**Overdose Prevention and Response Glossary**

This glossary is to clarify words and phrases used in reference to opioid overdose prevention and response. Language changes and evolves over time and the definitions in this document may be updated in the future to reflect current research and understanding of substance use.

**Addiction**

Behaviour characterized by a loss of control and a continued craving for the behaviour despite negative consequences. Current medical terminology identifies drug addiction as “substance use disorder.” Addiction is a complex issue which has many causes, including biological, psychological, social, economic, and spiritual factors.

**Adulterant**

Chemical or compound that may be added to illegal drugs typically without the knowledge of the consumer to increase profitability.

**Analogue**

Chemical compound that is structurally similar to another but differs slightly in composition. For example: Carfentanil is a fentanyl analogue.

**Analgiesic**

Medicines that relieve pain.

**Buprenorphine**

Analgesic that may be prescribed to control or moderate severe pain or to treat opioid use disorder as an opioid substitution medication. It can be administered under the tongue by tablet, by injection, or by a transdermal skin patch. In Canada, buprenorphine is most often provided in combination with naloxone a formulation which reduces the
risk of diversion and non-medical use. It helps with withdrawal symptoms and cravings for opioids. Also known as Suboxone.

**Carfentanil**

Synthetic opioid which can be up to 100 times more toxic than fentanyl. Use of this toxic drug, even in very small amounts, could result in overdose. It is used as a tranquilizer for large animals such as elephants.

**Carries** (in the context of Opioid Substitution Therapy)

Measured daily doses of opioid substitution treatment medications (e.g., buprenorphine/naloxone or methadone) that patients are allowed to take home with them for self-administration outside of a pharmacy. Carries are only prescribed by a health provider once a patient has become stable through success in their treatment. The number of doses they are allowed to take home can vary, but is usually enough for a few days or up to one week.

**Club drugs**

Psychoactive (mind-altering) substances often used at all-night dances or raves. Some examples of club drugs are ecstasy (MDMA), methamphetamine, gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB), flunitrazepam (Rohypnol), and ketamine. The term “club drug” is not a scientific one, and substances are varied and have different pharmacological properties.

**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

A form of psychosocial treatment that helps people understand their patterns of thinking and behaviour to learn healthier skills, habits and coping techniques. CBT is flexible, easily customized, supports self-efficacy and can help with self-management of mental health issues, including substance use problems.
Concurrent Disorder
Condition in which a person experiences two medical problems, such as having a mental illness and a substance use disorder. Concurrent disorder can refer to a wide range of co-occurring mental illnesses and substance use issues.

Consumption
Taking a substance into the body by ingestion, inhalation, injection, or absorption via mucous membranes (including in the nose, through snorting) or through the skin.

Crystal Meth
A smokable chemical variation of methamphetamine (also called jib, ice, crystal, speed or crank). Methamphetamine is a potent, long-acting synthetic stimulant drug. Use of crystal meth can lead to adverse health effects, including psychotic episodes.

Dependence
A need for repeated doses of a substance to feel good or avoid feeling bad, despite potential bad effects or consequences.

Diacetylmorphine
The medical term for the pharmaceutical-grade opioid that is more commonly known as heroin.

Discrimination
Action or a decision that treats a person or a group negatively for reasons such as their race, age, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation or ability.

Dope Sick
A slang term for withdrawal, or a group of symptoms that happen when a person stops or decreases use of a substance that they are dependent on. Long-acting medications like methadone or buprenorphine/naloxone can help avoid withdrawal symptoms while
on opioid substitution treatment (OST).

**Fake Oxys**
Illegally produced counterfeit pills that are made to look like a pain medication that used to be available in Canada (Oxycontin).

**Fentanyl**
An opioid pain medication. Fentanyl has medical uses and can be prescribed by a physician to help control severe pain, but in recent years it is also being produced in illegal labs and sold on the streets, often mixed with other drugs (such as heroin, cocaine, and others). Fentanyl is 50 to 100 times more toxic than morphine, which makes the risk of accidental overdose higher.

