

# Decriminalization of People Who Use Drugs in BC

Decriminalization allows adults 18+ in BC to possess ('hold') small amounts of certain illegal drugs (opioids, crack and powder cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA) for personal use in specific locations.

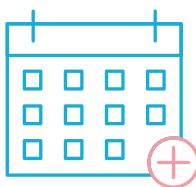
## Why

Substance use is a public health issue, not a criminal one. Decriminalization helps reduce the stigma and fear of criminal prosecution that prevent people from reaching out for help. Limiting decriminalization to specific locations balances this goal with the importance of ensuring that public spaces remain safe and accessible for all community members.



## Who

Adults 18+ in BC. It does not apply to people under the age of 18.



## When

From May 7, 2024, until January 31, 2026.



## Where

Private residences, places unhoused people are legally sheltering, overdose prevention, drug checking, and supervised consumption sites, and at outpatient addictions service sites in BC.

## What is decriminalized

Adults 18+ in BC are allowed to possess ('hold') a total amount equal to or less than 2.5 grams of these illegal drugs for personal use:

- Opioids (including heroin, morphine, and fentanyl)
- Cocaine (including crack and powder cocaine)
- Methamphetamine (meth)
- MDMA (ecstasy)

Decriminalization applies in:

- Private residences
- Places unhoused individuals are legally sheltering (indoor and outdoor locations)
- Overdose prevention, drug checking and supervised consumption sites
- Places that provide out-patient addiction services

In these locations, adults 18+ will not be arrested, charged, fined, or have their drugs seized. Instead, information about voluntary health and social supports will be offered.

## What remains illegal in BC

Adults 18+ cannot possess:

- More than 2.5 grams combined of the drugs covered under the exemption
- Any amount of other illegal drugs not covered under the exemption
- Any amount of drugs in public places like hospitals, businesses, transit and parks

Consumption in public remains illegal, except in the locations covered under the exemption.

Youth under 18 cannot possess any amount of drugs.

Illicit drugs are not legal. They cannot be:

- Imported or exported
- Produced
- Trafficked
- Taken across a domestic or international border

## Where does decriminalization apply under the revised exemption?

**Within a private residence:** A private residence is a building, portion of a building, or trailer used exclusively for residential purposes, and includes adjacent property intended for use by residents (e.g. a private balcony or backyard). It can also refer to a private guest room in a hotel, motel or other facility used for accommodation.

**Where an unhoused person is legally sheltering:** A person is legally sheltering if there are no bylaws against sheltering in a location. Both outdoor locations and indoor emergency shelters are included in this definition. Police recognize that people will have different types of shelters (e.g., sleeping bag, tent, tarps, etc.) and there may be safety considerations (e.g., fire risk) of smoking substances within a tent. Note: decriminalization does not override applicable bylaws or shelter policies.

**Within a designated health care clinic:** Designated health care clinics include those that primarily offer harm reduction (e.g. overdose prevention, drug checking and supervised consumption sites) or out-patient addiction services (e.g. rapid access addiction clinics or other community-based treatment clinics).