



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

FNHA Toxic Drug Emergency Community Support Guide



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(Updated February 2024)



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Introduction

First Nations people have been disproportionately represented in toxic drug poisoning events and deaths in British Columbia (BC) due to the ongoing legacy of colonialism.

Despite this, communities continue to show resiliency and strength in their approaches to healing and taking care of each other. As a partner in health and wellness, the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) continues to work with BC First Nation individuals, families and communities to identify needs surrounding the toxic drug emergency, and to offer supports and services to address those needs in a culturally safe and trauma-informed way.

The FNHA has developed both provincial and regional strategies to ensure timely and effective supports are in place for the development of harm reduction programming. Communities are encouraged to continue to identify gaps through their regional communication pathways. The FNHA will work with communities to address the gaps that fall within our ability and will advocate for additional resources for First Nations communities with our government and non-government partners.

This guide represents the areas of support that the FNHA has determined to be within the scope of our toxic drug emergency response and within our capacity as an organization to, effectively, fulfill. This document will be updated as our response unfolds.

Supports for Communities

Harm Reduction Supplies & Education

The FNHA's [Harm Reduction Hub](#) facilitates access to harm reduction supplies at no cost to First Nations communities. These supplies include:

- Intramuscular (Injectable - IM) Naloxone Kits.
- Nasal Naloxone Kits (Limited: up to 50 kits per order).
- [Harm Reduction Supplies](#) (Including safer injection, smoking, snorting and safer sex supplies).
- Fentanyl test strips.

Education and training are available and can be delivered virtually or in person. Topics may include:

- Understanding harm reduction supplies (safer smoking, snorting, injection, and safer sex supplies).

- Harm Reduction supply distribution planning, including how to connect with people who use drugs.
- IM and Nasal Naloxone administration including how to prevent, recognize and respond to a toxic drug poisoning.
- Support with the development of a policy for naloxone distribution.
- Drug checking with fentanyl test strips.

To order harm reduction supplies, or for harm reduction education support contact harmreduction@fnha.ca

Education & Training

Not Just Naloxone (NJN) Workshop

The [Not Just Naloxone: Talking about Substance Use in First Nations Communities](#) is a 2- day in-person or virtual train-the-trainer workshop hosted by the FNHA and is delivered by the Four Directions team, FNHA Regional teams, and community harm reduction champions.

The NJN workshop teaches participants to facilitate community-based discussions about:

- Racism and prohibition in Canada
- Decolonizing substance use
- Indigenous harm reduction practices
- Trauma- and resiliency-informed practice
- Anti-stigma work
- Nasal/injectable Naloxone

Kickstarter Grants of up to \$2500 are available to support graduates of the NJN workshops to host virtual or in-person training events about harm reduction in First Nations communities.

To request NJN training for your community, contact njn@fnha.ca

Regional Education & Training

Additional education & training may be available through the FNHA regional teams. These can be tailored to individual community needs, and can cover a variety of harm reduction and health and wellness topics.

To learn more about education & training being offered in your region connect with your regional team or harmreduction@fnha.ca

Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT)

The FNHA provides support to both individuals and communities to access [OAT](#) including Methadone, Buprenorphine/Naloxone (Suboxone), Slow-release Oral Morphine (Kadian), and Sublocade. These supports can include:

- Community education and stigma reduction regarding OAT.
- Building relationships with existing [local OAT prescribers](#) and pharmacies.
- [Supporting Opioid Use Disorder and Opioid Agonist Therapy in First Nations Communities.](#)
- Supporting [Nurse Prescribing](#) of OAT.
- Support with [OAT clinic fee](#) subsidy.
- Supporting individuals with [medical transportation](#) to access their OAT medications.

A one-time OAT access grant of up to \$15,000 is available to communities that would like to develop OAT programming or enhance existing supports.

FNHA's Pathway to Emergency Treatment Beds

FNHA offers a one-time preliminary amount to support access to emergency treatment beds at a selection of non-FNHA funded facilities around the province. This funding, initially in place until March 2024, is provided to support rapid access to bed-based treatment and withdrawal management.

