

July 2022

Update Bulletin: Responding to the Toxic Drug Crisis



Message from CEO Kathy MacNeil & CMHO Dr. Murray Fyfe

On March 9, the [BC Coroners Service Death Panel Review](#) released a special report with recommendations for reducing illicit drug toxicity deaths and poisoning events. This report is a sobering reminder that the toxic drug crisis continues unabated with devastating consequences.

Addressing the toxic drug crisis is part of our Strategic Framework, captured under [Pillar 4, Priority 8](#).

Four primary drivers of success direct our work:

1. Increase access to treatment options across the continuum of care;
2. Prevent drug poisonings;
3. Reduce the stigma associated with substance use; and
4. Increase capacity to respond to drug poisonings and advance harm reduction initiatives.

*Tackling the toxic drug crisis
is an organizational priority
and a shared responsibility
that touches us all.*

Island Health is strengthening our response in alignment with the provincial government, other health authorities and community partners. To accelerate our progress, we initiated 30/60/90 day plans with short-term objectives well underway (see example initiatives below). Additional details on the plans were presented on May 25 to the [Select Standing Committee on Health](#).

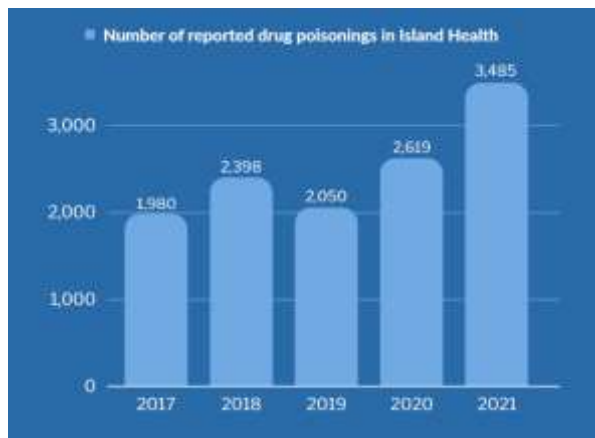
Tackling this crisis is an organizational priority and a shared responsibility that touches us all. In this Update Bulletin, we call on all Island Health employees, physicians and volunteers to learn more about the crisis and join us in working to mitigate the impacts of the toxic drug crisis on Island Health patients, families and communities.

Feature topic: Death review panel initiatives

Island Health is taking action to mitigate the impacts of the toxic drug crisis on Vancouver Island. Our response aligns with the [BC Coroners Death Review Panel Special Report](#). Initiatives include:

- Working with FNHA to accelerate shared priorities in response to the toxic drug crisis impact on Indigenous patients and communities
- Implementing prescribed safer supply initiatives

- Training and deploying Nurse Prescribers
- Launching an organization-wide Harm Reduction – Substance Use Policy
- Increasing inhalation services at overdose prevention sites
- Increasing support for people with lived and living experience employed by Island Health
- Providing targeted interventions to high risk populations by leveraging innovative initiatives like [The Tailgate Toolkit – You Deserve the Right Tools](#)
- Investing in and expanding access to sobering and assessment beds and treatment services



Paramedic-attended drug poisonings

The short and long-term impacts of survived drug poisonings is a major concern. **People who survive a toxic drug poisoning are at increased risk of experiencing liver and kidney problems, brain damage, decreased mental health, stigma and disconnection from support.** The numbers in the chart only capture when a paramedic responded to a drug poisoning. The actual number of drug poisoning in our communities with no follow-up is higher.

Learn more

- [BC Coroners Death Review Panel Special Report](#)
- [Select Standing Committee on Health: Island Health response to the toxic drug crisis](#)
- Want to stay informed? Sign up to receive the quarterly harm reduction newsletter by emailing harmreduction@islandhealth.ca

This quarterly update bulletin is shared with all Island Health staff, medical staff and volunteers.

Please contact the toxic drug crisis response team with questions or comments:

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