

# Position Statement



**August 21, 2018**

## **Overdose Prevention and Supervised Consumption Sites (OPS/SCS): A Critical Health Service for People Who Use Drugs**

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### **Our Position**

Sherbourne Health believes that Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) and Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS) are critical life-saving health services.

Alongside related interventions like Naloxone distribution, counselling and harm reduction education, OPS and SCS are an integral component on a continuum of mental health and addictions support. As part of an integrated health system these services preserve life, reduce overdoses and can support positive outcomes for people who use drugs.

Drug overdose is a growing public health crisis within our province. In 2017, there were 1125 opioid-related deaths in Ontario and over 300 deaths from overdose in Toronto alone. People in our community have died of overdose during this crisis. As a healthcare organization situated in the mid-east Toronto neighbourhood, we provide care for clients who use drugs and we see firsthand the impacts of drugs. We strongly believe that services like OPS and SCS are an important and effective response to help mitigate the risks associated with drug use, including communicable disease transmission, overdose and death.

Evidence shows that the establishment of OPS and SCS, when managed by trained individuals, brings a number of benefits. Key advantages include helping to reduce the spread of HIV and hepatitis, improving public safety by reducing public and outdoor injection and the number of precariously discarded needles, and most crucially, decreasing the number of preventable drug overdoses and fatalities<sup>1</sup>.

There is no evidence that OPS and SCS cause harm. It has been shown that SCS do not contribute to an increase in drug use, and in fact, provide an opportunity for people who use drugs to be connected to additional health and social support services within the community. SCS have been found to increase referrals to and the uptake of programs such as detoxification, opiate

substitution therapy<sup>i</sup>, and other addiction treatment and health services for people who use drugs<sup>ii</sup>.

Sherbourne Health is committed to advancing health through equitable access to comprehensive care for underserved communities, and supports the establishment of medical services like OPS and SCS that save peoples' lives.

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<sup>i</sup> Harm reduction in action: Supervised consumption services and overdose prevention sites  
<http://www.catie.ca/en/pif/fall-2018/harm-reduction-action-supervised-consumption-services-and-overdose-prevention-sites>

<sup>ii</sup> Public Health and Public Order Outcomes Associated with Supervised Drug Consumption Facilities: a Systematic Review.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28875422>