

January, 2017

Emergency Overdose Prevention Services in Nanaimo

Between January 1 and November 30, 2016, 139 people died from an illicit drug overdose in Island Health. Twenty-five of these individuals died in Nanaimo. Nanaimo has had an increased rate of overdose deaths for several years.

To save lives, Island Health is providing an Overdose Prevention Service in Nanaimo. The service will operate on a temporary basis while Island Health develops an application for a permanent supervised consumption service in Nanaimo.

The Overdose Prevention Service will be added to existing services already available at 437 Wesley Street. It will be open by the end of January 2017, if not sooner. This location is a low barrier residential facility that provides housing and support services for high risk, vulnerable populations. The building is owned by BC Housing and sits on land owned by the City of Nanaimo. The building is operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA).

Initially, the Overdose Prevention Service will open later in the morning and close in the evening. Hours will be reviewed once the service is operational. The Overdose Prevention Service will be operated by the CMHA. Staff will have special training working with people who use substances, and will be able to intervene in an overdose.

Approximately 18 similar Overdose Prevention Services have been opened/are opening in communities across BC, including Victoria.

Overdose Prevention Services are allowed under 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.'

Both Overdose Prevention Services and supervised consumption services 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.

Over the coming weeks and months, Island Health will be pursuing an application with Health Canada for a long term supervised consumption service in Nanaimo. This process will involve community engagement and the identification of a permanent location(s).

Island Health is grateful for the support of the City of Nanaimo for their support of both the temporary Overdose Prevention Service as well as the development of an application to Health Canada for permanent supervised consumption service.

More information about the overdose crisis, including supervised consumption services is available [on line](#) (www.viha.ca/mho/overdose.htm). Questions about the Overdose Prevention Service can be emailed to scs@viha.ca.