



THE HISTORY OF HARM REDUCTION

International & Provincial (BC) Perspectives



1959	Methodone treatment was first dispensed in Vancouver by the Narcotic Addiction Foundation of British Columbia for brief detoxification
1964	Methodone Treatment program officially begins in Canada, run by the Addictions Research Foundation in Ontario. Soon programs were established across Canada including BC. See OAT Therapy Timeline
1984	First needle exchange in the world launched in Amsterdam, Netherlands
1985	Mersey Model of harm reduction initiated - prescribing drugs (e.g., opioids) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Harm Reduction strategies available in a single location including needle exchange, counseling, prescribing drugs (including heroin) and employment and housing services
1986	First legal supervised injection site opens in Bern, Switzerland <ul style="list-style-type: none">Illicit drugs could be injected with nursing staff present
1989	First Needle Exchange Program in British Columbia <ul style="list-style-type: none">The City of Vancouver funds a pilot project for needle exchange delivered via the Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society and the North Health Unit
1990	1st International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harms in Liverpool, UK <ul style="list-style-type: none">Delegates from around the world went to learn about the Mersey Harm Reduction strategy
1996	Vancouver Injection Drug Users Study commenced by BC Centre for Excellence in HIV and AIDS <ul style="list-style-type: none">Longitudinal study of people who inject drugs; 6-monthly interviews about drug use practices, health status, health and social service utilization, HIV and hepatitis C testing
1997	Public Health Emergency Declared in Vancouver <ul style="list-style-type: none">Chief Medical Health Officer of Vancouver Richmond Health Board declares a public health emergency in response to increasing overdose deaths, hepatitis A, B and C, syphilis and HIV infections
1998	Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) formed <ul style="list-style-type: none">A peer-based support and education group "dedicated to improving the lives of drug users, their families, and our communities"
2001	City of Vancouver's Four Pillar Drug Strategy adopted <ul style="list-style-type: none">Vancouver City Council recommended actions across the four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement
2002	Provincial needle distribution policy replaces one-for-one needle exchange programs
	The Dr. Peter Centre provides supervised injection <ul style="list-style-type: none">The College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia ruled that it was in the scope of nursing practice to supervise injections for the purposes of preventing illness and promoting health
2003	BC Harm Reduction Program is transferred from the BC Ministry of Health Services to the BC Centre for Disease Control Vaccine and Pharmacy Services
	First officially sanctioned Supervised Injection Site in North America opens in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside <ul style="list-style-type: none">Health Canada grants Vancouver Coastal Health a Section 56 exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act
2004	World Health Organization (WHO) supports provision of sterile injecting equipment to reduce HIV transmission¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations General Assembly endorse Needle Exchange Programs²
2005	Anti-Harm Reduction Bylaw approved by Abbotsford City Council <ul style="list-style-type: none">Prohibits harm reduction such as needle distribution in the city
	WHO report on effectiveness of sterile needle and syringe programs <ul style="list-style-type: none">Needle Exchange Programs (NEPs) reduce unsafe drug use, transmission of HIV and HCV and the number of discarded needles and increase access to drug treatment. NEPs do not encourage initiation, increase duration or frequency of drug use.³
	North American Opiate Medication (NAOMI) trial begins <ul style="list-style-type: none">Randomized trial comparing prescribed diacetylmorphine (heroin) to methadone to treat individuals with chronic opioid dependenceDespite success, Health Canada disallows compassionate prescription heroin. Read More.
2006	"Evidence and best practice for the employment of harm reduction activities in programs aimed at controlling communicable diseases"⁴ report developed
2006-2007	Publications showing effectiveness of Vancouver's supervised injection site^{5,6,7,8}
2007	"More than just needles" study published <ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluates provincial harm reduction supply distribution, application of policy and identifies gaps⁹
2008	HRSS Strategies Newsletter launched <ul style="list-style-type: none">Highlights the latest Harm Reduction Strategies and Services (HRSS) policy, programs and information
	Fixed harm reduction site in Victoria closes after 20 years

The BC Harm Reduction Strategies and Services Committee publishes [Best Practices](#) for BC's harm reduction supply distribution program

- Provides guidance to BC's harm reduction services, supply distribution and collection program

