

# SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITE CLOSURES: WHAT DO RAAM CLINICS NEED TO KNOW?

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## KEY MESSAGES

- The planned closures of many Ontario supervised consumption sites (SCS) will result in a considerable service gap that RAAM clinics have a responsibility to help fill.
- RAAM clinics are not impacted by any directives to halt the distribution of harm reduction supplies, including injection and inhalation supplies.
- RAAM clinics play a critical role in ensuring that clients can access harm reduction supplies.
- Harm reduction is an important way to engage clients in care, whatever their goals are.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF HARM REDUCTION SUPPLIES

- Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) reduce the incidence of HIV and HCV by 10–40% and reduce the sharing of needles and syringes by 50%.<sup>1</sup>
- NSPs are associated with a reduction of injection-related skin, soft tissue, and vascular infections and with greater engagement in treatment for substance use and HCV/HIV.<sup>1</sup>
- The combination of NSP and OAT is more effective at reducing the risk of infection transmission than either intervention alone, making RAAM clinics an ideal setting for distributing needles and syringes.<sup>1</sup>
- Distribution of inhalation equipment is also recommended; equipment for preparing and smoking drugs can also carry traces of blood, posing a risk for transmitting infections.
- Distribution of take-home naloxone kits has been shown to be effective in preventing overdose deaths.<sup>2</sup>

## OBTAINING HARM REDUCTION SUPPLIES

- Only Core Programs/Public Health Units can order supplies through the Ontario Harm Reduction Distribution Program (OHRDP). To request supplies, contact your local [public health unit](#).

## ADDRESSING WOUNDS AND SKIN HEALTH

- Clients may lose access to wound care with the closure of SCS.
- META:PHI's [RAAM Clinic Toolkit](#) offers some guidance on relevant supplies for wound care and skin health.

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<sup>1</sup> Tonin FS, Alves da Costa F, Fernandez-Llimos F. Impact of harm minimization interventions on reducing blood-borne infection transmission and some injecting behaviors among people who inject drugs: an overview and evidence gap mapping. *Addict Sci Clin Pract*. 2024 Feb 4;19(1):9. doi: 10.1186/s13722-024-00439-9. PMID: 38310293; PMCID: PMC10838443.

<sup>2</sup> McDonald R, Strang J. Are take-home naloxone programmes effective? Systematic review utilizing application of the Bradford Hill criteria. *Addiction*. 2016 Jul;111(7):1177-87. doi: 10.1111/add.13326. Epub 2016 Mar 30. PMID: 27028542; PMCID: PMC5071734.

## EDUCATING CLIENTS ON SAFER USE

- Safer use includes adopting techniques to minimize the transmission of infections and reduce the likelihood of overdose.
- OHRDP's [Guide to Using Harm Reduction Supplies](#) is an excellent source of information about safer substance use.
- To reduce the risk of overdose, remind clients not to use alone:
  - Make sure that clients know about all options for supervised consumption in your area.
  - The [National Overdose Response Service](#) provides virtual support for people as they use drugs anywhere in the country.
- Tell clients about other overdose prevention strategies: Start with a test dose, use a smaller amount if you haven't used in a while, don't mix opioids with alcohol or benzodiazepines.
- Make take-home naloxone kits available to...
  - Anyone who uses opioids, including OAT, opioids for chronic pain, and occasional opioid use.
  - Anyone who uses unregulated drugs, including cocaine, crystal meth, and counterfeit pills, as these drugs sometimes contain toxic doses of potent opioids.
  - Family and friends of people who use drugs.
- Ensure clients know that it may take several doses of naloxone to reverse an overdose.
- Tell clients who smoke fentanyl about the risks of sharing their equipment. Smoked fentanyl leaves a residue in the equipment, which could put someone with less tolerance at risk of overdose.<sup>3</sup>
- The most important strategy to prevent infections is to **never re-use or share equipment**.
- Make inhalation and injection kits available to anyone who has recently inhaled or injected drugs, even if it's only occasional.
- Ask clients at each visit if they need supplies and how many they would like.
- Advise clients who inject drugs on preparing their drugs and sterile injection technique to minimize the risk of infections and damage to veins.
- Consider printing resources on safer drug use (as [handouts](#) or as [posters](#)) and ordering [brochures](#).

## OTHER RESOURCES

- OHRDP has information for clients about [harm reduction supply distribution locations](#) across the province.
- [META:PHI](#) holds quarterly town halls for RAAM clinic administrators to gather and discuss current issues (please email [Laurie Smith](#) to be invited). This is a good opportunity for clinics to connect and learn from each other.
- Connect with local harm reduction organizations and [community health centres](#) in your area.

## SUGGESTED HARM REDUCTION SUPPLIES

- Naloxone kits
- Safer injection supplies
- Safer inhalation supplies
- Safer sex products

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<sup>3</sup> Ciccarone D, Holm N, Ondocsin J, Schlosser A, Fessel J, Cowan A, et al. (2024) Innovation and adaptation: The rise of a fentanyl smoking culture in San Francisco. *PLoS ONE* 19(5): e0303403. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0303403>.