

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE UPDATE



Happy Holidays!

On behalf of MHSU Executive leadership, we extend our deepest gratitude to all of our staff, physicians, and leaders for their hard work throughout this challenging year. We hope you enjoy this holiday season.

Sincerely,

Keva Glynn, Sheila Leadbetter, and Dr. Wei Song

Nurse Prescribing and Retention Initiatives Underway

Opioid agonist treatment (OAT) is the use of medications that reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms related to the use of opioids. They decrease the risk of drug poisoning and contribute to better health outcomes for people with opioid use disorder (OUD). As part of Island Health’s response to the toxic drug crisis, two [Sprint](#) initiatives are underway that will increase access to OAT:

2. OAT RN/RPN OAT prescribing

The aim for the nurse prescribing project is to train and support RNs and RPNs in community settings to meet the [Public Health Order](#) conditions which permit trained RNs/RPNs to:

- Order and interpret diagnostic tests related to a substance use (SU) condition or disorder;
- Make a diagnosis of a SU condition or disorder;
- Prescribe specific drugs, including controlled substances, to manage the effects of SU disorder; and,
- Refer persons with SU disorder to primary care and specialized health/social services

By training nurses to perform these services, clients will be supported to get the help they need in a timely manner. There are currently two full time RPNs actively prescribing an OAT known as buprenorphine-naloxone within Island Health. Twenty more nurses are in the training pathway. Plans are underway to expand to other OATs—limited methadone and slow release oral morphine.

Both projects are founded on a shared goal of reducing death and injury related to the toxic drug crisis. If you have questions or would like to know more, please reach out to:

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Inside this issue:

1. Strengthening Opioid Agonist Retention (SOAR)

Nurse Prescribing and Retention	1	The aim of SOAR is to support 5-10 clinics regionally to engage in a quality improvement cycle. They will identify and implement small changes aimed at producing high yields in community-based clinics and support increased client retention in OAT , meaning that more people will consistently receive treatment.
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Wellness and Recovery Centres on the Rise



The **Cowichan Valley** Wellness and Recovery Centre (WRC) is marking its 1-year anniversary. This site provides inhalation and injection overdose prevention services and supports. It was the first of its kind on Vancouver Island – bringing together overdose prevention services with inhalation capacity, operated by Lookout Housing and Health Society. These services are co-located with Island Health teams providing care supports for marginalized, underserved people who use substances. These services include primary care, outreach supports, addictions medicine, and referrals to treatment and recovery programs.

A key component of the Cowichan WRC model is its Tablet Injectable Opioid Agonist Program (TiOAT), launched in January 2022 and funded through a Federal Health Canada grant. The TiOAT program had a phased implementation and as of October, the program is at maximum capacity of 25 participants. Work is underway on procedures and guidelines for a Fentanyl patch program.

“The TiOAT program is one component of the continuum of services, supports, therapies, and treatments accessible through the Cowichan Wellness and Recovery Centre,” says Dana Leik, Director, MHSU Central Island. “The importance of this continuum is demonstrated by one of TiOAT’s long-term clients having now opted for treatment and they are reported to be doing well.” Dana also added: “The Centre’s



presence of nursing and allied health supports therapeutic relationships, education, and minor physical care such as wound care. These services have made such a positive impact on people seeking low barrier supports, with the longer-term option that people can access addictions medicine physician or NPs when ready.”

This December, overdose prevention services in **Nanaimo** will improve substantially with the opening of an inhalation service, operated by Canadian Mental Health Association – Mid Island Branch and funded by Island Health. The inhalation overdose prevention service will become part of a Nanaimo WRC in late 2023 when renovations are complete – bringing together injection and inhalation services, Island Health-provided MHSU supports, and treatments and therapies providing alternatives to the toxic drug supply.

Plans for a Victoria WRC are underway as well, with this service expected to open in mid 2023.

