

Harm Reduction

destigmatizing drug use

HOPE

HELP

SUPPORT

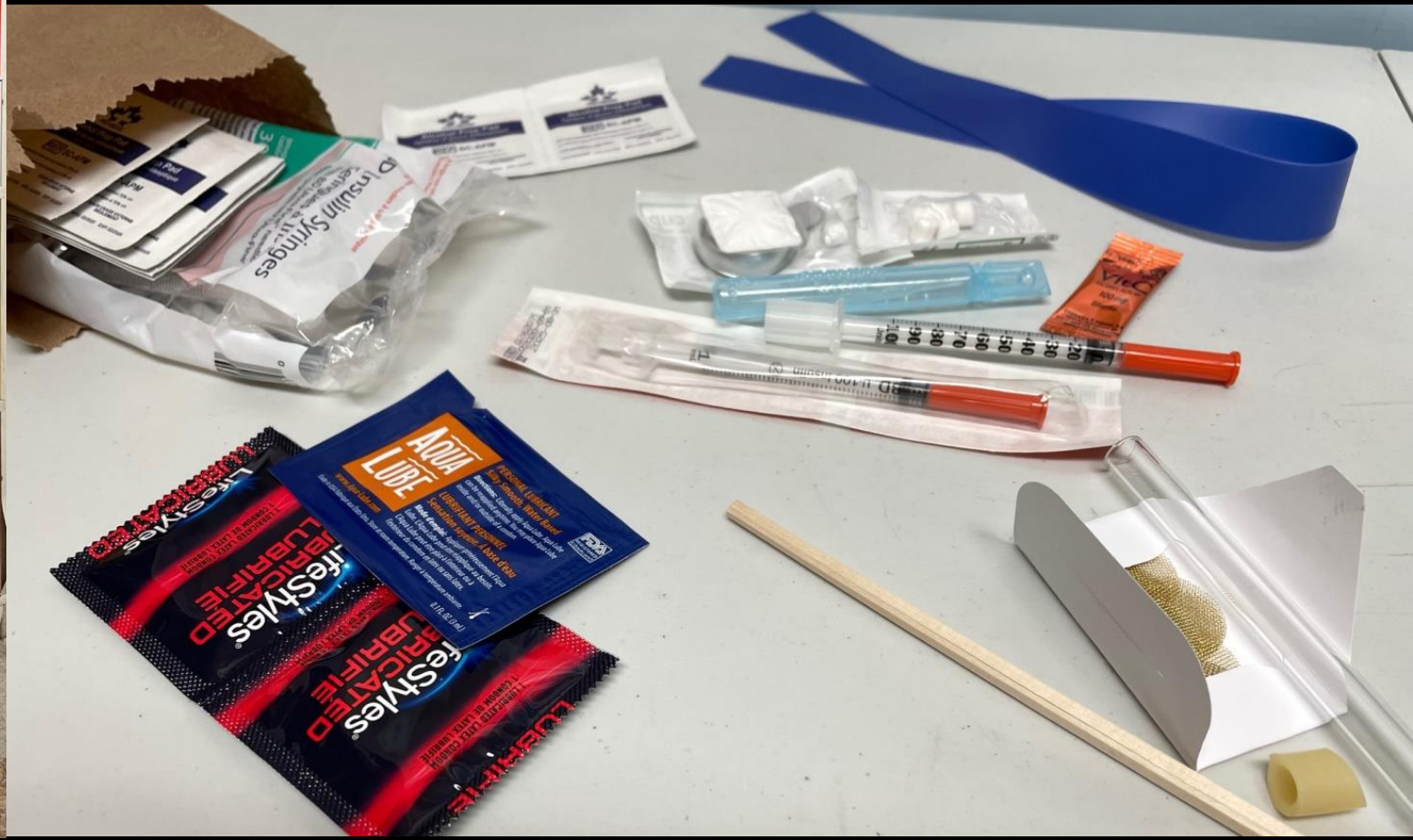


About Mainline





Supporting safer drug use & safer sex





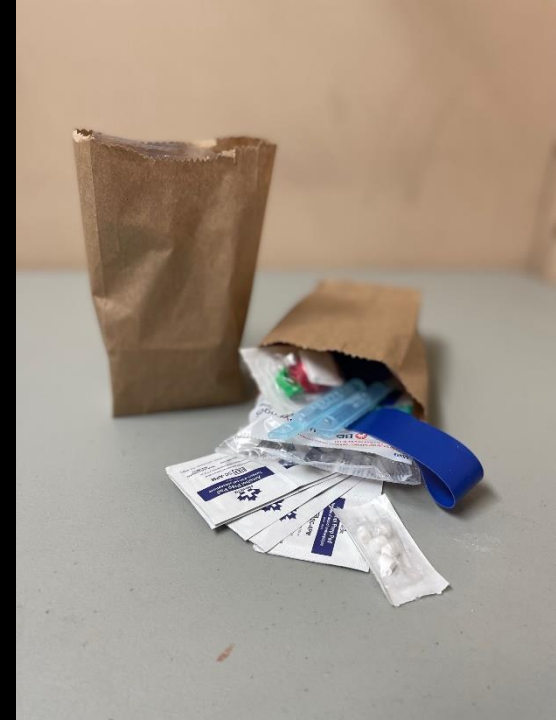
Supporting
safe disposal





Meeting people where they are at

- Main site
- Central outreach HRM
- Provincial outreach - Western
- PEERs walkabout
- Court outreach
- MOSH outreach
- Brown bag program



Other supports and advocacy

- HIV and hepatitis C testing days
- Referrals to health care (D180, MOSH)
- In-reach to hospitals
- Court outreach, legal advocacy
- Financial advocacy, tax filing



Meaningful engagement

Building opportunities and roles for peers throughout organization

- Staff have lived experience
- Peer outreach
- Day to day small tasks – needle search, shoveling snow, unloading deliveries
- Research & policy projects



How do you talk about addiction?



What is Harm Reduction?

UNDERLYING CONCEPTS:

- All substances have both positive and negative effects
- People use drugs, for many reasons
- Most people who use substances do not experience problems, but for some, use can become dependent and/or chaotic
- Reducing/stopping substance use should not be required in order to receive respect or services

HARM REDUCTION:

- Keeps people alive and encourages positive change in their lives
- Reduces harms to wider community
- Offers alternatives to abstinence-based approaches
- Grants people more control over their lives and their health
- Acknowledges people are experts in their own needs
- Meets people where they are at without judgement
- Aims to reduce the harms of stigma, drug laws and policy





