team is here to support you in making informed choices. If you are interested in exploring ways to reduce or manage your consumption and promote recovery, our care team is here to support you through education, access to harm reduction resources, nicotine replacement therapy, and personalized recovery planning. We can also connect you with community support, peer-led programs, and therapeutic services to help you achieve your wellness goals at your own pace.

As part of our commitment to safety and respect for all residents, we ask that each individual who chooses to consume legal substances review and sign the Substance Use Agreement. This agreement will be revisited with you as needed, and at minimum during your annual care conference.

Key Parameters of the Agreement Include:

- Consumption of legal substances only in designated areas and during posted hours.
- No sharing of substances with others, including residents, staff, or visitors.
- Independent management of supplies and safe handling of smoking/vaping materials.
- Secure storage of substances in your room, unless otherwise directed by your care team.
- Respect for posted guidelines, occupancy limits in designated consumption areas, and the privacy of other residents.
- Understanding and compliance with safety protocols such as using portable oxygen.

Your ability to safely consume substances will be reassessed periodically, especially if there are changes in your health status. If any concerns arise, our approach will focus first on education and support. In some cases, privileges may be temporarily suspended or discontinued to ensure safety, with cessation support provided as needed.

Please note that illegal substances are strictly prohibited in all Carewest facilities. Any concerns related to illegal substance use will be addressed in partnership with our security team and the Calgary Police Service Community Liaison Office.

A member of the clinical team will be reaching out to you over the next two weeks to review the Substance Use Privilege Agreement and to determine how the care team can continue to support your safe consumption.

We appreciate your cooperation and look forward to working together to maintain a safe and respectful living environment for everyone.

Warm regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Title]
Carewest XXXXX XXXXX

Smoking Brochure

Clear policies for smoking at Carewest Belcher

Designated smoking areas and building rules

Resources and feedback options for residents

Supporting a safe, respectful, and clean environment

Carewest Colonel Belcher has 5 approved smoking areas

Locations:

- Indoor unsecured 2nd floor smoking room near the administrative offices. Maximum capacity: 3
- Indoor secured on Lancaster unit. Maximum capacity: 3
- Outdoor secured courtyard on Lancaster unit.
- Outdoor west of main entrance



Carewest Colonel Belcher



Carewest Smoking Information

Carewest is committed to providing safe, respectful, and accessible designated smoking areas to support residents who choose to smoke. This brochure offers important information for residents, guardians, families, outlining the resources, guidelines and expectations around smoking within our facilities. It has been developed in alignment with Carewest's policies, procedures, and applicable regulatory standards for Type A facilities, ensuring a safe environment for everyone.

Smoking Area Rules

Smoking area guidelines vary depending on location and are designed to promote safe, respectful smoking practices. These rules help ensure that Carewest remains compliant with all relevant policies, procedures, and regulatory standards associated with operating designated smoking spaces within a Type A facility.

Indoor Smoke Room Rules

- The following items are not permitted in the smoke room: Oxygen, food, beverages, alcohol
- Use ash trays provided & keep your smoking room clean
- Resident Use only
- 3 Person Maximum Capacity

Outdoor Smoking Areas Rules

- Use ashtrays provided and keep your smoking area clean
- No oxygen in or near the designated smoking space
- Resident use only



Smoking During an Outbreak

Occasionally, Carewest may experience outbreaks of illness that affect site operations and resident routines.

During a declared outbreak, access to indoor smoking areas may be temporarily restricted, and residents should expect reduced availability as part of efforts to minimize the spread of infection.

Residents are encouraged to remain flexible with their smoking routines during these times. To support residents, smoking cessation products may also be made available upon request.

Additional outbreak protocols—such as enhanced cleaning and cohorting of units—will be implemented and applied to indoor smoking areas to maintain a safe and supportive environment for all.

Other Information

Environmental Cleanliness

Several ashtrays are available in each designated smoking area. Please ensure proper use of ashtrays to keep the smoking area clean and safe for all. Housekeeping routines also include both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Upholding Protocols Carewest utilizes support from our Peace Officer to collaborate on By-law compliance. Site smoking areas have been reviewed and meet by-law standards. Site security services are utilized to promote safe and by-law compliant use of our designated site smoking areas. In accordance with Carewest policy, security is not permitted to remove residents from the smoking area for misuse.

Feedback?