**Harm Reduction**
Policies, programs and practices that aim to reduce the adverse health, social, and economic consequences of psychoactive substance use for people unable or unwilling to stop using immediately. Harm reduction is a pragmatic response that focuses on keeping people immediately safe and minimizing death, disease, and injury from high-risk behaviour. It involves a range of strategies and services to enhance the knowledge, skills, resources, and supports for individuals, families and communities to be safer and healthier.

**Heroin**
A slang term for an illegal opioid street drug, originally the trade name for diacetylmorphine. It is usually a white, odorless, bitter crystalline compound that is derived from morphine.

**Heroin Assisted Treatment**
Treatment that includes the provision of pharmaceutical grade heroin (diacetylmorphine) under medical supervision, along with other interventions that support people who are
seeking treatment for opioid use disorder.

**Housing**

Where a person lives. A person’s housing situation can influence the impact substance use has on their health and can also compromise the effectiveness of treatment. People who do not have stable and supportive home environments (such as those living on the streets, in unstable housing or with a substance-dependent or abusive partner) need supports to help them find stable housing.

**Hydromorphone (trade name Dilaudid)**

An opioid medication used to treat severe pain, which has also been studied in Canada as a medication to assist in the treatment of opioid use disorder, for patients who have not responded to other forms of treatment. This drug is available as an oral tablet, a liquid solution and extended-release tablet that is taken orally. It can also be administered as an intravenous (IV) injection from a healthcare provider.

**Illicit**

A thing or act that is forbidden, disapproved of, or not permitted for moral or ethical reasons by custom, society, laws or rules. It can be something illegal, or may not be specified by law.

**Low Threshold/Low Barrier**

Services that have very few requirements for people to access them. For example, services may not require clients to be seeking or to achieve abstinence from substance use in order to participate.

**Methadone**

A long-acting opioid medication that may be prescribed to treat pain or opioid use disorder. It relieves withdrawal symptoms, reduces the physiological cravings and allows body functions to become stable.
Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)
Psychoactive (mind-altering) substance. Also known as ecstasy or E.

Naloxone
Medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose when injected into an arm, buttocks or thigh muscle or when administered as an intranasal spray. Within two to five minutes, naloxone can reverse slowed breathing. Also known as Narcan.

Opioid Agonist Treatment
See Opioid Substitution Treatment.

Opioid Substitution Treatment
An evidence-based treatment for opioid use disorder, which involves the prescription and daily administration of medications that are substitutes for opioids such as heroin or fentanyl. It relieves withdrawal symptoms, reduces the physiological cravings and allows body functions to become stable. Methadone and buprenorphine/naloxone (also called Suboxone) are the most common medications used for opioid substitution treatment. Also known as Opioid Agonist Treatment, Opioid Substitution Therapy and Opioid Assisted Treatment.

Opioid Use Disorder
A problematic pattern of opioid use that causes clinically significant impairment or distress. A diagnosis is based on criteria such as unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control use, as well as use resulting in social problems and a failure to fulfill obligations at work, school, or home. Opioid use disorder can also be called “opioid dependence” or “opioid addiction.”

Opioids
A class of substances used to reduce pain in the body. Opioids can be legal and illegal. Examples of opioids include heroin, morphine, fentanyl, methadone and codeine.

**Outreach**
Community-based services that are designed to improve health and reduce drug-related risk or harm. These services are designed to link people to health or social services by sending staff to places where people who use substances frequently spend time.

**Over the Counter Drugs**
Medicines you can buy without a prescription.

**Overdose (OD)**
Use of a substance in excess, resulting in negative health effects on the person who consumed the substance. An overdose may or may not be fatal.

**Overdose Prevention Sites**
Services in some parts of British Columbia that were established as a response to the opioid overdose public health emergency, which provide people who use drugs a space where they can be monitored by health professionals, and receive treatment for an overdose if needed.