BC Harm Reduction supply distribution centralized

2009

Two-day harm reduction workshop in Vancouver hosted by the BCCDC

- 88 participants including front line staff, people with lived experience, health authority and Indigenous community representatives; facilitated by BCCDC outreach program, Vancouver Coastal Health and VANDU

Jun '09

[Pacific Summit](#) on Drug User Health held in Vancouver

- VANDU organised and hosted 100 drug user activists
- [BC Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors](#) formed to strive for social justice and advocate for human rights of people who use drugs (PWUD) and to eliminate the discrimination, criminalization, stigmatization and isolation of PWUD

Jul '09

[Harm reduction webpage](#) added to BCCDC website

Aug '09

[BC Harm Reduction Training Manual](#) developed

- Hard copies sent to all BC distribution sites and published online for regular updates

2011

Drug Overdose and Alert Partnership (DOAP) developed

- DOAP coordinates stakeholder communication and action to enable timely alerting and responses to illicit drug use issues

Apr '11

Annual funding provided by BCCDC to support local initiatives

- Funds made available through health authority for 1) peer-led initiatives and 2) community development activities matched by health authority funding

Jul '11

Study to Assess Long-term Opioid Maintenance Effectiveness ([SALOME](#)) initiated

- A clinical trial to determine if hydromorphone (Dilaudid) benefits people with chronic addiction as much as diacetylmorphine, (active ingredient of heroin), who are not benefiting sufficiently from other treatments ¹⁰

Aug '11

Survey of Public Attitudes Towards Harm Reduction was conducted among BC residents

- The results show overall 78% support harm reduction; 75% support needle distribution; and 54% support safer inhalation equipment distribution ¹¹

Sep '11

[Supreme Court of Canada](#) rules to uphold Insite's exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

Mar '12

[Toward the Heart](#) website launched

- Knowledge exchange website of the BC Harm Reduction Program

Aug '12

[BC Take Home Naloxone](#) program launched

- The program provides training and prescribed naloxone to individuals at risk of opioid overdose

2013

[Best Practice for Canadian Harm Reduction Programs \(Part 1\)](#) developed for those that provide service to people who use drugs and are at risk for HIV, HCV and other harms

- Developed by cross-Canada team including people with lived experience, service providers, policy makers and researchers

2014

[BC Harm Reduction Strategies and Services Policy and Guidelines](#) updated

2015-2018

Peer Engagement and Evaluation Project

- Peer engagement in harm reduction: development, implementation and evaluation of best practice guidelines for BC funded by the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies and renewed twice. [Final Report Published](#).

2015

Bill C-2 "Respect for Communities Act" passed under the Conservative Government, stipulating 26 conditions that must be met for Supervised Consumption Services

[Best Practice for Canadian Harm Reduction Programs \(Part 2\)](#)

2016

Bill C-37 effectively replaces Bill C-2 decreasing 26 conditions to 5 conditions making it easier to open a Supervised Consumption Site (SCS)

Apr '16

BC Provincial Health Officer declares a public health emergency under the Public Health Act due to the rise in overdose deaths reported in BC.

- The declaration allows for real-time information to be collected, reported and analyzed across the health system, to identify immediately where risks are arising and take proactive action to warn and protect people who use drugs

Oct '16

BC Officer's Council passes resolution 145-03 increasing compassion and inclusion in harm reduction services

- Health authorities and their contract agencies support staff to engage people who use drugs with compassion and respect; and vulnerable and marginalized populations must be meaningfully engaged in the planning and provision of all harm reduction services

Nov '16

Health Canada and Health Ministers across Canada release the ['Joint Statement of Action to Address the Opioid Crisis'](#)

Nov - Dec '16

The province sees an unprecedented increase in overdoses and overdose deaths. Demand for naloxone and THN kits increases

Dec '16

[Overdose Prevention Services](#) (OPS) initiated by the [BC Minister of Health](#) due to increasing mortality from illicit drug overdoses and delays in being able to open supervised consumption sites

2017

[BC Overdose Prevention Services Guide](#) published

Mar '17

In a comparative content analysis of Canadian provincial and territorial frameworks, BC is found to be the only province to meet all quality indicators related to populations and ranked highest on program features and overall performance in documents ([Hyshka et al](#))

Apr '17

Overdose Prevention Service implemented at Harm Reduction Strategies and Services meeting at BCCDC

- OPS enables meeting attendees with lived experience to be observed if injecting drugs on-site.