To provide feedback visit reception to obtain a paper copy of a Carewest Feedback form

Standard Signage Guide for Consumption

Continuing Care Design Standards



INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

PURPOSE

Outline signage requirements to ensure safety and compliance in consumption areas.

SCOPE

Applies to compliance with Continuing Care Design Standards, NBC-AE 3.8.3.9, CSA B651, and 2025 standards.

FOCUS

Preserve accessibility, clarity, and standardization in signage design.

COMPLIANCE

Verbatim adherence to specifications is essential for safe, consistent signage.



**SAFE
CONSUMPTION
AREA**

**RESPECT PRIVACY
KEEP SPACE CLEAN**

NBC-AE 3.8.3.9 COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

NBC-AE 3.8.3.9 requires that safe consumption areas be identified with signage that is visible, legible, and placed to be easily noticed by users.



CSA B651 ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Csa B651 sets clear requirements for accessible signage in safe consumption areas.

Specifies measurements, tactile features, and contrast criteria.

Includes compliant text and symbols to support recognition and safety.

Applies consistently within continuing care facilities.

**CLEAR.
ACCESSIBLE.
COMPLIANT.**

Accessible signage ensures dignity, independence, and a safer environment for everyone.



2025 CONTINUING CARE DESIGN STANDARDS

MEETS 2025 STANDARDS	Aligns with 2025 Continuing Care Design Standards for safe, accessible, and consistent signage.
MATERIAL & DIMENSIONS	Use durable, easy-to-clean materials with appropriate size, contrast, and tactile elements for clear visibility.
PLACEMENT	Install signs at complaint heights and locations to support wayfinding, safety, and accessibility.
INTEGRATED COMPLIANCE	Designed to work in harmony with NBC-AE 3.8.3.9 and CSA B651 for a cohesive signage program.
LAYOUT & DESIGN	Follow layouts that prioritize readability, clarity, and standardization.



RECOMMENDED SIGNAGE EXAMPLES AND LAYOUT NOTES





Staff Communication Scripts

CLEAR CONVERSATIONS.
HEALTHIER OUTCOMES.





SCRIPT
APPROACH

Approach Calmly and Privately

Greet the resident with a calm, respectful tone

Invite them to speak in a private space

Make clear this is about something important

Keep the conversation focused and confidential

**PRIVACY BUILDS TRUST. CALM BUILDS
SAFETY.**



STAFF SCRIPTS

Express Concern and Objective Information

STATE WHAT YOU OBSERVED Describe the specific
behavior or situation

SHARE YOUR CONCERN Why it matters in a calm,
factual way

CLARIFY YOUR PURPOSE How you want to
check in and understand



SCRIPT APPROACH

Invite Resident's Perspective

Create space for them to share **their view**

Listen to understand, not to respond

Show you're here to support

CURIOSITY BUILDS CONNECTION.



Acknowledge and validate



Thank them for trusting you

Recognize the challenge they're facing

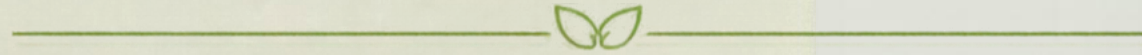
Show that their honesty matters

**EMPATHY OPENS THE DOOR
TO SAFE CONVERSATIONS.**





Restate Expectations and Offer **Support**



We follow the agreement to protect your care and safety

Not following it can affect your care and safety

Let's talk about what support could help you succeed

We can explore options together



Explain Next Steps Clearly, End Positively

I'll document this and update the care team so we can support you

If this continues, there may be changes to your care plan

Our goal is to work with you and help you feel supported, while maintaining safety

WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU



TRAUMA INFORMED TIPS:

Lead with Calm. Support Safety.

Speak with respect and empathy

Keep language calm and non-judgmental

Focus on safety, not consequences

Partner with the resident on solutions

COMPASSION CREATES CONNECTION



CAREWEST | FACILITIES DESIGN

SAFE SMOKING AREA DESIGN GUIDE

Two options. One safe decision.

Use this guide to align compliance, resident safety, staff supervision and long-term operations before design begins.



OUTDOOR
SHELTER

INDOOR
ROOM

Each route includes detailed requirements and implementation checklists.

