

January, 2017

## Emergency Overdose Prevention Services – 713 Johnson Street

Between January 1 and November 30, 2016, 139 people died from an illicit drug overdose in the Island Health region. Sixty of these individuals died in Victoria. Island Health has the highest overdose death rate per 100,000 population compared to other health authorities.

To save lives, Island Health is providing Overdose Prevention Services in several communities on Vancouver Island, including two locations already operational in Victoria (Pandora Avenue and Johnson Street). These services will be in effect for as long as they are needed and/or until permanent supervised consumption services can replace them.

A further Overdose Prevention Service will be added to existing services already available at 713 Johnson Street (Access Health Centre). It opened this week. The Access Health Centre provides a range of primary health care, dental, pharmacy, counselling and harm reduction services for high risk, vulnerable populations. The building is owned by the Victoria Cool Aid Society and AIDS Vancouver Island and delivers services by Cool Aid, AIDS Vancouver Island and Island Health.

The Overdose Prevention Service at 713 Johnson Street will be open 3 pm to 9 pm seven days a week and will be located on the 3rd floor of the Access Health Centre. Staff will have special training working with people who use substances, and will be able to intervene in an overdose. The Overdose Prevention Service will be operated by AIDS Vancouver Island with oversight and funding provided by Island Health. The Overdose Prevention Service at AIDS Vancouver Island is temporary and will be reviewed after 60 days to consider impact on other services in the Access Health Centre and the surrounding community. Should the service continue beyond 60 days, it would close when a permanent supervised consumption service opens at 941 Pandora Avenue later in 2017.

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

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.

Island Health is grateful for the ongoing support of the City of Victoria and Victoria Police Department in the response to the current opioid overdose crisis in our communities and in the creation of permanent supervised consumption services that will be one part of a comprehensive set of services intended to reduce the impact of addictions.

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