



April 8, 2019

Community Update

Vernon overdose prevention site - update regarding RFP

On March 27, Interior Health posted a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit Proposals from qualified Proponents for the delivery of overdose prevention services in Vernon, including a fixed overdose prevention site.

Interior Health has made the decision to pause this Request for Proposal (RFP) process to allow further consultation; RFP 2018-19-002 will be cancelled. Interior Health will be seeking input from key stakeholders about how the service is designed, and intends to repost the RFP in the near future.

While we hope to avoid any delay in implementing this important service, our goal is to establish a successful overdose prevention service that meets the needs of diverse community groups.

As originally planned, the implementation date and location for the services will be determined through the procurement process.

About overdose prevention sites

Establishing an overdose prevention site in Vernon is an important addition to the continuum of health-care services for people with opioid use disorders. Other components include Opioid Agonist Treatments (such as methadone and Suboxone), intensive day and residential treatment programs, distribution of harm reduction supplies including Naloxone, and supportive recovery services.

Overdose prevention sites provide designated spaces to monitor people who use drugs and ensure that Naloxone and other lifesaving first aid is available in the event of an overdose. Unlike supervised consumption (injection) sites, overdose prevention sites do not require an application for exemption from federal drug laws.

In B.C., overdose prevention sites are low-barrier, judgement-free, safe spaces that offer a continuum of services and supports: peer support, outreach, education, linking people to substance use services, drug checking, and the distribution of harm reduction supplies.

International research has found that in addition to saving lives, providing designated spaces for people to use drugs can be beneficial to the surrounding community in other ways, with a reduction of public drug use and reduced numbers of inappropriately discarded needles.

Evidence has shown that these types of services:

- Save lives - no one has died in an overdose prevention site/supervised consumption service in B.C.;
- Reduce sharing of needles that cause HIV and hepatitis C;
- Increase the use of substance use treatment services;
- Provide opportunities to connect people to health-care services, housing and other supports;
- Help decrease hospitalizations and associated health-care costs.

There are currently more than 30 overdose prevention and supervised consumption sites operating in communities throughout the province. Within Interior Health there are currently supervised consumption services in Kamloops and Kelowna, and an independently-operated overdose prevention site in Nelson.

For more information visit www.interiorhealth.ca.

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