Dilaudid



Crack Cocaine

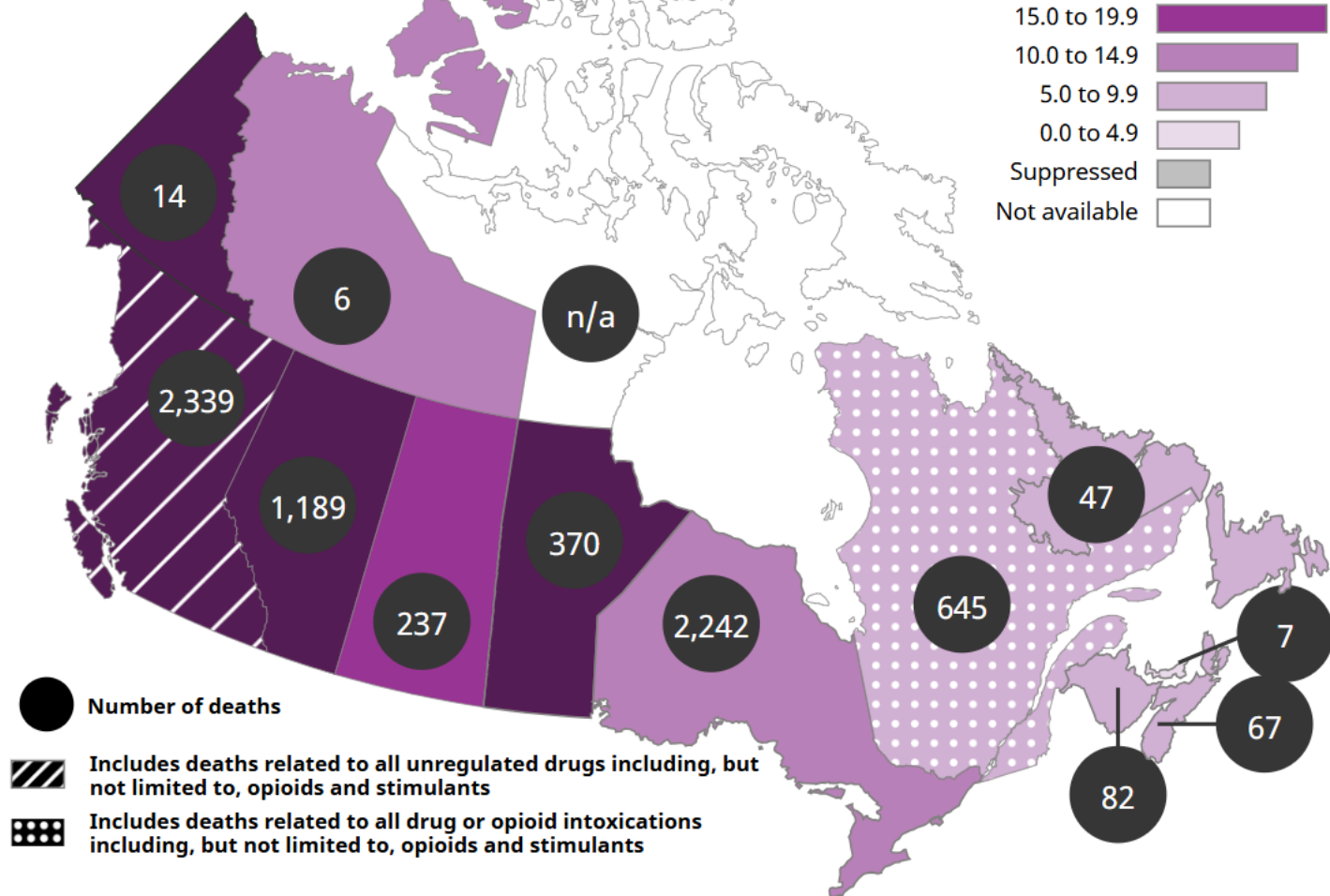
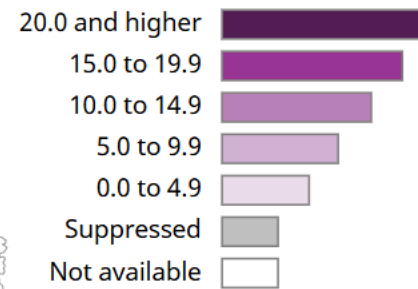


Valium

Up until the pandemic, the drug supply in Halifax was mostly prescription opioids, benzos, cocaine; some other party drugs e.g., MDMA (Ecstasy/Molly), psychedelics like LSD and "magic mushrooms" (psilocybin). Because of this our overdose rates have been lower than most provinces.

Canada 7,245

Crude rate per 100,000 population



Number and
rate per 100k
population of
apparent opioid
toxicity deaths,
2024

IRON LAW OF PROHIBITION

THE HARDER THE ENFORCEMENT THE HARDER THE DRUGS

INCREASING LAW
ENFORCEMENT



INCREASING COST
OF ILLEGALITY



INCREASING POTENCY
OF DRUG



Need to Avoid Detection
(Less weight & Volume, Easier to Hide,
Store & Transport)