May '17

SisterSpace, a women's only overdose prevention site, opened in Vancouver Downtown Eastside

Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act was made law

- People who call 911 to get help for an overdose will not be charged with simple drug possession, nor will anyone who is at the scene
- [Poster](#) and [Card](#) Resources Developed to help spread awareness of the Act

Aug '17

Policy Indicators Report released by the BC Harm Reduction Strategies and Services committee

- [Policy Indicators](#) report released with data to December 31, 2016

Dec '17

BC launches the [Overdose Emergency Response Centre](#). The centre works provincially, regionally and locally to mobilize resources within communities to intervene quickly to save lives and deliver proactive treatment and support on the ground to proactively identify and support people at risk from overdose.

- The OERC works provincially, regionally and locally to mobilize resources within communities
- Each health authority forms a Regional Response Team to monitor overdose trends and unexpected events
- Community Action Teams (with representation from municipal government, Indigenous partners, first responders, front-line community agencies, Divisions of Family Practice, people and families with lived experience and local provincial ministry offices providing housing, children and family, and poverty reduction services) will spearhead local coordination and communication

2018

As of August, 2018 there are 31 Observed Consumption Sites across BC

1. World Health Organization. 2004. Policy Brief: Provision of sterile injecting equipment to reduce HIV transmission. Geneva. <https://www.unodc.org/documents/hiv-aids/provision%20of%20sterile%20injecting%20equipment.pdf>
2. Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. 2007. Sticking points: Barriers to access to needle and syringe programs in Canada. Toronto, Canada. https://canadianharmreduction.com/sites/default/files/access_to_needle_programs_2007.pdf
3. World Health Organization. 2004. Effectiveness of sterile needle and syringe programming in reducing HIV/AIDS among injecting drug users. Geneva. http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/prev_care/effectivenesssterileneedle.pdf
4. Kerr T, and Wood E. 2006. Evidence and best practice for the employment of harm reduction activities in programs aimed at controlling communicable diseases. Prepared for the BC Ministry of Health Core Functions in Public Health Project. http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Publications/Epid/Other/Epi_HarmReduction_Pub_EvidenceandBestPractice_20090608.pdf
5. Wood E, Tyndall MW, Montaner JS, and Kerr T. Summary of findings from the evaluation of a pilot medically supervised safer injecting facility. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2006;175(11), 1399-1404.
6. Stoltz JA, Wood E, Small W, Li K, Tyndall M, Montaner J, et al. Changes in injecting practices associated with the use of a medically supervised safer injection facility. Journal of Public Health, 2007;29(1), 35-39.
7. Kerr T, Small W, Moore D, and Wood E. A micro-environmental intervention to reduce the harms associated with drug-related overdose: Evidence from the evaluation of Vancouver's safer injection facility. International Journal on Drug Policy, 2007;18(1), 37-45.
8. Milloy MJ, Kerr T, Tyndall M, Montaner J, and Wood E. Estimated drug overdose deaths averted by North America's first medically-supervised safer injection facility. PLoS ONE, 2008;3(10), e3351.
9. Buxton JA, Preston E, Mak S, Harvard S and BC Harm Reduction Supply Services Committee. More than just needles: An Evidence-informed Approach to Enhancing the Distribution of Provincial Harm Reduction Supplies. Harm reduction Journal (2008), 5:37 <http://www.harmreductionjournal.com/content/5/1/37>
10. The Study to Assess Long-term Opioid Maintenance Effectiveness <http://www.providencehealthcare.org/salome/about-us.html>
11. Tzemis D, Campbell J, Kuo M, HRSS committee, Buxton JA. A cross-sectional study of public attitudes towards safer drug use practices in British Columbia, Canada. Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy (2013) 8:40 <http://www.substanceabusepolicy.com/content/8/1/40>

More information about the Harm Reduction program can be found at <https://towardtheheart.com/>

Last Updated: 04-Dec-2018