

Attachment 2

New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team

**NEW WESTMINSTER OVERDOSE COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM:
PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

Prepared by New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team

COVID-19 UPDATE

Currently, the work of the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team (NWOCAT) is proceeding on a modified basis due to challenges that have been presented in the face of the COVID19 pandemic. Projects designed to bring people together have been placed on hold in order to reduce risk of infection of the coronavirus. The NWOCAT has also experienced challenges with respect to capacity, as members of the have been redeployed to address the ongoing pandemic. Strategies to continue moving projects forward continue to be explored.

NWOCAT meetings continue to be held on a monthly basis, with one cancelation in April to provide time for adjustment to COVID19 protocols.

The Peer Network and New West Street Degree is currently on hold due to COVID19 restrictions. Strategies to hold peer network meetings virtually have been piloted, and plans to bring small groups together are in development. This will ensure Peer Network members are able to complete the Street Degree program, while also adhering to safe physical distancing protocols.

The Anti-Stigma Campaign - Trades and Business Engagement Initiatives have also been placed on hold as a result of physical distancing protocols. At this time, virtual or digital alternatives are being explored. This may include the development of an online platform to share information tailored to specific target groups, and promote specific programs, including the NWOCAT Peer Mentorship program.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Community Action Initiative (CAI) Stream 1 Funding (November 2018- October 2019)

Asset and Gap Analysis and Strategic Action Plan

An asset and gap analysis was conducted in the first year after the establishment of the NWOCAT in May 2018. Findings from the asset and gap analysis were used to inform

the committee's strategy for reducing the incidence of overdose locally. Through this process, four strategic priorities were identified:

- a) ***Anti-stigma campaign;*** The *Messages of Hope Campaign* was developed in the first year of the project. This included the development and coordination of an exhibitor booth. The committee attended local events throughout the summer to provide information about the impact of the overdose crisis in New Westminster, and invited members of the community to write Messages of Hope on hearts that were later developed into a mural and unveiled on International Overdose Awareness Day. Naloxone training was also provided to community residents. The objective was to promote compassion and a compassionate response to drug use in our community.
- b) ***Peer network and mentorship;*** In the first year of the project, structures and engagement strategies for connecting with people who have been directly impacted by the overdose crisis, either through personal drug use or loss of a loved one, were established. This included weekly group meetings, and a formal membership process. Meetings were used as an opportunity to assess group priorities. The objective is to increase the involvement of peer knowledge and experience in designing overdose response programs and activities, to enhance the capacity of peers interested in leading overdose prevention work, and to reduce internalized stigma relating to drug use.
- c) ***Expansion and coordination of services;*** In the first year of the project, a comprehensive list of overdose response services were identified in New Westminster, and a proposal was put in place to develop a centralized list of supports through the Division of Family Practice Pathways website. Regular updates are circulated through the NWOCAT distribution list, and opportunities to promote service coordination were proposed as part of the peer mentorship program - including the establishment of formal partners with Fraser Health's Mental Health and Substance Use Services, and the local Fire and Police Department.
- d) ***Guiding best practices;*** A need to enhance knowledge, and practical strategies for promoting cultural safety and trauma-informed practice was identified across the NWOCAT committee. Opportunities for capacity building, particularly within the realm of cultural safety was explored in year one. A local program director with varied expertise in substance use and Indigenous practices was invited to develop a training on Cultural Safety as part of a peer capacity building program. Opportunities to bring this training to other community partners continues to be explored. Additionally, formal partners within Fraser Health and the Metis Association provide

ongoing recommendations to enhance cultural safety and trauma informed practice across initiatives developed by the committee.

Community Action Initiative (CAI) Stream 2 Funding (November 2019 - October 2020)

Anti-Stigma Workshop, Trades

[Data reports](#) on the incidence of overdose in BC indicate that men in trades may be at high risk for overdose. A workshop was developed by two overdose public health nurses at Fraser Health, and a person who identified as having lived experience with personal drug use and the trades. Workshop content included relevant statistics on the impact of the overdose crisis; a discussion on language and stigma; a presentation on someone's personal experiences with overdose; understanding how to recognize and respond to overdose; and information on where to access harm reduction and recovery-oriented services. The objective is to reduce fatal and non-fatal drug related overdose through targeted contact-based workshops designed to address stigma within the trades.

Anti-Stigma Campaign, Businesses

Findings from the NWOCAT asset and gap analysis indicated a need, and some willingness to participate in overdose prevention strategies across the local business community. Local businesses were also identified as a key target group for the anti-stigma campaign given their reach in the community. In year two of the committee, a survey was developed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the overdose crisis across the business community, and to identify strategies that will be most effective for engaging this target group. A web platform is currently in the process of being developed that will include relevant training, a list of local resources, as well as promote the peer mentorship program as a potential resource for connecting folks to services. The objective of this initiative is to enhance overdose response capacity and coordination across New Westminster, and reduce stigma at the social level.

Peer Network

As noted above, a peer network was established in order to promote empowerment-based peer-led overdose prevention initiatives that fit the needs of the people who may be at risk for overdose in New Westminster. One of the key outcomes of the CAT Peer Network is to support standalone peer-led initiatives. In the second year after the establishment of the peer network, the following projects were developed:

- ***Digital Inclusion:*** Through ongoing peer group meetings, a need to increase access to communications and technology was identified. This will allow peers to better communicate with one another, as well as access information online. This gap in digital connectivity became further apparent after the onset of the COVID19 pandemic. The objective of the digital inclusion initiative is to reduce barriers to

technology, and increase access to information and resources among marginalized and/or vulnerably-housed individuals by establishing a low barrier tech cafe.

- ***Overdose Memorial:*** Peers attending the weekly peer group showed interest in leading a public art project in order to raise awareness about the local impact of the overdose crisis across New Westminster, and in doing so, contribute to ongoing stigma reduction efforts relating to substance use. It is also a strategy for honouring the many lives that have been lost to a contaminated drug supply, and where memorials may not always be held.
- ***Street Degree:*** Peers attending the weekly peer group showed interest in receiving ongoing overdose response training. Referrals were frequently made to the Street Degree program located in Vancouver. A request for training with fewer transportation barriers led to a proposal for a Street Degree program in New Westminster to promote ongoing capacity building and peer-based overdose response.
- ***Community Advocacy:*** Weekly peer group meetings serve as a platform for ongoing advocacy. Members of the group are encouraged to identify gaps in the community with respect to overdose response, and social determinants of health - and are supported to bring these concerns to the attention of the larger CAT committee, as well as to City Council.

Vancouver Foundation, Three Year Test Grant (January 2020 - December 2022)

Peer Mentorship Program (Project ALLIES)

The Overdose Emergency Response Centre has identified peer empowerment and employment as one of eight essential services for overdose prevention in BC. The main objective of the peer mentorship program is to reduce fatal and non-fatal accidental overdose by creating avenues for social connection, linking to essential services, building partnerships in the community, and addressing stigma at the self, social, and structural levels. To date, structures and processes have been developed to support the development of the peer mentorship program. Four peers were recruited on a part-time basis to conduct an environmental scan. Information collected through this process will be used to inform the peer mentorship program moving forward. Ongoing strategies to build relationships with local partners, and the business community will be developed for the purpose of ongoing coordination of services, and stigma reduction.

Policy Toolkit

Based on key learnings obtained through the establishment of the peer mentorship program, structures and recommendations will be developed to support the implementation of policies that promote best practices and enhance quality of care to

service recipients. A toolkit will be developed and made accessible to local organizations, and across communities as part of a commitment to enhancing trauma informed and cultural safe peer-based programming.