Beer and Wine



Sprits



Moonshine

Cannabis



High THC Cannabis



Synthetic Cannabinoids

Coca Leaf/Tea



Powder Cocaine



Crack Cocaine

Opium



Heroin



Fentanyl/Carfentanyl

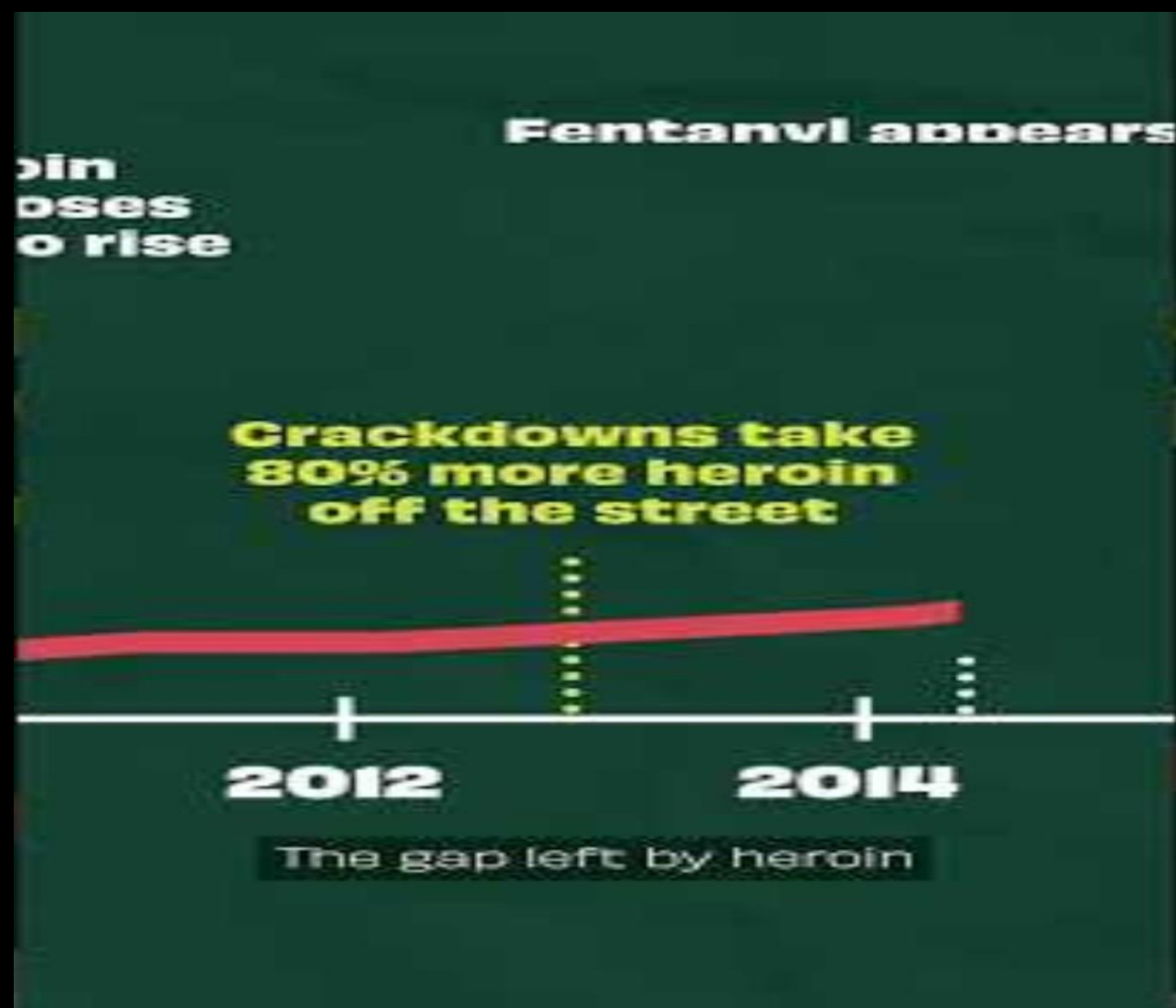
Ephedra



Amphetamine

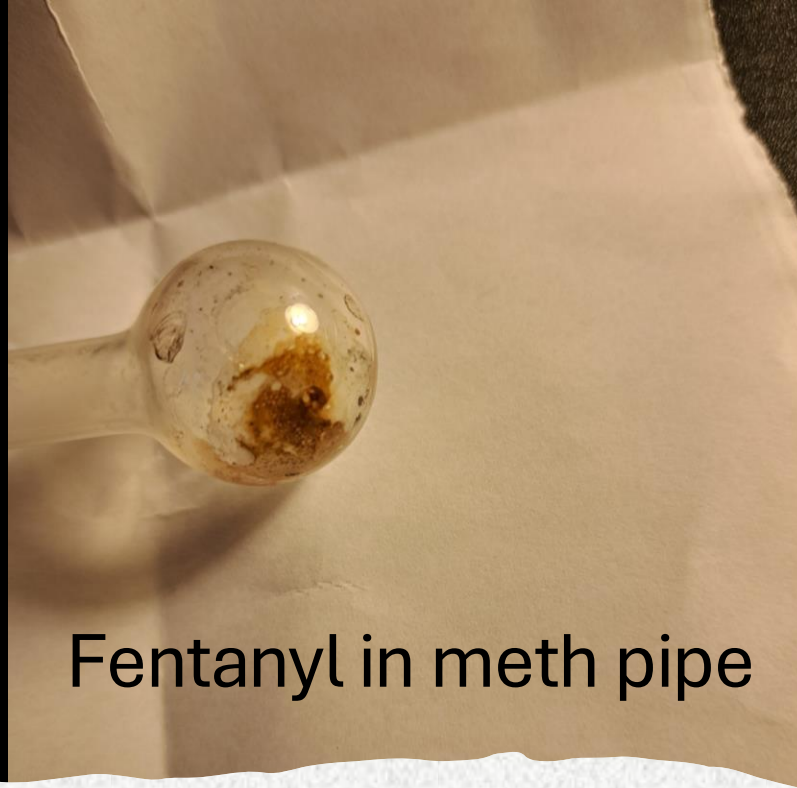


Ice/Methamphetamine





Green Fentanyl



Fentanyl in meth pipe



Pink Fentanyl

Street fentanyl or "Down" is often dyed with food coloring to prevent mixing it up with other street drugs.

Many drugs are white powders and could easily be mistaken for each other. For example, the photo of the fentanyl in that pipe could easily be mistaken for meth

Other things that may be added into Illicit drugs

- Benzodiazepines and novel benzodiazepines
- Fentanyl and novel fentanyl analogues
- Xylazine
- Nitazenes
- Medetomidine
- Pig dewormer
- Caffeine
- Baby laxatives
- Etc.



Xylazine
aka Tranq



Background

- Xylazine is a veterinary tranquilizer not approved for human use.
- Street drug supplies in the U.S., especially those being sold as fentanyl and/or 'dope,' are increasingly cut with xylazine.
- Xylazine is a central nervous system (CNS) depressant – a downer – but not an opioid.

Overdose



The only way to know if your drug supply has xylazine in it is to test it. If your drugs are cut with xylazine, you are at a higher risk of overdosing. Have naloxone (Narcan) available! Narcan works against the opioids (such as fentanyl) that might be causing the overdose, even though it doesn't work on xylazine.

Wounds



For reasons that aren't yet fully understood, people using xylazine are at higher risk of developing wounds, regardless of the route of drug use (snorting, injecting, boofing, smoking). Wounds also might appear at sites other than where drugs are injected. Seek treatment for wounds – the earlier the better – because wound care can help them heal.

