

background information:

May 2017

Emergency Overdose Prevention Services – 3699 3rd Avenue, Port Alberni

Between January 1 and December 31 2016, 155 people died from an illicit drug overdose in Island Health. 56 fatalities occurred in the Central Island region in 2016, and 24 people have died in the region during the first three months 2017.

Island Health, in partnership with community organizations, is providing Overdose Prevention Services (OPS) in Victoria, Nanaimo, Courtenay and Port Alberni. Approximately 20 similar overdose prevention services have been opened/are opening in communities across BC, and Campbell River is in the process of initiating overdose prevention services. These services will be in effect for as long as they are needed and/or until permanent supervised consumption services can replace them.

The Port Alberni-based OPS began operating on May 1. The service is being operated by the Port Alberni Shelter Society (PASS) with funding from Island Health. PASS opened a new location at 3699 3rd Avenue where they will be offering the OPS.

The overdose prevention services will be available 7 days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Staff at the location are equipped with naloxone, are trained for overdose response, and will be able to intervene in an overdose.

Overdose Prevention Services are allowed by Ministerial Order (Ministerial Order M488) under the Emergency Health Services Act. This order directs health authorities to provide 'Overdose Prevention Services for the purpose of monitoring persons who are at risk of overdose and providing rapid intervention as and when necessary, as ancillary health services.'

The creation of overdose prevention services are one part of a comprehensive set of services intended to reduce the impact of addictions. Both overdose prevention services as an emergency measure, and supervised consumption services as a sustained intervention, are part of a broad overdose response strategy that includes education, prevention, outreach, harm reduction, naloxone kits, counselling, substance use treatment and supports, and access to mental health services.

Island Health is grateful for the ongoing support of the City of Port Alberni, the local RCMP detachment, BC Ambulance and Port Alberni Fire Department in the response to the current health crisis in our communities.

More information about the opioid overdose crisis, including overdose prevention services and supervised consumption services, is available on line (www.viha.ca/mho/overdose.htm). Questions about the services can be emailed to scs@viha.ca.