Location & compliance

- ✓ ≥ 5 m from openings, windows and air intakes
- ✓ No oxygen cylinders or O₂ equipment within 10 m
- ✓ Staff visibility and safe supervision
- ✓ Avoid high-traffic areas



Design Requirements for 4 Seasons

✓ Open-sided design — maximum 2–3 walls

✓ Non-slip flooring + proper drainage

✓ Electric or radiant heating element

✓ Standard Carewest wayfinding

✓ Roof rated for snow load

✓ Wheelchair / walker accessible dimensions

✓ Clear, maintained winter pathway

ENCLOSED = INDOOR

A fully enclosed shelter requires full indoor ventilation compliance.



Safety & operations

- ✓ Fire extinguisher within 10 m
- ✓ Non-combustible ashtrays — wall-mounted or weighted
- ✓ CCTV coverage OR clear lines of sight
- ✓ Winter snow clearing: path + shelter
- ✓ Fire-resistant, easy-clean chairs or bench
- ✓ Daily / weekly cleaning protocol
- ✓ Quarterly structural inspection
- ✓ Lighting for evening visibility



Three gates before design

01 FEASIBILITY

Facilities + mechanical contractor
review

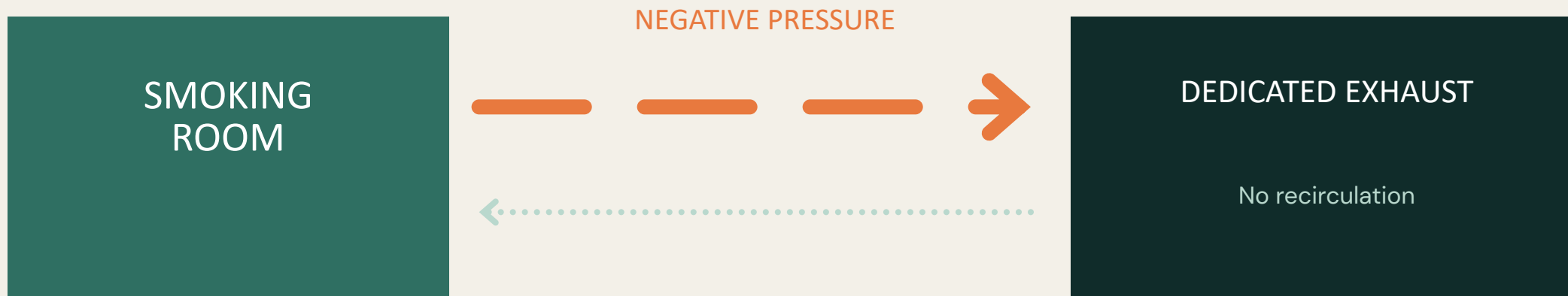
02 BUSINESS CASE

Document rationale and source quotes

03 BUDGET APPROVAL

Construction + ongoing operating costs

Mechanical ventilation system



Exhaust outlet ≥ 10 m from fresh-air intakes

Air filtration & fire safety

✓ In-duct HEPA or equivalent filtration — recommended

✓ Filter replacement schedule established

✓ Wheelchair accessible

✓ Secured non-combustible ashtrays

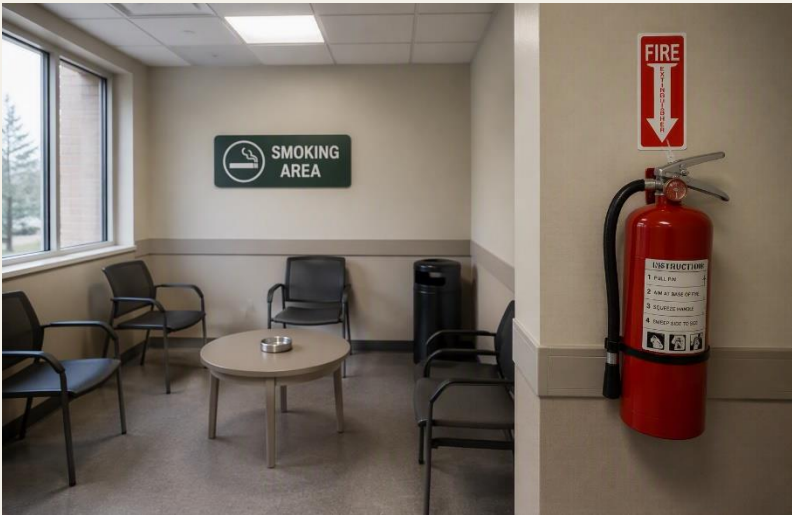
✓ Fire-retardant, easy-clean furniture

✓ Local smoke detectors + building alarm integration

✓ Self-closing, fire-rated door — preferred

✓ Non-combustible floor, wall + ceiling finishes documented

✓ Fire extinguisher mounted in room



Monitoring & controls

✓ BAS (Building Automation System) integration where possible	✓ Staff / security checks and rounds	✓ Call bell within room
✓ Operating hours: _____	✓ Standard Carewest signage	✓ Disposal + emergency instructions posted
✓ Daily cleaning schedule	✓ Deep clean frequency: _____	✓ Staff supervision + emergency response training

Ongoing Maintenance Schedule

DAILY

Visual inspection
Cleaning
Ash disposal

WEEKLY

Deep clean
Check ventilation

MONTHLY

Filter inspection
Airflow spot-check

QUARTERLY

Full ventilation test
PM system inspection

Required Approvals

✓ Facilities Engineering — ventilation design

✓ Fire Marshal — fire safety, detection, materials

✓ Infection Prevention & Control — smoke control, cleaning

✓ Occupational Health & Safety — staff exposure

✓ Carewest Leadership — operational approval

✓ City of Calgary — permit / bylaw review

ALL APPROVALS COMPLETE → PROCEED

Equipment Options for Safe Storage and Space Design



Carewest does not recommend or endorse any of these products. They are presented as options to support operators in researching the product that best meets their needs.