Strategies

- If you use drugs, use a small amount of your supply before taking a full dose
- Have Narcan available
- Keep your phone charged
- Avoid using alone
(**Never Use Alone Hotline: 800-484-3731**)
- Talk to people you know about what they're seeing in their supply

If you have concerns about what's in your drugs, you can get up-to-date information about the drug supply and ways to reduce harm from Public Health's syringe service programs ([King County Needle Exchange - King County](#)).

Drug Trends

Xylazine is in many of the drug supplies on the East Coast. As of June 2023, Washington State has seen sporadic cases of xylazine in street drug supplies. For updates on drug trends, [sign up for text/email alerts](#) or scan the QR code.



Public Health
Seattle & King County



Testing options

- **Test strips** are the easiest way to test your drugs at home, however they are not super accurate
- **Mass spectrometry** is a lot more accurate than test strips however this option can be hard for many drug users to access.
- **Mailing in a sample** to www.getyourdrugstested.com or other services can give you a much better idea of what is in your drugs. However you end up losing the sample you send in



DRUG ANALYSIS RESULT



DATE & LOCATION:

April 17, 2024 Vancouver BC

SOLD AS: Down

RESULT: Erythritol 30-35%, Caffeine 25-30%, Fentanyl 20-25%, Uncertain Match 10-15%

FENTANYL: Positive **BENZODIAZEPINE:** Positive

NOTES: A down sample is a mix of an opioid, a sugar or carbohydrate, and some caffeine. This sample also tested positive for benzodiazepine. Around 30% of down samples in the Vancouver region contain benzos. This can increase the risks of a complex overdose.