Kindness Counts: Landon's Story



Landon Walters is a recent hire to Island Health and the MHSU /Public Health Project Team, joining in October to support the Drug Decriminalization initiative. Below, he shares how his work and colleagues have affected him in the hopes that it serves as a reminder of the importance of kindness this holiday season and throughout the year.

"Being new to Island Health, I had no idea to what degree my work and colleagues would impact my personal life. The matter of the fact is, compassion and empathy does not stop when we clock out but rather is developed within and becomes a part of us. While I always thought I had a respectable moral compass, I tended to stick to my own and stayed out of other people's business. This way of thinking has done a complete 180 since my first day at Island Health 7-weeks ago.

"During the recent snow storms, I ventured into the cold and windy night to pick up my significant other from downtown.

"While waiting for her in the parking lot, I spotted a bundled up individual nestled into a nearby doorway to escape the frigid wind and snow. Rather than "not wanting to get involved," I reflected on a recent team meeting about compassion.

I started to question, "Why? Why is this person out in the cold, why does he have nowhere to go, why is nobody helping him?"

"Even though I didn't know this person's story, I knew that nobody deserves to be left out in the cold. In true Canadian fashion, I picked up a double-double and a pack of Timbits for this individual. While this didn't solve his problems, I do hope it made him realize that somebody cares. He is not invisible and he is not alone. Just like I had a small impact on his night, I would like to thank my colleagues for having a major impact on my life moving forward."



MHSU Sprint Update



The MHSU Sprint is now half-way complete. Solid progress has been made towards each of the goals in the work-streams, thanks to our Operational Leads, Corporate Partners and the Sprint Team. The team is proud to highlight some of the milestones achieved to date and shine a light on what is coming next in the table below:

<p>Increasing Access for MHSU Community Services</p>	<p>⇒ Bridging Care: This enhanced day program has seen 40 patients since March 2022. Plans for expansion are on track to open in mid-January.</p> <p>⇒ Substance Use Treatment: 40 new beds will be available in early 2023, including 10 beds provided by an Indigenous service provider.</p> <p>⇒ Counselling Services: New in-person and virtual counselling services will be available to an anticipated 1500 adults across the Island beginning February 2023.</p>
<p>Accelerating the Toxic Drug Crisis Response</p>	<p>⇒ Overdose Prevention: A new inhalation overdose prevention service opened in Nanaimo December 5, 2022.</p> <p>⇒ Nurse Prescribing: Trained nurses have written the first Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) prescriptions, improving access to OAT.</p> <p>⇒ Initiatives to be implemented January 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a single access line for MHSU services • Enhancing connections with law enforcement • Decriminalizing possession of 2.5 grams or less of certain drugs after Health Canada granted an exemption under the <i>Controlled Drugs and Substances Act</i> to the Province of B.C. Comes into effect Jan 31 2023. • Providing resources to support people who are found with drugs in their possession under the allowable amount, as part of the new government policy.
<p>Improving Access to intensive supports for Child, Youth and Families</p>	<p>⇒ Tier 5 Service Model and Transitional Care Model planning: Two separate working groups have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed a review of the evidence • Consulted with a broad range of stakeholders on the models of care • Provided recommendations to leadership for next steps.
<p>Indigenous Led Priorities</p>	<p>⇒ First Nations Health Caucus: Island Health staff were invited to attend the Caucus and other meetings with community Health Directors.</p> <p>⇒ Relationship Building: Continuing to strengthen connections and relationships with Indigenous Health, FNHA, and Indigenous families.</p> <p>⇒ Treatment: Establishing ten new substance use treatment beds, operated by an Indigenous provider.</p>

Visit the [Intranet page](#) for more details on each work stream and initiative. If you have questions or comments, email Jacqueline MacKinnon, Director – Special Project, MHSU Sprint (Jacqueline.mackinnon@islandhealth.ca)

STRATEGIC CLINICAL NETWORK – QUALITY CLINICAL NETWORK

2023 MHSU Education Opportunities

The Mental Health Substance Use Strategic Clinical Network Education Team is excited to share the following **2023 offerings for SafeTALK, S2H and ASIST training.**

These trainings will be offered in person, following Public Health Orders at sites throughout the region.

