



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# Opioid Use Disorder Care

## Opioid use disorder

Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) involves the repeated use of opioids such as heroin and fentanyl, which can cause significant impairment or harm. OUD is one of several factors contributing to the toxic drug crisis, a crisis that is disproportionately affecting First Nations people. There is a spectrum of care options available for people with OUD, depending on where they are on their healing journeys. The Four Directions team at the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) can support First Nations communities in providing a range of OUD care.

## Opioid Agonist Therapy

Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) is a safe and effective treatment option for people living with OUD. It involves the use of medications to provide a safe, steady and low level of opioid to help people feel well and reduce cravings for other opioids. It has been proven to save lives and reduce harms related to OUD. Because OAT medications are regulated and not all prescribers prescribe them, First Nations people in rural or remote communities often face barriers to accessing OAT. The Four Directions team can provide support by connecting with prescribers and pharmacies to facilitate community access.

## Nurse Prescribing

In 2020, Registered Nurses (RNs) and Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) in BC were given the authority to prescribe certain forms of OAT to provide increased access to prescribers and to culturally safe care. The Four Directions team can support the education pathway and training of nurses working in rural, remote and urban First Nations communities who are interested in becoming nurse prescribers.

## Prescribed Safer Supply

One of the primary drivers of the toxic drug crisis is the unpredictability of the unregulated drug supply i.e., street drugs. Prescribed Safer Supply (PSS) is a range of regulated, predictable, pharmaceutical grade alternatives provided by health professionals to people who are at risk of drug toxicity or other drug-related harms. The Four Directions team can help connect communities with prescribers and pharmacies to facilitate access.

## Harm Reduction and Naloxone

Harm reduction is an evidence-based approach that helps people stay safe while using drugs. The Four Directions team offers a Harm Reduction Hub ([harmreduction@fnha.ca](mailto:harmreduction@fnha.ca)) that provides a range of services including community and staff education, and support with ordering and distributing harm reduction supplies (e.g., naloxone, which is used to reverse opioid overdose). The Four Directions team also provides Not Just Naloxone training ([njn@fnha.ca](mailto:njn@fnha.ca)), which covers topics like Decolonizing Substance Use, History of Racism and Prohibition, and Indigenous Harm Reduction. Graduates of the program are eligible to apply for a Kickstarter Fund to share their knowledge in their own communities.

For more information, please contact [4directions@fnha.ca](mailto:4directions@fnha.ca)