DRUG ALERT



09/26/21

Vancouver, BC



Sold as: Fentanyl

Results: Fentanyl (65-70%), Xylazine (15-20%),
Uncertain Match (10-15%)

Notes: This sample unexpectedly contained xylazine, which is a sedative used by vets and is not approved for human use. The combination of fentanyl and xylazine can increase the risk of an overdose.

NS Drug Alert System

- Submissions from community members or organizations
- Sent out as email alerts
- To subscribe: send an email to NSDrugAlert@nshealth.ca.

Drug Harms Alert – Community Report, Fake Pills containing powerful opioid



Drug Alert<NSdrugalert@nshealth.ca>

😊 ↩ Reply

Hello,

You are receiving this message as a part of Nova Scotia's Drug Harms Alert distribution list. We received details.

This report came from a community source regarding (repeat drug name/contaminant or reaction)

Location/community of where the drug was used	Dartmouth
Date and time when the drug was used	Wed Sept 24th
Name(s) of the drug (i.e. what was assumed to be used)	Dilaudid 8 mg tablet
Description of the drug and its packaging	Heart shaped – each pill had differently misaligned bisect and incorrect imprints of “APO”
How the drug was used	Insufflation (snorting)
Observed reaction of the drug used	Paranoia, unexpectedly strong for that dose and drug type.
Test-strip results (if used)	Negative for xylazine, not tested with fentanyl strip or other types of test strips

No photo of the drug was available.

- **Please share through your communication networks** (e.g. posters in your service locations, community media postings, etc.).
- **Please also include the following harm reduction messages:**

Counterfeit Pharmaceutical Pills are in Nova Scotia

- Counterfeit pills (fake or ‘pressed pills’) are potentially harmful to anyone who takes them because they are not what they are supposed to be. They may contain dangerous substances that can cause harm or even death.

Why make services more
accessible for people who
use drugs?



Morty will share his perspectives on accessing health care, housing and shelter services as a person who use(d) drugs:

- What brought you to these services?
- What was your experience?
- What barriers did you face?
- What made it harder to stay there?

Increasing need for services

- Housing crisis and drug toxicity crisis – across Canada and locally
- Injection drug use and associated hospital admissions are increasingly common in Canada.
- Hospitals and shelters are responding to e.g., overdose/drug toxicity, medical complications, patients without a primary care provider
- Hospitals and shelters are critical touchpoints for people who use drugs (Lennox et al., 2021; McNeil et al., 2014).

Impacts of stigma and inadequate services

- People cannot meet requirements to access shelter
- People avoid accessing shelters due to stigma, policies, previous bad experiences
- Unsheltered/unhoused people are in danger – violence, exploitation, weather
- Accelerated aging, poor health outcomes among homeless individuals
- Increasing burden on public spaces and infrastructure
- More visible homelessness -> negative sentiments from general public

Below is a video about experiences of PWUD in hospitals

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATUpklvz3kE> Video by EQUIP Healthcare

Reframing assumptions

It is not realistic to expect all clients/patients to stop drug use when they come into hospital or shelter

For many, that expectation is detrimental to their relationship with staff

Abstinence-only shelters are helpful for people who are seeking a sober space – opting in

