

Emergence of Drug Checking Services (DCS) in Canada: *Implementing a Multi-Site DCS Network in Toronto, Ontario for a Marginalized Population of People Who Use Drugs*

Setting Up A New Drug Checking Service II Panel

reduse2018 - International Multidisciplinary Conference on
“New Aspects and Developments in Recreational Drug Use”


Thursday, September 13, 2018

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Background: A National Public Health Crisis



 **Travis Lupick** ✓
@tlupick [Follow](#)

Latest fatal overdose numbers for BC: 134 dead in July, 7th highest ever. In 2012 (just before [#fentanyl](#) arrived), average fatal ODs/ month: 22.8. Since Nov 2016 (carfentanil arrived), average dead/ month: 125.2.
[#bcpoli](#) [#OpioidEpidemic](#)
[#OverdoseAwarenessDay](#)
[#OverdoseAware2018](#)

 **Joe Cressy** ✓
@joe_cressy [Follow](#)

More than 1000 Ontarians died from opioid related causes in 2017 - a nearly 50% increase over 2016. Despite best efforts and shifts in harm reduction policy, this health emergency is getting worse.



Opioid deaths in Canada expected to hit 4,000 by end of 2017

Increased presence of fentanyl blamed for 'very toxic drug supply'

The Canadian Press Posted: Dec 18, 2017 9:37 PM ET | Last Updated: Dec 19, 2017 12:28 PM ET

Drug Checking Services (DCS) in Canada



The screenshot shows the Government of Canada website. At the top, there is a header with the Canadian flag, the text 'Government of Canada' and 'Gouvernement du Canada', and a search bar labeled 'Search Canada.ca'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'Jobs', 'Immigration', 'Travel', 'Business', 'Benefits', 'Health', 'Taxes', and 'More services'. The 'Health' link is highlighted. Below the navigation menu, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home → Health Canada'. The main content area features a headline: 'New federal initiatives to address the opioid crisis'. Below this is a section titled 'Backgrounder' with a sub-header 'From Health Canada'. The text states: 'The increasing number of opioid-related overdose deaths is a national public health crisis. The impact of the crisis continues to be devastating to individuals, families and communities. As part of the federal government's efforts to address the opioid crisis, the Government of Canada has announced new activities under the following key areas:'. This is followed by a section titled 'Supporting innovative approaches to address the opioids crisis' which contains a bulleted list of two points.

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

Search Canada.ca

Jobs Immigration Travel Business Benefits Health Taxes More services

Home → Health Canada

New federal initiatives to address the opioid crisis

Backgrounder

From [Health Canada](#)


The increasing number of opioid-related overdose deaths is a national public health crisis. The impact of the crisis continues to be devastating to individuals, families and communities.

As part of the federal government's efforts to address the opioid crisis, the Government of Canada has announced new activities under the following key areas:

Supporting innovative approaches to address the opioids crisis

- Health Canada will authorize drug checking services at supervised consumption sites. These changes will ultimately help those who use drugs to make choices once they understand what is in their drugs and help lower the number of overdose deaths related to opioids.
- In addition, through [Substance Use and Addictions Program \(SUAP\)](#), the government will fund pilot projects to provide drug checking service at supervised consumption sites. This will include an evaluation on this innovative approach to harm reduction. Should the pilot projects prove to be successful, they could be expanded to other provinces.

DCS in Canada



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Comparing Models of Drug Checking Services in Canada

Models of drug checking services (DCS) in Canada differ in important ways, including targeted subpopulations of people who use drugs (who can access the service and when) and the technology used for analysis of samples (which impacts how long it takes to receive results and what information is available from the analysis). This resource aims to provide an overview of select DCS in Canada that are harmonizing research protocols and approaches for the purpose of ensuring nationwide comparability of collected evidence.

	British Columbia			Ontario		
	Regional Health Authorities	Vancouver and Surrey (BCCSU)	Nelson (ANKORS, in partnership with BCCSU)	Regional Health Authorities	Ottawa (SHCHC)	Toronto (CDPE)
Location	All SIS and OPS in BC	Two SIS, and select music festivals and events	One community organization, and select music festivals and events	SIS and OPS in Ontario	One CHC offering SIS	Three frontline harm reduction agencies (including CHCs) offering SIS
Access Restrictions	OPS/SIS clients	None	None	None	SIS clients only at point of injection	None
Status	Operating	Operating	Operating	Operating	Operating	Forthcoming
On-Site Technique	Fentanyl test strips	Combination method: FTIR spectrometer and fentanyl test strips	Combination method: FTIR spectrometer, fentanyl test strips, and reagent tests	Fentanyl test strips	Mobile mass spectrometer (portable ion scanner)	N/A
Turnaround Time	>5 minutes	5 minutes	5 minutes	>5 minutes	20 seconds	N/A
Information Available	Presence / absence of fentanyl only	Most qualitative, limited quantitative	Most qualitative, limited quantitative	Presence / absence of fentanyl only	Some qualitative	N/A
Offsite Technique	N/A	qNMR, LC-MS, and GC-MS	N/A	N/A	N/A	GC-MS and LC-MS
Turnaround Time	N/A	7 days, expected to decrease to 4 days	N/A	N/A	N/A	Approximately 2 hours
Information Available	N/A	All qualitative and quantitative	N/A	N/A	N/A	All qualitative and quantitative