The pathway to access available beds and funding is as follows:

- Check with [FNHA-funded treatment centre network](#) for availability of beds, and then check for availability at provincially-funded treatment centres.
- If there are no available beds, [submit a subsidy application to FNHA](#). The application will be reviewed within 3-5 business days. If the referral is urgent, or if submitted applications require changes, please contact FNHA at 1-855-693-3033 or nonFNHAFundedtc@fnha.ca.
- Applications must be approved by the FNHA Subsidy application team before the client is admitted to the service.
- Each non-FNHA funded treatment program has their own assessment process. Acceptance to each individual program is based on their own process.
- Once approval is received from FNHA, reach out to both the centre as well as medical transportation (if required) for admission and arrival arrangements.

Please note that priority may be given to applicants meeting the following criteria:

- Recent drug toxicity experience (e.g., "overdose")
- Living in rural/remote locations

- Unhoused or otherwise vulnerable
- Requiring detox support
- Pregnant
- Complex mental health and/or concurrent issues (physical health, mental health, using multiple substances)
- Other treatment options do not meet applicant's needs

Funding is available through FNHA to support access to emergency treatment beds if access at FNHA-funded and provincially-funded centres is not available.

To apply, please complete [FNHA's online application form](#)

For more information, contact 4directions@fnha.ca

Prescribed Safer Supply

Prescribed safer supply is a harm reduction approach that provides individuals who rely on the unregulated and toxic drug supply with a range of regulated, predictable, pharmaceutical grade alternatives through a health care provider.

Safer supply can contribute to:

- Reducing the number of toxic drug-related deaths by providing safer alternatives of substances with known composition and strength.
- Providing more options for people who use substances, including those who use substances occasionally or recreationally.
- Bringing stability to people who use substances by reducing stigma and fear through conversation and education.
- Moving away from the criminalization of people who use substances by providing a regulated and legal supply.
- Potentially improving relationships to family and community, promoting participation in culture and ceremony and a return to home communities.
- Improving wellness and quality of life.

- Making space for people who use substances to continue improving their lives and seek opportunities for reconnecting with their gifts.

Accessing safer supply can be challenging due to lack of availability, however, there are specific services to assist First Nations people to access it such as FNHA's [First Nations Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service](#) (FNvSUPS).

To learn more about safer supply and the role it plays in responding to the toxic drug emergency, access the [FNHA "Safer Supply Frequently Asked Questions" document here](#).

FNHA can support Individuals and communities to learn more about prescribed safer supply in their area.

To learn more about OAT programming, Nurse Prescribing, Prescribed Safer Supply and the OAT access grants contact 4directions@fnha.ca

[Collaborating With and Learning From People with Lived and Living Experience](#) People with lived and living experience (PWLE) of substance use are those community members who use substances, or have a history of substance use, and hold expert knowledge around the harm reduction needs of the community. There are a variety of ways that PWLE can support harm reduction programming in community.

When collaborating and learning from PWLE it is essential to read and follow the [Principles and Best Practices for Peer Engagement](#) and [Peer Payment Standard](#).

[Establishing a Peer Network](#)

PWLE of substance use in your community can be supported to develop a peer network that will allow them to build relationships, skills, and a network of support.

Funding opportunities are available for communities who would like incorporate PWLE into harm reduction programming, or to support the development of a peer network.

To learn more about collaborating with PWLE and for information and support on establishing a peer network contact tdr@fnha.ca.

[Drug Alerts and Overdose Advisories](#)

Drug alerts and overdose advisories are a way of communicating information about a drug sample that may be harmful, or to alert the community when there is an increase in people who are having unexpected effects when using substances. Having a template or script

ready to go will help the alert to get out as quickly and efficiently as possible. Drug alerts can be communicated in a variety of ways including:

- Posters around the community
- Social media
- Email
- Radio

Information on how to develop a drug alert/overdose advisory can be found [here](#).

Individuals can access free and anonymous [toxic drug alerts](#) across BC. To sign up for this service text the word "JOIN" to 253787 (ALERTS).

Using Social Media for Harm Reduction Information

Social media, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter can be used to communicate important harm reduction and safety information to the community.

Tips for safe and effective communication through social media include:

- Use [non-stigmatizing language](#) including these tips on [talking about substance use](#) to maintain dignity and respect.
- Ensure privacy and confidentiality in posts – for example do not include names or addresses.
- Post fact-based information.
- Always include links to supports for people who might be affected by the information including [mental health and crisis support](#), [harm reduction strategies](#), and where to access naloxone in the community (Including after hours).