**Oxycodone**
An opioid analgesic used to relieve moderate to severe pain.

**OxyNeo/OxyContin**
A time-released formulation of the opioid pain medication oxycodone. It was developed in 1995 for people needing around-the-clock pain relief, so they don't have to take pills as often. OxyContin is no longer sold in Canada, replaced by a new tamper-resistant formulation, OxyNeo.
Person-First Language
A non-stigmatizing way of referring to a person that does not prioritize their behaviour or health condition. Acknowledges that a person’s condition, illness or behaviour is not that person’s defining or primary characteristic. For example, “A person who uses drugs,” or “A person living with HIV.”

People Who Use Drugs
People who use psychoactive substances, which can occur along a spectrum of use.

Spectrum of Psychoactive Substance Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficial</th>
<th>Problematic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses that has positive health, spiritual and/or social impacts</td>
<td>Uses that may have negative impacts for individuals, family, friends, communities and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., pharmaceutical drugs used as prescribed; ceremonial uses of tobacco, peyote or ayahuasca</td>
<td>e.g., use by minors or pregnant women, impaired driving, binge consumption</td>
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Non-problematic
Recreational, casual or other use that has negligible health or social effects

Chronic Dependent
Use that has become habitual and compulsive despite negative health and social effects; e.g., addiction

Some people choose abstinence and use no substances at all, a decision which should be honoured, respected and supported. Some people who use substances do so in beneficial or non-problematic ways, such as drinking coffee to stay alert, or ceremonial uses of tobacco, peyote or ayahuasca; others drink alcohol moderately in social situations and do not experience problems. Some people engage in problematic substance use—for example, using at an early age, using while pregnant, or driving while impaired—which increase the risk of harms that can and should be prevented. Some people develop chronic dependent substance use, or addiction, which may require treatment or other drug-related health and community supports. Talking about “people who use drugs” is preferable to labelling them as an “addict,” or “user,” underscoring the
humanity of the person first.

**Prevention**
Measures that prepare and support individuals, groups, communities and larger systems in reducing the onset of problematic substance use or minimizing harms from substance use.

**Process Addiction**
The compulsive and persistent engagement in a behaviour or action (other than drug use) that causes serious negative consequences to a person’s physical, mental, social and/or economic well-being. Examples of behaviours that for some individuals may become process addictions are gambling, video gaming, work, sex, shopping and internet use.

**Problematic Substance Use**
Instances or patterns of substance use associated with physical, psychological, economic or social problems or use that constitutes a risk to health, security or well-being of individuals, families or communities. Some forms of problematic substance use involve potentially harmful types of use that may not constitute clinical disorders, such as impaired driving, using a substance while pregnant, binge consumption and routes of administration (i.e. ways of taking a substance into one’s body) that increase harm. Problematic substance use also includes “substance use disorders” (defined as dependence or “addiction”). Problematic substance use is not related to the legal status of the substance used, but to the amount used, the pattern of use, the context in which it is used and, ultimately, the potential for harm. See also “Addiction,” “Substance Use” and “Substance Use Disorders.”

**Psychoactive Substance**
A plant or chemical that affects the brain and associated mental functions, such as
sensations of pain and pleasure, moods, views of reality, thinking ability, motivation or being alert. Examples include coffee and tea (caffeine), alcohol, tobacco (nicotine), cannabis, coca (cocaine), amphetamines, LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, opium and derivative opioid medications.

**Recovery**
A process of change through which individuals work to improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. Recovery is built on access to evidence-based clinical treatment and recovery support services for all populations.

**Resilience**
The ability to cope with challenges, process negative feelings, bounce back from bad experiences, and move forward in the face of adversity. It is vital for health and well-being. The four key “protective factors” that lead to resilience and help young people grow into thriving adults are: connectedness; opportunities for participation, contribution and high self-expectations.