- DCS in Canada predominantly serve a different subpopulation of people who use drugs (PWUD) than most DCS in Europe
- European DCS reached previously inaccessible PWUD; Canadian DCS integrated into harm reduction services, including supervised injection sites (SIS)
- Within Canada, DCS models differ in important ways (e.g., targeted subpopulations of PWUD, technology used for analysis)

**Anonymous and free
drug checking services
are coming to
Toronto!**

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**Drugs sometimes don't contain the
substances you think. With overdoses on
the rise, there's no better time to get your
drugs checked.**

Beginning in 2019, analysis of drug samples will be available at three nonjudgmental harm reduction agencies in downtown Toronto:

Parkdale Queen West
Community Health Centre
Queen West Site
168 Bathurst Street
(Bathurst and Queen)

The Works
at Toronto Public Health
277 Victoria Street
(Yonge and Dundas)

South Riverdale
Community Health Centre
955 Queen Street East
(Pape and Queen)

Within a few hours of providing a small amount of your drug to be checked, you will receive information on what's in it and how strong it is, along with tailored harm reduction tips. This will allow you to make informed choices about your drug use and avoid toxic substances.

Learn more:

www.cdpe.org

[centreondrugpolicyevaluation](https://www.facebook.com/centreondrugpolicyevaluation)

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Toronto DCS Partners

Frontline Harm Reduction Agencies

Hospital Laboratories



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camh
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

St. Michael's



Toronto DCS Partners



Government



Community



Sandy Hill
Community Health Centre

Centre de santé
communautaire Côte-de-Sable

Research



Public
Health
Ontario

Santé
publique
Ontario



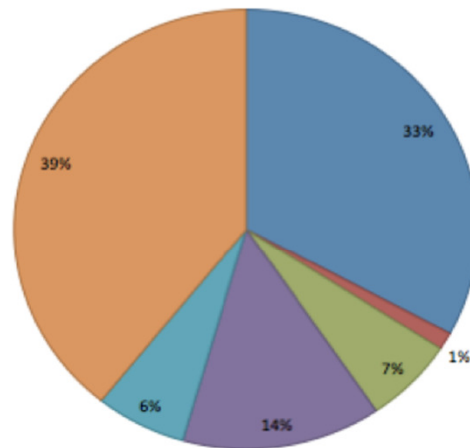
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Feasibility Survey Results

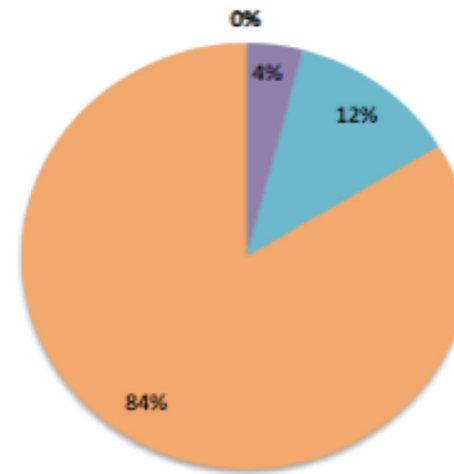
Injection Frequency

Q2: Do you inject drugs?

Frontline Harm Reduction Agency Respondents; n=79



Online Respondents (*Trip!* Project); n=49



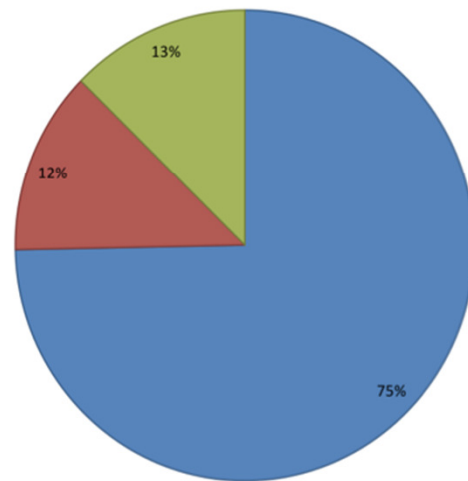
- Yes, multiple times a day
- Yes, 4-7 times a week
- Yes 1-3 times a week
- Yes, a few times a month
- Yes, less than once a month or very occasionally
- No

