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## Overdose Prevention Site and Supervised Consumption Services in Red Deer FAQ

### **What are Supervised Consumption Services (SCS)?**

Supervised consumption services provide a place where people can use previously-obtained drugs in a monitored, hygienic environment to reduce harm and overdose death caused by substance use while offering additional services such as counselling, social work, and opioid-dependency treatment. The federal process required for approving Supervised Consumption Services is much more robust than OPS and designed for long-term service provision.

### **What is an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS)?**

Overdose Prevention Sites are temporary health services designated for the purposes of observing people while they are using previously-obtained drugs and monitoring for adverse events, primarily overdose. The Health Minister has been given the ability to extend a provincial exemption to operators in Alberta to allow for timely Overdose Prevention Sites in areas where an urgent public health need exists.

### **What services are offered in Red Deer?**

An OPS, operated by Turning Point and located on the Safe Harbour Society property at 5246 53 Ave., was established on Oct. 1 as a temporary measure.

Turning Point has an application before the City of Red Deer to establish SCS at 5233 54 Ave.

### **Why does Red Deer need OPS or SCS?**

Red Deer has the highest rate per capita in the province for deaths related to fentanyl (a very strong type of opioid). Overdose death is a serious concern and Alberta Health Services, with our partners, is working hard to reduce the harm from substance use.

### **What is harm reduction?**

Harm reduction is about preventing harm rather than complete abstinence, recognizing that stopping use may not be realistic or desirable for everyone. People who use drugs are at risk of harm, which includes infection from the use of unsanitary equipment and overdose death (especially when using in isolation). Harm reduction services, such as overdose prevention sites, supervised consumption services and harm reduction supply programs, reduce the risks associated with drug use. Harm reduction approaches recognize addiction as a chronic disease and the need to look at the underlying root cause of substance use and behaviours associated with it.

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

OPS and SCS are part of a range of services that includes awareness, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and addressing organized crime. No single approach is going to solve the whole problem. Harm reduction initiatives such as OPS and SCS are one way to save lives and keep communities safe. Please see the Red Deer Fact Sheet – Opioids Prevention, Harm Reduction & Treatment at [ahs.ca](http://ahs.ca) for more.

### **What are the roles of partners involved in setting up OPS and SCS?**

Partners including City of Red Deer administration, AHS, the Government of Alberta, Turning Point and Safe Harbour Society have been working together to bring supervised consumption services to Red Deer.

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The Government of Alberta funds OPS and SCS in response to the opioid crisis. In the case of OPS, the Health Minister has been given the ability to extend a provincial exemption to operators in Alberta to allow for timely Overdose Prevention Sites in areas where an urgent public health need exists. With SCS, the Province can assist the operator in applying to the Government of Canada for an exemption for medical purposes under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to operate a site.

Alberta Health Services currently operates SCS in Edmonton and Calgary; however, in Red Deer's case, AHS will be a partner and provide oversight while Turning Point will operate the service.

Turning Point is a community-based agency supporting street-involved populations in health promotion, outreach, prevention and harm reduction. The agency operates the OPS and have applied to operate SCS in Red Deer.

Safe Harbour Society is an agency providing services in the form of shelter, medically supported detox, housing, outreach and Indigenous connections. The temporary OPS is located on the property owned by Safe Harbour Society,