
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2024PSFS0041-001424
Sept. 3, 2024

Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

B.C. taking action to prevent overdoses, make students safer on campus

VICTORIA – The Province is moving forward with new guidelines to protect students and reduce the risks and harms of toxic-drug poisonings.

“Our post-secondary campuses should be a safe space for students, staff and faculty,” said Lisa Beare, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. “That’s why the Province has worked with the post-secondary sector to create new guidelines for toxic-drug overdose awareness and response for institutions to use to keep students, staff and faculty safe on campus.”

B.C.’s Post-Secondary Overdose Prevention and Response Steering Committee was formed in May 2024 after being convened by Beare. The committee has developed overdose prevention and response guidelines to support public post-secondary institutions implementing strategies to protect students and reduce the risks and harms of the toxic-drug crisis.

“The toxic-drug crisis continues to have a devastating impact on families and communities in B.C., and the impact on students has been heartbreaking,” said Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “Poisoned drugs have become incredibly toxic and more people than ever before are at risk of dying. We’re taking action to make sure students have the tools and knowledge they need to keep themselves and their peers safe in an emergency.”

The steering committee has released guidelines for the public sector to help keep students safe.

These guidelines include promoting awareness of overdose prevention and treatment services available on campus or in the community, the Lifeguard and Brave apps, take-home naloxone kits and drug-checking services, and ensuring students know they can call first responders for help without fear of academic repercussions.

Other guidelines will help improve overdose-response protocols and procedures, such as clear training recommendations for campus security, other campus staff and faculty.

To see the full guidelines for post-secondary institutions, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/emergency-support>

The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, in partnership with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, and the Ministry of Health, is distributing nasal naloxone to all B.C.’s public post-secondary institutions, as well as First Nations Mandated Institutes.

These supplies will be located in student residences, social venues such as bars and restaurants,

and other areas on campus.

The steering committee will continue to meet during the school year to continue its work. Further guidelines are being developed to supporting training and communications related to addressing the toxic-drug crisis.

Quick Facts:

- Take-home naloxone kits are available at more than 2,320 locations, including 911 pharmacies in B.C.
- Since 2015, more than 2.4 million take-home naloxone kits have been shipped.
- As of June 2024, 161,854 take-home naloxone kits have been reported being used to reverse a drug poisoning.

Learn More:

For more information about Overdose Prevention and Response, visit:

<https://www.respondtooverdose.gov.bc.ca>

To find out more about where naloxone is available in B.C., visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/overdose/naloxone-kit>

A backgrounder follows.

Contact:

Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and
Future Skills
Media Relations
604 209-7629

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BACKGROUND

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What people are saying about new guidelines to make post-secondary campuses safer

Evan Hilchey, associate vice-president, administration, Camosun College –

“We know addiction is in our community and Camosun College is committed to creating a kind, compassionate and caring campus culture. The new guidelines will help reduce and protect students, faculty, staff and campus visitors from the harms of toxic-drug poisonings. One of the big changes on each of the college’s campus will be the introduction of 12 cabinets in central locations later in the semester with nasal naloxone kits supported by additional training on how to administer naloxone.”

Cindy Heitman, president, College of New Caledonia –

“This document will provide us with important guidance as we review our processes and educate the college community. It is vital to support the health and well-being of students and provide safe places for them to succeed. We are all dedicated to reviewing our processes, implementing change and working across our institutions to make overdose prevention and harm reduction top priorities.”

Neil Fassina, president, Okanagan College –

“As we welcome learners back to campus and are excited to be supporting them in their programs and courses, we are at the same time committed to doing everything we can to ensure our whole community is safe and has access to help when they need it. Okanagan College is opening new student housing in Vernon and Kelowna this fall – having naloxone cabinets, automated external defibrillators and enhanced first-aid protocols in those buildings and throughout our campuses, along with expanded training, awareness campaigns and other health and wellness resources – these are all critical components of collective efforts to prevent deaths and combat the toxic-drug crisis in this province.”

Brett Fairbairn, president and vice-chancellor, Thompson Rivers University (TRU) –

“As a contributor to B.C.’s Post-Secondary Overdose Prevention and Response Steering Committee, TRU remains steadfast in its commitment to campus safety. The new guidelines are a valuable extension of our existing efforts, including naloxone training and availability. By aligning with these guidelines, we will enhance our proactive measures and support systems for students, faculty and staff, and reinforce our dedication to fostering a safe and resilient campus environment.”

Joy Johnson, president and vice-chancellor, Simon Fraser University –

“SFU has taken an active role in working with government to help our community deal with the

effects of the overdose crisis and is pleased to see these additional measures are now in place. The provincial steering committee's recommendations will enhance overdose prevention, and ensure a greater number of our faculty, staff, students and other campus users in B.C. have access to the tools and training needed to save lives."

Cole Reinbold, secretary-treasurer, BC Federation of Students –

"The BC Federation of Students commends the government for acting on the urgent need to raise awareness of how the toxic-drug crisis impacts campus communities. The federation and student unions across the province look forward to working with institutions to increase naloxone availability, protecting student safety and ensure that the rollout and continued development of these guidelines are successful."

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