For information and support on developing drug alerts and/or overdose advisories contact harmreduction@fnha.ca

Emergency Safer Use Planning

One of the biggest risks for toxic drug poisoning is using substances alone or in isolation. Developing an emergency safer use plan in your community, alongside PWLLE, can help to support community members who use drugs to do so in a safer and supported way. This may include:

- Distribution of cell phones with safety monitoring apps including [Lifeguard App](#) or [Be Safe App](#) installed (Both of these apps require reliable wifi to function properly) or the [National Overdose Response Service](#) (NORS) number.
- Auntie/Uncle/Cousin Program: Designated safe space in community for people to use their substances.

- Development of a [Raven's Eye Sage Site](#): A First Nations led overdose prevention site that offers wrap-around services along with harm reduction and overdose prevention programs.
- Locations for "after hours" naloxone kits and harm reduction supplies.

Funding is available through the FNHA to support emergency safer use planning, including the development of Raven's Eye Sage Sites.

For Information and support on developing emergency safer use planning and to learn more about funding available contact TDR@fnha.ca

Grief and Hope Supports

Grief and hope supports are available through FNHA regional teams to individuals, families, and communities who have lost loved ones to the toxic drug emergency. Supports can be tailored to meet the community's needs and may include:

- 1:1 crisis counselling.
- Community grief and hope loss workshops.
- Ceremonies to honor lost loved ones.

Additionally, the FNHA has created a safe and welcoming digital space called "[Honouring Lost Loved Ones](#)" for friends and family members to remember, honour, and grieve loved ones that they have lost due to the toxic drug emergency.

The FNHA provides [one-time yearly funding](#) for communities who would like to recognize International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31st in their community.

Mental Health and Cultural Supports

Culturally safe and trauma informed [mental health and crisis supports](#) are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week for First Nations people in BC.

In addition, the FNHA provides [mental health benefits](#) for counselling services provided by qualified mental health providers including psychologists, clinical counsellors and social workers.

For additional information on grief and hope, and mental health, and cultural supports available to your community contact your regional team.

Urban and Away From Home Supports

Harm reduction supports are available to community members who are living away from their home community and using substances. These supports include:

Harm Reduction Supplies: Harm reduction supplies are available throughout BC at no cost to anyone who needs them. To learn where to access harm reduction supplies in your area click [here](#).

IM Naloxone: IM Naloxone kits are available throughout BC at no cost to anyone who needs them. To learn where to access IM naloxone kits in your area click [here](#).

Nasal Naloxone: is available at no cost to those with a personal health number and Status number in pharmacies in BC. For information on how to access nasal naloxone at a pharmacy click [here](#).

Drug Checking: There are a range of drug checking services available across BC including in-person and mail-in options. See Appendix C for drug checking options in your region.

Substance Use Treatment Options

Detox and Withdrawal Management

To learn more about detox and withdrawal management options in your area see [Appendix B](#) and “Withdrawal Management” or connect with your FNHA regional team.

FNHA Funded Treatment Centres

The FNHA supports Individuals of all genders, as well as youth and families who are on their healing journey to access treatment services.

Visit the [FNHA treatment centre](#) page to learn more and to access the application form.

Non-FNHA Funded Treatment Services

In situations where an individual is not able to attend an FNHA funded treatment centre they can be supported to access a non-FNHA treatment centre. For more information on this process and eligibility requirements please review the [Treatment Centre Application FAQ document](#).

Virtual Supports

FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day

1-855-344-3800 (Toll-free, 7 days a week 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#)

FNHA Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service

Provides virtual specialist support in addictions medicine and psychiatry.

FNHA Virtual Doctor of the Day, or your usual medical professional, can refer you to the [Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service](#).