Feasibility Survey Results

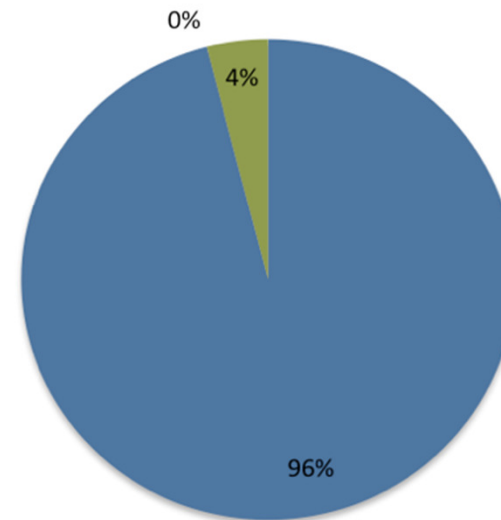
Interest in Using Drug Checking Services

Q3: Would you be interested in using the described drug checking service?

Frontline Harm Reduction Agency Respondents; n=79



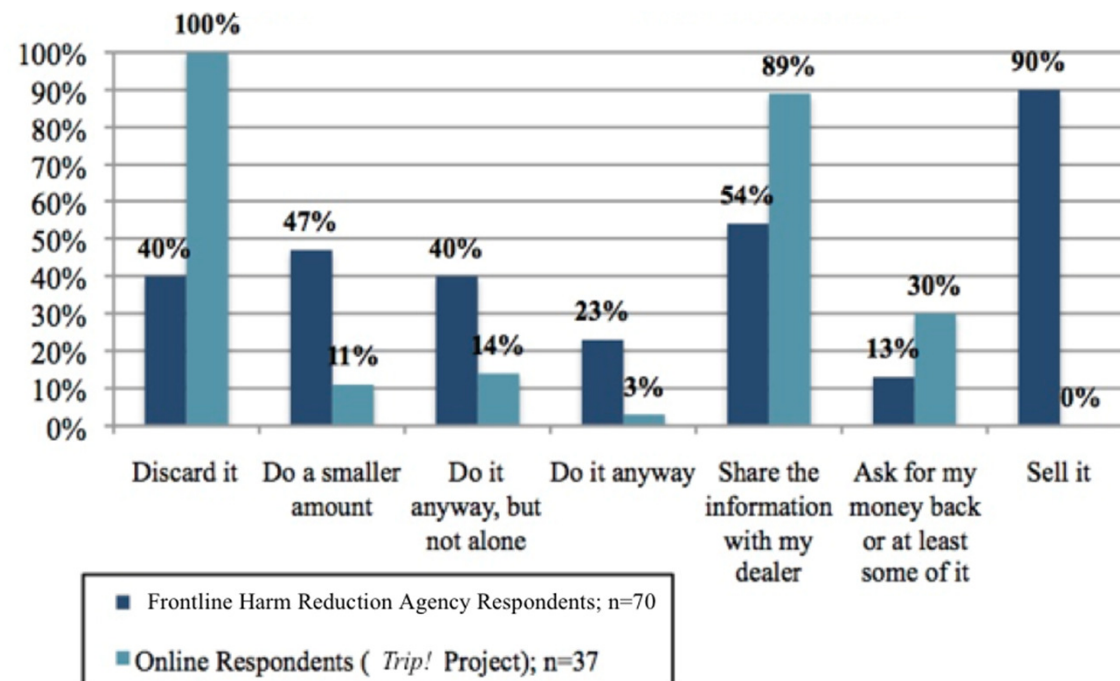
Online Respondents (*Trip!* Project); n=49



Feasibility Survey Results

Anticipated Behaviours in Response to High-Potency Opioids

Q7: If high-potency opioids (fentanyl, carfentanil) were detected, what would you do?

