

## Overview: Provincial Overdose Emergency Response

To escalate the response to B.C.'s overdose public health emergency, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions launched the new **Overdose Emergency Response Centre** on Dec. 1, 2017. The centre will spearhead urgent action on the ground to save lives and support people with addiction toward treatment and recovery. Located at Vancouver General Hospital, which has a fully equipped emergency operations centre available immediately, the centre will be the provincial hub for new regional and community action teams collaborating on targeted local action.

The emergency centre will have a strong focus on measures to prevent overdoses and provide life-saving supports that are:

- on-the-ground
- locally driven and delivered
- action-oriented
- rapidly implemented

With approximately 10 full- and part-time staff, the Overdose Emergency Response Centre will be supported with a team of experts from:

- BC Centre for Disease Control
- BC Centre on Substance Use
- Ministries of Mental Health & Addictions, Health, Public Safety & Solicitor General, Attorney General, Housing, Social Development & Poverty Reduction, Children & Family Development, Education
- Health Emergency Management BC
- BC Ambulance Service
- Regional health authorities
- First Nations Health Authority
- Office of the Provincial Health Officer
- Police and fire departments
- People and families with lived experience of substance use

Each of the province's five regional health authorities will form a **Regional Response Team** to work closely with the provincial centre to develop and implement comprehensive regional action plans. With close linkages to other regional government social service and public safety agencies and First Nations, these five teams will ensure regional-level actions and policy development are integrated, responsive and targeted. They will actively monitor overdose trends and unexpected events in communities in their region and take immediate steps to support local actions, working with new community action teams in hard-hit communities.

**Community Action Teams** will be established by January 2018 in communities identified through overdose data as having most urgent need. The community action teams will spearhead local coordination and communication to mount a robust response to the needs of those most at risk of overdose within their communities. The teams will include representation from municipal government, Indigenous partners, first responders, front-line community agencies, Divisions of Family Practice, people and families with lived experience and local provincial ministry offices providing housing, children and family, and poverty reduction services.

As announced in September 2017, the provincial government is investing \$322 million in new funding to address the overdose crisis. The provincial Overdose Emergency Response Centre will ensure those resources are used for effective strategies where they are most urgently needed. As part of this funding, regional response teams and community action teams will have access to a new Community Crisis Innovation Fund – which includes \$3 million for the remainder of this year, and \$6 million each year in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

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The Overdose Emergency Response Centre planning at the provincial, regional and local levels will be structured on a core set of measures and actions that:

- 1) capitalize on proven effective strategies that together form an integrated, comprehensive response to the overdose crisis, and
- 2) are tracked in a standardized way so gaps in services can be identified and addressed.

Essential Health Sector Interventions	Essential Strategies for a Supportive Environment
<p><b><u>Naloxone</u></b> Ensuring optimal supplies, training and community-level supports to provide broad access to naloxone, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coverage</li> <li>• Supplies</li> <li>• Trainers</li> <li>• On-going capacity</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Social stabilization</u></b> Community strategies to promote access to social and emotional supports. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services to engage and strengthen support networks such as family and friends</li> <li>• Support groups, healing circles &amp; counselling</li> <li>• Affordable and/or supported housing</li> <li>• Integrating access to supports with housing, income, transportation &amp; food security into addictions &amp; harm reduction services</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Overdose Prevention Services</u></b> Supporting a range of community-level, low-barrier services tailored to local needs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overdose prevention &amp; supervised consumption sites</li> <li>• Housing-based initiatives</li> <li>• Strategies to reach people using alone</li> <li>• Mobile services</li> <li>• Drug checking</li> <li>• Safe drug supply (e.g. hydromorphone)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Peer empowerment and employment</u></b> Programs that help people with lived experience build skills and experience. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity of paid peer program opportunities</li> <li>• Peer-led initiatives</li> <li>• Peer training opportunities</li> <li>• Involving people with lived experience in program planning and decision-making</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Acute overdose risk case management</u></b> Robust data collection and analysis, as well as a system to identify individuals at risk within communities and ensure they have follow-up connection to care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive screening for problematic opioid use at health care sites</li> <li>• Clinical follow-up</li> <li>• Fast-track pathways to treatment and care</li> <li>• System for monitoring/evaluating patient outcomes and following up</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Cultural safety and humility</u></b> Together with Indigenous communities and organizations, ensuring services are rooted in understanding and respect, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services and supports incorporate Indigenous approaches to healing wellness</li> <li>• Cultural safety teachings and support for all service providers</li> <li>• Trauma-informed and culturally safe facility/space and program design</li> <li>• Elders involved in service delivery &amp; planning</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Treatment and Recovery</u></b> Ensuring low-barrier access to a full spectrum of evidence-based medications and comprehensive treatment &amp; recovery services, including access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methadone, Suboxone, oral morphine, injectable hydromorphone</li> <li>• A range of treatment and recovery programs for opioid addiction that combine medication and social and emotional supports.</li> <li>• Multi-disciplinary pain management.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Address Stigma, discrimination &amp; human rights</u></b> Action to tackle stigma and discrimination and protect human rights for people with addiction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate barriers to services for people who use drugs caused by stigma and discrimination:</li> <li>• Provide legal support to address discriminatory laws and policies that impact harm reduction</li> <li>• Deliver public education and campaigns</li> </ul>