Appendix A: FNHA Harm Reduction Resources

- [FNHA Harm Reduction Hub](#)
- [A Framework for Action: Responding to the Toxic Drug Crisis for First Nations](#)
- [Supporting Opioid Use Disorder and Opioid Agonist Therapy in First Nations Communities](#) (Resource developed to support nurses working in First Nations Communities)
- [FNHA Harm Reduction Policy Statement](#)
- [FNHA Harm Reduction Policy Supplement 1 of 3: The Context for the FNHA's Policy on Harm Reduction](#)
- [FNHA Harm Reduction Policy Supplement 2 of 3: Why Harm Reduction](#)
- [FNHA Harm Reduction Policy Supplement 3 of 3: What is Harm Reduction](#)

Appendix B – Regional Health Authority Harm Reduction Resources

The FNHA works in partnership with the regional health authorities to help advocate for the delivery of culturally safe and trauma-informed harm reduction services. Below is a list of our health authority partners' substance use and harm reduction services by region.

Northern Health:

[Northern Health Harm Reduction Information and Resources](#) | [Overdose Prevention Services by Community](#) | [Mental Health and Substance Use](#) | [Drug Alerts](#) | [Withdrawal Management](#) | [Indigenous Health Supports](#)

Interior Health:

[Harm Reduction Partner Information](#) | [Harm Reduction](#) | [Overdose Prevention and Treatment](#) | [Adult Substance Use Services and Resources](#) | [Substance Use Wheel](#) | [Opioid Agonist Therapy](#) | [Drug Alerts](#) | [Withdrawal Management](#) | [Indigenous Health Supports](#)

Fraser Health:

[Harm Reduction](#) | [Harm Reduction Resources](#) | [Mental Health and Substance Use Services](#) | [Opioid Agonist Treatment](#) | [Drug Alerts](#) | [Withdrawal Management](#) | [Indigenous Health Supports](#)

Vancouver Coastal Health:

[Harm Reduction](#) | [Substance Use Services](#) | [Opioid Addiction and Treatment](#) | [Drug Alerts](#) | [Withdrawal Management](#) | [Indigenous Health Supports](#)

Island Health:

[Overdose Prevention Services](#) | [Substance Use and Addiction](#) | [Opioid Agonist Therapy](#) | [Safer Prescribing Options](#) | [Drug Alerts](#) | [Withdrawal Management](#) | [Indigenous Health Supports](#)

Appendix C: Drug Checking and Overdose Prevention Site Locations

In-Person Drug Checking Options:

Northern Health: Click [here](#) for drug checking in Prince George and [here](#) for Terrace. Interior Health: Click [here](#) for the full list of drug checking services.

Fraser Salish: Click [here](#) for the full list of drug checking services. Vancouver

Coastal: Click [here](#) for the full list of drug checking services.

Vancouver Island: Click [here](#) for the full list of drug checking services supported through the Vancouver Island Drug Checking Project. Click [here](#) for drug checking in Nanaimo.

Mail-in Drug Checking Options:

Get Your Drugs Tested is based in Vancouver and instructions for how to use this mail-in services can be found [here](#).

The Vancouver Island Drug Checking Project is based out of Victoria and instructions for how to use this mail-in service can be found [here](#).

Overdose Prevention Sites/Supervised Consumption Sites:

For a list of overdose preventions sites and supervised consumption sites in your area use this [link](#).

Appendix D: Additional Harm Reduction Resources

Mobile Response Team:

- [Provincial Overdose Mobile Response Team](#)

Resources for Pregnant and Parenting People

- [Perinatal Substance Use](#)
- [Families in Recovery Program \(FIR\)](#) (Vancouver)
- [Heartwood Centre for Women](#) (Vancouver)
- [Peardonville House](#) (Abbotsford)
- [Harmony House](#) (Prince George)
- [Sheway](#) (Vancouver)
- [Herway Home](#) (Victoria)

Youth Resources:

- [Child and Youth Mental Health & Substance Use Resources](#)
- [Foundry BC](#)
- [YouthCo](#)

Provincial Harm Reduction Supports

- [Toward the Heart Website](#)
- [Harm Reduction Services](#)
- [Harm Reduction Clinical Resources](#)

Education and Training Opportunities

- [BC Center on Substance Use](#)
- Canadian Red Cross: [First Aid for Opioid Emergencies](#) & [Becoming an Opioid Harm Reduction Champion](#).
- [St. John's Ambulance Opioid Response Training E-Learning](#)
- [St. John's Ambulance Opioid Poisoning Response Training for Underserved Communities](#)