

Northern Health has deemed harm reduction services as an essential service during the public health emergency related to the spread of corona virus (COVID-19). The messaging both regionally and provincially is to encourage all community members to practice physical distancing, limit their access to public sites, to perform frequent hand washing and self-isolate wherever possible to stop the spread of COVID-19. Although these messages help to reduce community transmission of the virus, they may also further isolate our most vulnerable populations.

The following key messages and approaches were developed to provide guidance and support for NH staff and staff of community-based organizations who provide services to these above-mentioned populations.

Harm reduction supply distribution:

- Public access to medical facilities and public spaces is limited at this time due to COVID 19, this includes spaces where peers or people who use drugs (PWUD) may access HR supplies in our communities
- In order to continue to provide much needed supplies and connections to health care, staff should message to PWUD any changes to supply accessibility, times available, modes of pick up or if the location is closing
- Sites may request that PWUD call ahead to ensure staff have supplies ready for when they arrive
- Registered sites should continue to order supplies as needed weekly/monthly to avoid stock piling
- Please continue to distribute supplies as usual and note that if there is a specific request for supplies for an individual who requires quarantine or isolation, additional supplies may be provided for the 14-day period.
- If you are awaiting your next order to arrive and are temporarily low on any supplies, connect with the local PHRN or Regional Nursing Lead for Harm Reduction.
- Individuals can also be referred to nearby existing sites in community if your stock is low
- HR supplies can be prepackaged to speed dispensation and minimize exposure
- Encourage and allow individuals to stock up on HR supplies in order to distribute to other peers as well as minimize visits to HR sites. This practice can work to promote broad distribution and support individuals to stay home
- Limit number of clients on-site to maintain social distancing, screen for symptoms at that door
- Please include harm reduction/COVID messaging with all HR supplies to raise awareness and public education

Suggested resource to include in HR pre-packages:

BCCDC: [Harm Reduction, COVID-19 and Overdose Response](#)

Take Home Naloxone Program

- HR sites should continue to encourage THN training through alternative methods whenever possible such as online training modules (<http://www.naloxonetraining.com/>), or via telephone call with a staff member

Outreach Team Guidance

- Outreach distribution can support further distribution of supplies and allow staff to meet people where they are at vs having them access public sites
- Staff need to maintain social distancing and hand hygiene practices
- If two staff members are travelling in a vehicle together it is advised that both wear masks
- Wear masks if handing over supplies to a client or in close proximity
- Screen clients for symptoms over phone where possible, ensure adequate protection if they screen positive
- Use premade HR supply packages for rapid dispensation
- Have clients deposit their own used sharps in container to minimize direct contact
- Remind clients to maintain social distancing verbally or through use of extra signage

Vaccines and COVID-19

Northern Health recommends and encourages that all individuals eligible for COVID-19 vaccination receive their full series.

Vaccine passports **will not** be required to access health care including access to OPS and accessing harm reduction supplies, these services are included in essential services.

For information on where proof of vaccine will be required:

- [Proof of vaccination and the BC Vaccine Card - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/diseases/communicable-diseases/covid-19/vaccines/vaccine-card)

How to get your BC Vaccine Card?

- Visit www.gov.bc.ca/vaccinecard to enter your Personal Health Number, date of birth, and date of vaccinations. You may also access your BC Vaccine Card through the Health Gateway App.

If I do not have access to a smartphone, computer and printer:

- Call the Provincial Vaccine Line: 1-833-838-2323
- Translators are available for other languages.
- You can also call the Provincial Vaccine Line at to have your printed card mailed to you

All NH immunizations clinics available for COVID-19 vaccination can be found here:

- <https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/covid-19-immunization-clinics>

Additional Resources:

NH:

- [COVID-19 information and resources for community partners who work with vulnerable people.](#)

BCCDC:

- [People who use substances \(bccdc.ca\)](#)
- http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_RespondingToOpioidODsInOPS_SCS.pdf
- [New language guide helps to destigmatize COVID-19 \(bccdc.ca\)](#)

BCCSU:

- <https://www.bccsu.ca/resources-substance-use-and-covid-19/>