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THE CALGARY

SUPERVISED SAFE CONSUMPTION SITE

Supervised Consumption Services at Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre FAQ

What are supervised consumption services?

Supervised consumption services are part of a range of evidence-based services that support prevention, harm reduction and treatment for Albertans living with substance use challenges.

Supervised consumption services provide a place where people can use drugs in a monitored, hygienic environment to reduce harm from substance use while offering additional services such as counselling, social work, and opioid-dependency treatment.

What is harm reduction?

People who use drugs are at risk of harm, which includes infection from the use of unsanitary equipment and overdose death (especially when using in isolation). Harm reduction services, such as supervised consumption services and needle exchanges, reduce the risks associated with drug use. Harm reduction refers to policies, programs and practices that aim to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal psychoactive substances without requiring a reduction in consumption. AHS' harm reduction policy acknowledges that those struggling with substance use are Albertans and thus have the right to accessible, compassionate, and evidence-based health care.

What is the difference between "Safe injection" and "supervised consumption"?

"Supervised consumption services" are an evolution of the term "safe injection sites". While substance use (including alcohol) is not "safe", it is safer when supervised. Users of these services may use by routes other than "injection" (e.g. taking substances orally) hence the use of term "consumption". The term "services" is important as it highlights that these sites provide a wide range of health care services to improve the health of substance users.

Do we need supervised consumption services?

With 687 opioid related deaths in Alberta in 2017 it is imperative that we work collaboratively to implement solutions as quickly as possible. In 2016, in Alberta, 343 people died of drug overdoses involving fentanyl.

Overdose death is a serious concern and Alberta Health Services, with our partners, is working hard to reduce the harm from substance use.

Opioid use disorder is complex issue faced by many Albertans, and requires a multifaceted approach that includes awareness, prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and addressing organized crime.

Supervised consumption services, along with needle exchanges, [naloxone](#), and [opioid dependency treatment](#), help reduce harms from substance use, including HIV, Hepatitis C, bacterial infections, and overdose death.

Why provide supervised consumption services?

Supervised consumption services provide a safe environment for people who use drugs, and reduce overdose deaths, the transmission of diseases and infections and reduce public substance use and discarded needles.

Supervised consumption services are a compassionate, comprehensive, and collaborative form of evidence-based care and provide options when clients are ready for change.

Supervised Consumption Services at Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre FAQ

Will supervised consumption services increase crime in the community?

Evidence from other supervised consumption services locations indicates that these services do not increase crime rates in areas surrounding the site. We are committed to working with our partners, such as Calgary Police Service and AHS Protective Services, to monitor impacts to the community and ensure the safety of the public, our patients, and staff.

Do supervised consumption services encourage people to experiment with, and use, drugs?

Supervised consumption services are designed for people already dealing with substance use issues.

Will introducing the services attract more people to use narcotics?

Supervised consumption services are typically used by long-time drug users, who often are forced to use in public or in unsupervised spaces. Consumption services help keep drug users safe, particularly vulnerable and marginalized chronic substance users in inner cities. It is unlikely that novice drug users will use these services, however, even for this population, using in a monitored environment is safer than using alone.

Will supervised consumption services attract people who sell drugs?

Studies of supervised consumption services have shown that they improve public order and have no effect on criminal activity in the vicinity of the services. Supervised consumption services are generally integrated with other programs used by people with and without substance use issues and it is not obvious which service community members are seeking when they enter the facilities. Enforcement related to illicit drugs remains a component of a comprehensive strategy to address substance use issues.

Why aren't we putting more resources into prevention and treatment?

Supervised consumption services are part of a continuum of services that includes awareness, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and addressing organized crime. No single approach is going to solve the whole problem. Supervised consumption services are one important factor in saving lives and keeping communities safe.

Why supervised consumption services at the Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre?

Locating the supervised consumption services site at Chumir is an opportunity to connect patients to additional health services and programs, such as community-wide services for adults with severe or persistent mental illness and the AHS Opioid Dependency Program. Chumir already delivers an opioid dependency program and houses Safeworks, an AHS harm reduction and needle exchange program.

Where in Chumir is supervised consumption services offered?

Supervised consumption services is located along 13 ave., through a private entrance and exit.

What are the hours of operation?

The current hours are from 9 am to 11:30 pm, seven days a week.

Beginning April 30, 2018, the site will begin operating 24/7.

Supervised Consumption Services at Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre FAQ

How many clients have used supervised consumption services at Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre?

From October 30, 2017 to March 31, 2018, there were 10,020 client visits to supervised consumption services.

How many overdoses has supervised consumption services responded to?

From October 30, 2017 to March 31, 2018, supervised consumption services staff responded to 186 overdoses.

How many supervised consumption services clients were referred to other programs?

From October 30, 2017 to March 31, 2018, 84 clients were referred to social work for support and connections to other services, and 55 clients have been referred to other health services or agencies.

How many supervised consumption services clients have been referred to opioid agonist therapy?

From October 30, 2017 to March 31, 2018, 46 supervised consumption services clients were referred to the opioid dependency program for opioid agonist therapy.

How will Albertans benefit from these services?

With 687 opioid related deaths in Alberta in 2017 it is imperative that we work collaboratively to implement solutions as quickly as possible. In 2016, 363 people died of apparent fentanyl-related overdoses in this province. That is up 41 per cent from 2015, when 257 people died of apparent fentanyl-related overdoses.

Over the long term, this investment will save lives and better support people who use substances, people with addictions, and their families.

Where can the public submit questions and concerns?

While formal community sessions regarding the Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre project have wrapped up, members of the public wishing to ask questions can do so by emailing scs.calgary@ahs.ca. To learn more, visit www.drugsafe.ca

For more information visit www.drugsafe.ca or the Alberta Government Opioid Crisis Response webpage, which includes opioid quarterly reports and statistics, at <https://www.alberta.ca/albertas-opioid-crisis-response.aspx>