

# FAQ – Supervised Consumption Services

August 2022

On February 22, 2022 Alberta Health (AH) informed SCS/OPS operators the grants currently held by AH would transition to Alberta Health Services (AHS) effective April 1, 2022. The following information is to support SCS service providers when discussing or receiving questions from staff, community providers or stakeholders. This document will be updated as required.

## What are supervised consumption services?

Supervised consumption services provide a place where people can use pre-obtained drugs while monitored by staff to lower the risk of harm. Staff respond to people who need immediate medical care and connect people to recovery-oriented services such as substance use treatment.

In Alberta, supervised consumption services include both Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS) and Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS). These services help prevent deaths from drug poisonings, lower harms from substance use, connect people to health and social services for treatment, while supporting people on their journey to recovery.

## What is the difference between supervised consumption sites (SCS) and overdose prevention sites (OPS)?

In Alberta, SCS and OPS both offer supervised consumption services, and must meet all requirements set out in the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* (MHSPA), *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (MHSPR) and the *Recovery Oriented Overdose Prevention Services Guide*.

The only marked difference is that SCS and OPS are exempted differently under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA).

## When were supervised consumption services established?

Alberta opened its first SCS in 2017.

## How many people visited supervised consumption services in Alberta?

In 2021, there were 180,521 visits from 6,554 individuals at SCS/OPS in Alberta. For more information on substance surveillance data including SCS/OPS visits, opioid poisonings and deaths, visit [Substance Use Surveillance Data, Government of Alberta](#).

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## What do supervised consumption services provide?

SCS/OPS provide a place for people to use pre-obtained drugs in a monitored area. In addition to this, SCS/OPS offer access to health and social services, either by providing the service on-site and/or through referral to a service outside of the site. This includes access to healthcare, substance use treatment and supports such as mental health care, housing, and employment. Drug poisoning prevention education and naloxone kits are given to clients, as well as sterile supplies and disposal equipment.

## What ways can people use drugs at an SCS/OPS?

In Alberta, clients accessing SCS/OPS can use pre-obtained drugs by injection, intranasal (snorting), and oral consumption. At this time, no sites in Alberta are licensed to allow inhalation of drugs.

## How many people can access the site at once?

Each SCS/OPS has a maximum number of people that can be in the site, based on the number of booths and waiting room areas. The number of booths that sites are able to operate is outlined on each site's licence. To learn about a specific location, contact [scops.inquiries@ahs.ca](mailto:scops.inquiries@ahs.ca).

## What does a visit to an SCS/OPS look like?

Clients check in with a staff member, and if it is their first visit, some basic information will be collected. Clients are then brought to the consumption area where they can use their pre-obtained drugs through injection, intranasal (snorting), or oral consumption while observed by staff. Sterile supplies and disposal containers are given to use to lower the risk of harm, reducing the risk of infection and spread of communicable diseases. Emergency medical care is available if needed. After they have used their drugs under supervision, clients are offered to move to a post-use area where they can be observed for harmful reactions and connect with staff for support services.

## How are clients being connected to treatment and recovery services?

Supervised consumption services are part of the addiction and mental health services continuum of care. Staff support clients to access other addiction and mental health services to support their treatment and recovery.

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## How are you monitoring the impact(s) of SCS/OPS?

SCS/OPS monitors and tracks client visits and data regularly. Impacts of the sites on outcomes for clients accessing the site, as well as substance use trends will be monitored and submitted to Alberta Health for review.

Service providers submit critical incidents associated with the site operations and services to Alberta Health. Follow-up activities may occur to increase patient, staff and community safety.

## Who is responsible for needle debris surrounding the site?

Each SCS/OPS is responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of their property which includes ensuring that needle debris is properly removed. If you have questions or concerns about needle debris at a specific site, please contact the service provider.

## What do I do if I see someone who might need help?

If you see someone who needs help (e.g., not moving, very drowsy) ask them if they are okay. If someone is unresponsive, call 9-1-1 right away. If you have a naloxone kit, follow the steps provided through your training and in your kit.

## What if I have a concern or was a witness to an incident at a site?

If you have a concern or question about the site, connect with the service provider of that site. Each site is committed to open communication with the community, and to resolving disputes and issues expressed by the public. You can also contact Alberta Health [here](#), to report a concern or complaint.

If it's an emergency, call 9-1-1. For all non-emergency situations where an immediate response is not required (i.e. noise complaints) contact your local non-emergency line or please inform the site.