**Risk Factors**
Characteristics of people or environments that increase the chance of developing, prolonging or intensifying substance use problems.

**Self-efficacy**
Believing in yourself, your abilities and knowing or trusting that you can succeed at setting and achieving a goal.

**Stereotypes**
An oversimplified, generally over-exaggerated belief that all members of a certain group act and think in the same way. People use negative stereotypes to justify discrimination.
Stigma
Disapproval of a person or group by society, community or larger group, based on perceived characteristics, which significantly discredits the person or group in the eyes of others, particularly when the person or group differs from the larger cultural norms. For example, beliefs and attitudes about people living with mental illness or substance dependence that leads to negative stereotyping and prejudice against them and their families. These beliefs are often based on fear, ignorance, misunderstanding and misinformation.

Suboxone™
The brand name of a medication that contains a four-to-one ratio of buprenorphine and naloxone, and is prescribed for opioid substitution treatment. Buprenorphine activates opioid receptors in the brain and relieves pain up to a certain point. The result is that treatment with Suboxone virtually eliminates cravings for opioids in people with opioid use disorder who use it as directed by a qualified medical professional. It can be taken once per day as a pill or other format.

Substance Use
The intentional consumption of a psychoactive substance (legal or illegal) in order to modify or alter consciousness. Psychoactive substances include alcohol, caffeinated beverages, tobacco, certain medications, solvents and glues and a range of controlled (i.e. illegal) substances, such as cannabis, cocaine and heroin. The use of psychoactive substances is an almost universal human cultural behaviour and has been engaged in since the beginning of human history. Substance use can occur for a variety of reasons – including medical, scientific, spiritual or religious, social, pleasurable or habitual – and its effects can range to beneficial to severely problematic, depending on the quantity, frequency, method or context of use.

Substance Use Disorder
A diagnostic term for an illness in which the use of one or more psychoactive
substances leads to clinically significant symptoms - including craving and inability to stop using despite negative consequences - that are detrimental to the individual’s physical and mental health, or the welfare of others. The terms substance use disorder is the preferred current medical term for what is more commonly known as drug addiction or dependence.

Supervised Consumption Services (SCS)
Health services where people consume drugs (that they have obtained elsewhere) in a hygienic environment, under the supervision of trained staff. The intent is to reduce the number of overdose deaths, connect people who use illegal drugs with healthcare services, including treatment and reduce public drug use and discarded used needles. SCS also provides opportunities to engage in other health and social services.

Tapering
The gradual reduction of a dose of medication such as methadone. This should only be done with the supervision of a health care provider.

Titration (Stabilization)
The process of determining the lowest dose of a substance needed to achieve the desired effects. This involves starting out on a low dose and safely working up to the dose that provides a stable feeling of comfort and wellness with minimal side effects.

Transdermal Skin Patch
A method of administering medication, in a stick-on patch that is applied to skin. Also known as a skin patch.

Trauma
An experience that overwhelms an individual’s capacity to cope. Trauma can be devastating, interfere with a person’s sense of safety, self and self-efficacy, as well as the ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Traumatized people may feel
terror, shame, helplessness, powerlessness, and may engage in problematic substance use or unhealthy behaviours as a way to cope. Trauma can include events experienced in early life, such as child abuse, neglect, disrupted attachment or witnessing violence. It can also be rooted in events later in life such as violence, accidents, natural disasters, war, sudden unexpected loss and other life events that are out of one’s control.

Withdrawal
Symptoms that may occur when a person with a substance use disorder or drug dependence stops or decreases use. These symptoms can typically be managed through appropriate treatment (withdrawal management).

Withdrawal Management
Quitting or cutting down on substance use under the care of a health professional. The aim is to alleviate pain and to achieve a temporary state of abstinence from the substance(s) and to treat any physical or psychiatric conditions.

W-18
A lethal fentanyl analogue.