Safety concerns – can be addressed

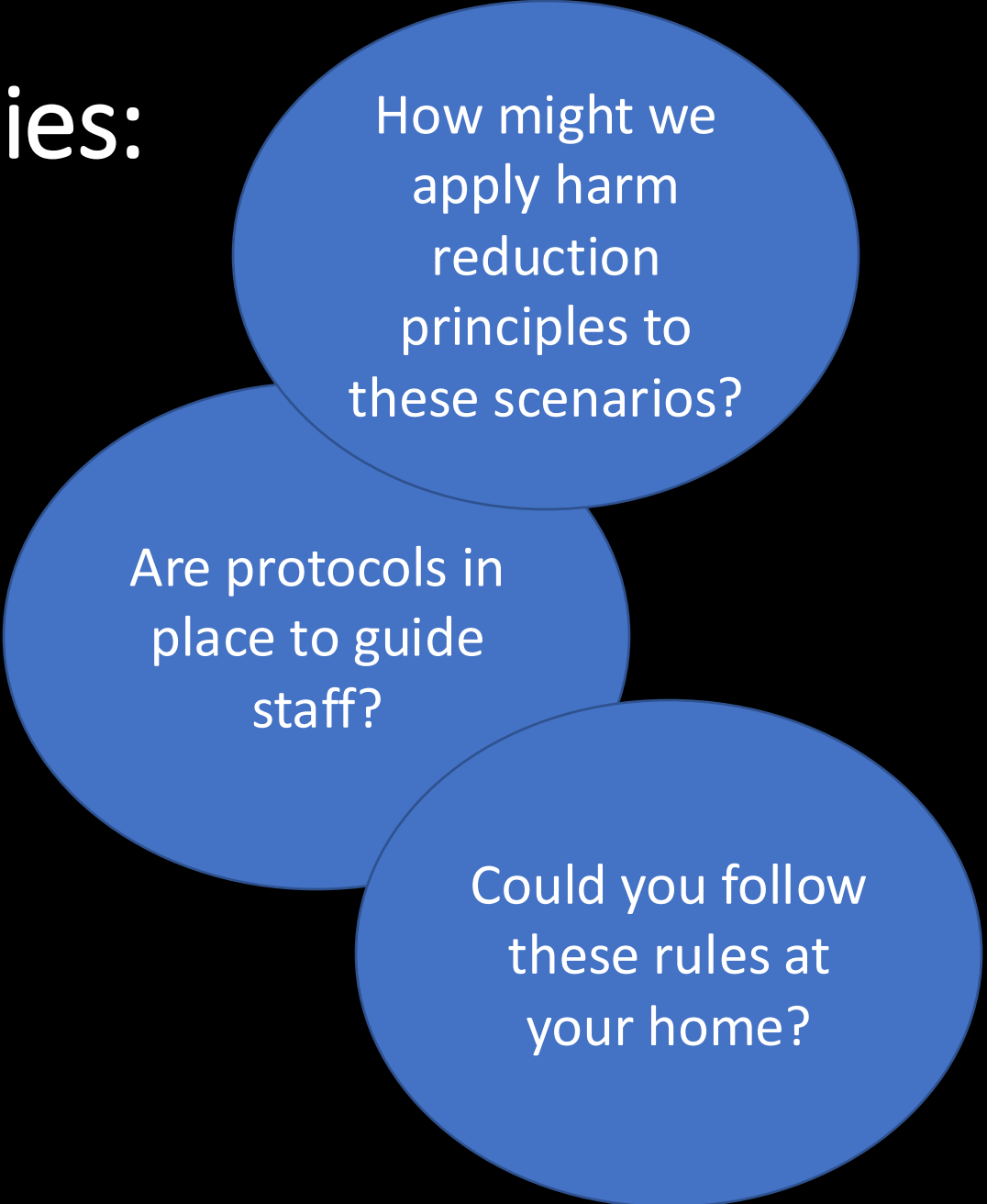
Addiction is a chronic health condition and should be addressed as such

Using and relapse are primary symptoms of substance use disorder

Many harms of drug use are caused or exacerbated by restrictive policies and the need to hide drug use

Examine practices and policies:

- Programs that require abstinence
- Sharps safety
- Search/seizure of client belongings
- Provision of harm reduction supplies
- Time away, curfew, holding beds
- Staff with lived experience, peer support
- Other?



How might we
apply harm
reduction
principles to
these scenarios?

Are protocols in
place to guide
staff?

Could you follow
these rules at
your home?

Draw on resources to help/advise

- Invite collaboration with community partners (MOSH, Mainline, Direction 180, etc.)
- Collaborate/explore what other orgs are doing
- Meaningfully engage PWUD in decision-making and programming
- Listen to clients' stories, preferences, goals



Youtube channels with info on safer drug use

Provincial health services authority PHSA (BC)

ANKORS

Apothicom

CATIE

Guidance for injecting tablet medications by Provincial Health Authority



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh6eTS9q4bA>