Safe Storage at Bedside

Bedside Cabinet Lock

Supplier: RGO Products Ltd.

Item #: GCEXBT01PN-LK

Install a keyed lock on bedside tables or closets for clients to manage and hold the key if possible.

Safe Storage with Oduor Control



- **Smell-Proof Bag for Cannabis**

Residents' cannabis is placed in this smell-proof bag and then secured inside the bedside cabinet.

[Click here to link to product.](#)



Temporary Safe Storage Option

- Unit Teams, under the direction of the leadership, should create a safety plan to address the need to temporarily remove a substance from a client and the need to temporarily house a substance while alternate arrangements are made.
- This container could be mounted on the wall in that designated location and accessible for staff.

Wall-Mounted Storage Boxes

Safe Smoking Equipment

- Equipment should be secured/mounted.
- Easy to clean.
- Fire resistant.
- Weatherproof.
- Durable

The Site Manager will be able to provide recommendations on equipment.



Infinity™ Smoker's
Receptacles



Wall-Mount Smoker's
Receptacle





Safe Smoking and Vaping Design

- Reference the Safe Space Design Guide in the Toolkit.
- The Site Manager will provide site specific design recommendations.



Assistive Devices

Assistive/adaptive aids such as weighted ashtray with a cigarette holder, smoking tubes and adaptive cigarette holders and lighters:

- Smoking aid ashtray with flexible tube allows handsfree smoking, reduces fire/burn risk and a clamp to secure the base to a wheelchair or an anti-slip base for a table
- USB charging, rechargeable flameless lighter
- Wall or pole mounted lighters (flameless)



Fire Resistant Accessories



Fire resistant accessories: Fire-retardant aprons, clothing, and blankets to protect against falling ashes.



Smoker's Fire Retardant Bib:[Smokers Fire Retardant Bib | ERP0350](#)



Fireproof Apron: Apron protects residents who smoke and upholstery from burns.
[Click here.](#)



Flame-Resistant Clothing: coveralls, jackets, hoodies. Price ranges depending on garment
[Click here.](#)



Cover surfaces as needed with a flame retardant blanket



Welding Blanket
[Click here.](#)

Fire-safe Cigarette Disposal Containers



- Stainless steel smoke disposal box
Smoke-X Cigarette Disposal Box | Safety Media
- Commercial Fireproof Ashtrays wall-mounted or free-standing designs with various capacities. Powder-coated stainless steel, weather resistant.
- Receptacle Liners

Smoke Reduction Equipment



Equipment to reduce excess smoke and/or alert for smoke particles

- Smokeless ashtrays reduces smoke fumes. Options range from basic to advanced air purifiers. Available from Walmart, Amazon and other vendors.
- Portable purifiers can help in semi-enclosed outdoor spaces (e.g., patios, tents)
 - o For smaller spaces