Supervised Consumption Services FAQ

Overview

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 substances 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.

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 Supervised Consumption Services Standards.

The only marked difference is that SCS and OPS are exempted differently under the Controlled Drug and Substances Act (CDSA). Currently, there are no OPS operating in Alberta.

How many supervised consumption services are established in Alberta?

There are currently three (3) SCS operating within Alberta. For further information on service locations visit: Supervised Consumption Services | Alberta Health Services.

How many Albertans access care at supervised consumption services?

For information on substance use surveillance data including SCS/OPS visits, opioid poisonings and deaths, visit: Substance use surveillance data, Government of Alberta.

What do supervised consumption services provide?

SCS/OPS provide a place for people to use pre-obtained substances 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 for use on-site.

What ways can people use substances at an SCS/OPS?

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

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. To learn about a specific location please reach out to scops.inquiries@recoveryalberta.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 substances 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 substances under supervision, clients are offered to move to a post-use area where they can be observed for harmful reactions and are connected with recovery-oriented services such as withdrawal management and addiction treatment programs.

How are clients being connected to treatment and recovery services?

SCS/OPS 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.

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

SCS/OPS monitors and tracks client visits and data regularly. Impacts of the service on outcomes for clients accessing the site, as well as substance use trends, are provided to the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction (MHA) for service evaluation and quality improvement purposes.

Service providers submit critical incidents associated with the site operations and

services to the MHA, Compliance and Monitoring (CAM) Unit. 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 MHA CAM 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.

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