

## **Ontario Moving Quickly to Expand Life-Saving Overdose Prevention Programs**

*Latest Data Shows Opioid-Related Deaths Continue to Increase*

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Ontario is expanding access to addiction and harm reduction services across the province, as the latest data shows that opioid-related deaths continue to rise.

There were 1,053 opioid-related deaths in Ontario from January to October 2017, compared with 694 during the same time period in 2016 -- this represents a 52 per cent increase. From January to December 2017, there were 7,658 emergency department visits related to opioid overdoses, compared with 4,453 during the same time period in 2016 -- this represents a 72 per cent increase.

To help combat the crisis, more than 85 mental health and addiction providers across the province are enhancing treatment services and supports for opioid use disorder. Twelve of these providers are supporting targeted supports for youth. Over 20 providers are investing in withdrawal management services in Ontario. More than 30 communities will also benefit from new or expanded Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinics. In addition, up to 40 providers are hiring new front-line health and social service workers to provide counselling, case management and other supports.

Since the new overdose prevention site program began in January, four sites have been approved, with the first site now open in London, Ontario. Supervised injection services, which offer referrals and access to primary care, social services and addiction and mental health treatment, also continue to be expanded. Both services provide easy-to-access lifesaving supports in a stigma-free environment as well as harm reduction supports.

Other initiatives rolling out as part of Ontario's Strategy to Prevent Opioid Addiction and Overdose include:

- Releasing, in collaboration with Health Quality Ontario, three new opioid-related quality standards that are based on evidence and developed with clinical experts and people with lived experience. These standards outline the improved prescribing of opioids for [short-term acute](#) and [long-term chronic pain](#), and how to identify and provide the best care for people with an [opioid use disorder](#).
- Making easy-to-use nasal spray naloxone kits available for free at participating pharmacies, giving people the choice between nasal spray or the injectable kits that have already been available.

- Expanding public education to ensure people have information on how to access free naloxone and how it can be used to temporarily reverse an opioid overdose, including providing pharmacies with [posters](#) and [brochures](#) with information about prescription opioids, how to use them safely and potential risks.

## QUOTES

" These numbers are a stark reminder of why we are putting so much effort into addressing the opioid crisis on all fronts. We are working to save lives, both now and in the long-term, and to help all people in Ontario affected by this tragedy."

- Dr. Helena Jaczek

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

" As we learn more about the opioid crisis, we continue to enhance our response. By monitoring the data, we are able to modify our strategy and put our resources where they will help the most people across the province."

- Dr. David Williams

Chief Medical Officer of Health

" By improving data collection methods, we have a clearer picture of the reality of the opioid problem in Ontario. It is our hope that the new information will inform evidence-based decisions, resulting in better and more targeted programs to help all people affected by the dangerous use of opioids. "

- Dr. Dirk Huyer

Chief Coroner for Ontario

## QUICK FACTS

- Ontario has approved nearly \$7 million in funding for seven supervised injection services. Five of these sites (three in Toronto and two in Ottawa) opened between August 2017 and February 2018. The province continues to accept applications.
- Overdose prevention sites provide core harm reduction supports and services such as supervised injection and access to harm reduction supplies and naloxone.
- On February 12, 2018, the first Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) opened in London, Ontario. The province continues to [accept applications](#).
- Health Quality Ontario and the Council of Academic Hospitals are helping to support the provincial rollout of the Rapid Access Addiction Medicine model, with funding from the province.
- Over the next three years, Ontario is investing more than \$222 million to combat the opioid crisis in Ontario, including expanding harm reduction services, hiring more front-line staff and improving access to addictions supports across the province.

## LEARN MORE

- [Where to Get Naloxone Kits and How to Use Them](#)
- [Ontario's Strategy to Prevent Opioid Addiction and Overdose](#)

- [How to Apply for an Overdose Prevention Site](#)
- [Interactive Opioid Tool](#)

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