Each session is limited to 24 people and empty seats are generally offered to community partners if Island Health staff does not fill them. Registration levels are reviewed 2-4 weeks before the course takes place, after which the seats are shared or the training is cancelled due to lack of interest, so be sure to sign up as soon as you can!

SafeTALK

Register: [SafeTALK - LearningHub \(phsa.ca\)](#)

LivingWorks SafeTALK is a four-hour face-to-face workshop featuring powerful presentations, audiovisuals, and skills practice.

At a LivingWorks SafeTALK workshop, you will learn how to prevent suicide by recognizing signs, engaging someone, and connecting them to an intervention resource for further support.

2023 Offerings:

- ◆ Victoria: January 24 and May 23
- ◆ Nanaimo: March 02 and October 19
- ◆ Comox: April 18 and September 29



Suicide to Hope (S2H)

REGISTER [Suicide to Hope \(S2H\) - LearningHub \(phsa.ca\)](#)

LivingWorks Suicide to Hope (S2H) is a one-day face-to-face workshop for professional helpers. It features powerful audiovisuals, discussions, and simulations.

At LivingWorks suicide to Hope, you will learn new counseling and support tools designed to help people with lingering thoughts of suicide. Modeled on recovery and growth techniques in post-traumatic stress counseling, these tools can integrate into any treatment approach.

2023 Offerings:

- ◆ Comox: January 19

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

REGISTER: [Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\) - LearningHub \(phsa.ca\)](#)

LivingWorks ASIST is a two-day face-to-face workshop featuring powerful audiovisuals, discussions, and simulations.

At a LivingWorks ASIST workshop, you will learn how to prevent suicide by recognizing signs, providing a skilled intervention, and developing a safety plan to keep someone alive.

2023 Offerings:

- ◆ Comox: January 17-18 or April 19-20
- ◆ Victoria: January 25-26, November 14-15, or May 24-25
- ◆ Nanaimo: February 28-March 01 or October 17-18

STRATEGIC CLINICAL NETWORK – QUALITY CLINICAL NETWORK

Accreditation

The following is a list of ideas on how to integrate quality improvement into day-to-day work and operations:

- Schedule regular times to review progress on improvement initiatives and evaluate outcomes. Track activities on shared spreadsheets, Share-Point, or One Drive for easy access.
- Have accreditation as a standing item at meetings and review the standards until all have been assessed and then re-assess.
- Review the survey results and recommendations that apply to your area and track improvement plans in line with the recommendations.
- Review all PSLs reports as part of ongoing learning.
- Practice mock tracer activities in fun, creative ways.
- Stay in the loop with [quality, safety, and standards](#).
- Find quality improvement tools at [Improvement \(island health\)](#)
- Or use other ideas that the team can collaboratively create in order to continue monitoring quality and embedding cycles of learning in day-to-day work.



A number of community MHSU services recently welcomed Accreditation Canada surveyors to showcase their work and ongoing quality improvement. While there was inevitably extra effort to

prepare for the surveyor's visit, there were a few MHSU programs who confirmed they were survey ready any day. Being survey-ready not only aligns with the newly-adopted sequential survey but also distributes quality assurance and improvement activities across more manageable timelines.

Suicide Risk Management Framework

In May of 2022, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions approached each of the Health Authorities with an opportunity to work on their Suicide Risk Management Framework over 18 months within each region, aiming to improve care for those experiencing suicidal ideation.

Island Health has decided to rebuild its existing suicide risk management guidelines to ensure that all people accessing Adult MHSU Services receive standardized suicide risk screening, assessment and safety planning, and a standardized approach to transitions in care by using the most current evidenced based practices. By providing staff with access to the latest clinical practices, education, and resources, people accessing care for suicidal ideation will experience the same approach by teams across the region.

MAINTAINING
SURVEY READINESS

