

Supervised Consumption Services

What are supervised consumption services?

Supervised consumption services are part of a range of evidence-based services that support prevention, harm reduction and treatment for Albertans living with substance use challenges.

Supervised consumption services provide a place where people can use drugs in a monitored, hygienic environment to reduce harm from substance use while offering additional services such as counselling, social work, and opioid-dependency treatment.

Why provide supervised consumption services?

Supervised consumption services provide a safe environment for people who use drugs, and reduce:

- overdose deaths
- transmission of diseases and infections
- public substance use and discarded needles.

Supervised consumption services are a compassionate, comprehensive, and collaborative form of evidence-based care and provide options when clients are ready for change.

Do supervised consumption services encourage people to experiment with, and use, drugs?

Supervised consumption services are designed for people already dealing with substance use issues.

Will introducing the services attract more people to use?

Supervised consumption services are typically used by long-time drug users, who often are forced to use in public or in unsupervised spaces. Consumption services help keep drug users safe, particularly vulnerable and marginalized chronic substance users in inner cities. It is unlikely that novice drug users will use these services, however, even for this population, using in a monitored environment is safer than using alone.

Will supervised consumption services attract people who sell drugs?

Studies of supervised consumption services have shown that they actually improve public order and have no effect on criminal activity in the vicinity of the services. Supervised consumption services are generally integrated with other programs used by people with and without substance use issues and it is not obvious which service community members are seeking when they enter the facilities. Enforcement related to illicit drugs remains a component of a comprehensive strategy to address substance use issues.

Why aren't we putting more resources into prevention and treatment?

Supervised consumption services are part of a continuum of services that includes awareness, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and addressing organized crime. No single approach is going to solve the whole problem. Supervised consumption services are one important factor in saving lives and keeping communities safe.