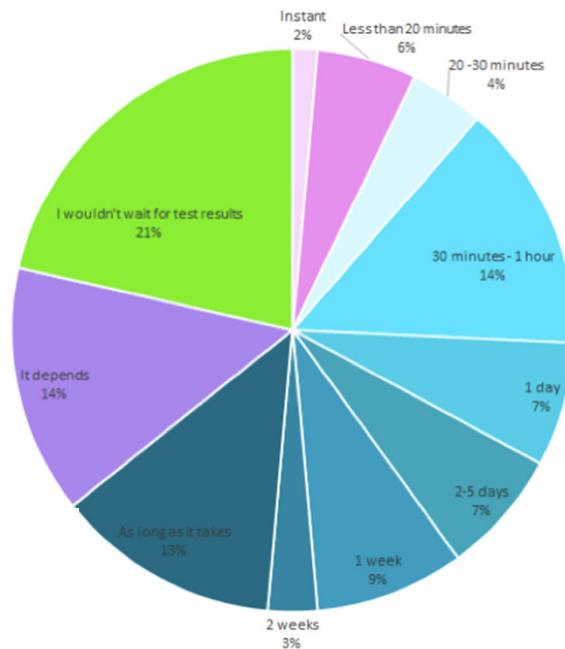


Feasibility Survey Results

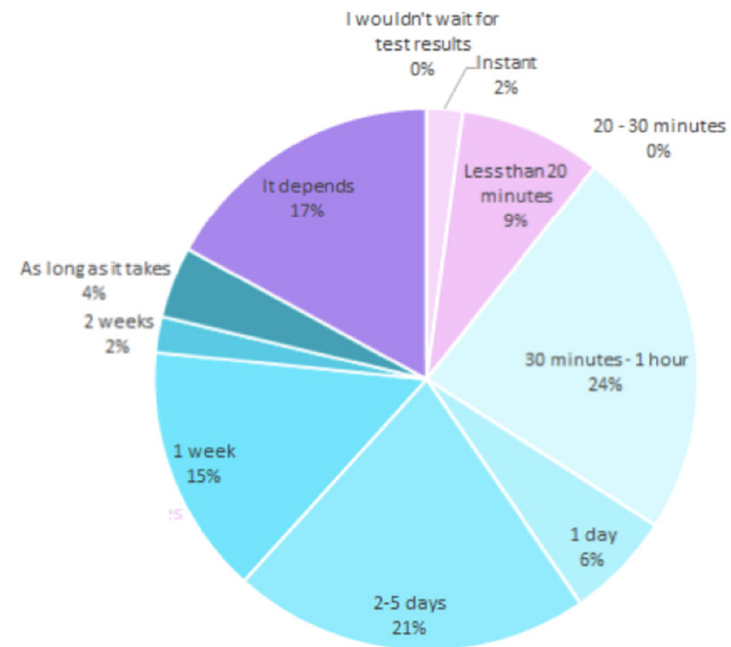
Willingness to Wait for Drug Checking Results

Q8: What is the longest you would wait to receive drug checking results?

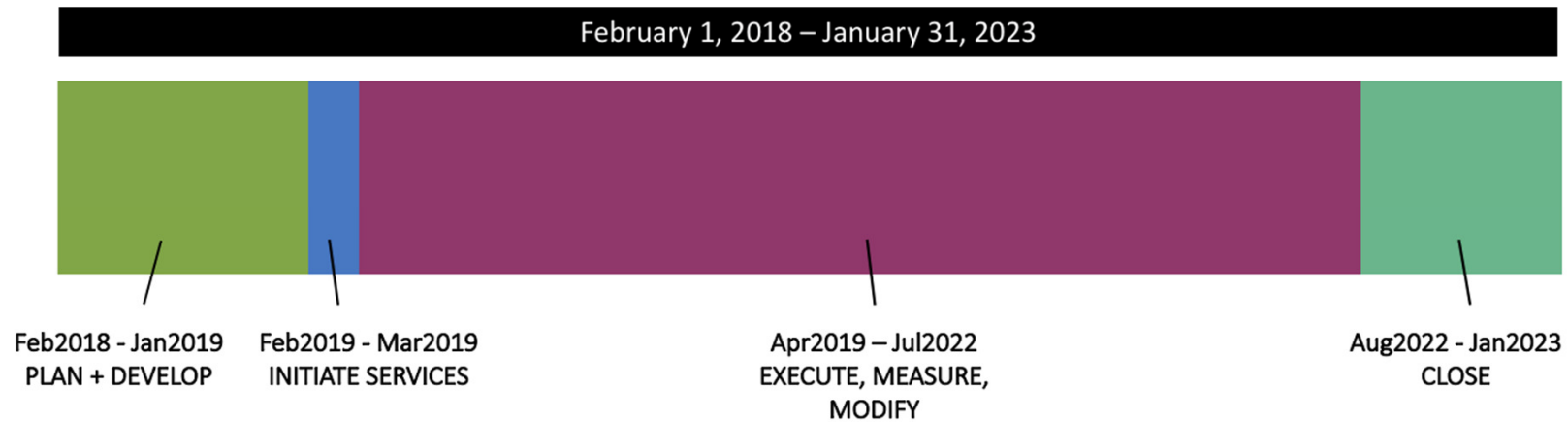
Frontline Harm Reduction Agency Respondents; n=70



Online Respondents (Trip! Project); n=47



Timeline and Next Steps



Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

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