



NORTHREACH

GOOD NEIGHBOUR COMMITMENT

-for-

Northreach Society's

Licensed Mobile Supervised Consumption Service

Northreach Society April 2024

ABOUT NORTHREACH SOCIETY

Northreach Society (Northreach) has supported individuals living in Alberta's North for over 30 years. We are a not-for-profit AIDS service organization based in Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray. We promote awareness, initiate prevention, and provide care and support throughout the northern region of the province.

Northreach prides itself on being a Harm Reduction based agency. Harm Reduction is a public health philosophy which aims to reduce the negative impact of a behaviour, either on an individual and/or population basis. It involves an honest, open, non-judgmental approach to social issues while meeting people "where they are at". This is realized through education, intervention, and support.

Our mission is addressing the *Social Determinants of Health* through innovation, collaboration, education, support, and harm reduction.

Our vision is a safe and inclusive world, free of discrimination.

Our idea is to provide wraparound supports addressing risks related to sexually transmitted and blood borne infections, and to respond to identified community needs. We aim to build a respectful, comprehensive, and dignified network of support for *all populations*.

(Northreach Society, 2024)

MOBILE SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SERVICE

Background

In the summer of 2017, Northreach Society (formerly HIV North Society) conducted the Alberta Drug Use and Health Survey as part of an opioid crisis response needs assessment. 200 residents of Grande Prairie participated in the survey, each person disclosing information related to their substance (drug) consumption, housing situation, access or use of addiction treatment or health services, and their knowledge of supervised consumption services (SCS). The results from the survey along with local community data, was presented to municipal and provincial stakeholders. A supervised consumption service was proposed, and a feasibility study was conducted.

At the end of that year, 2017, Grande Prairie had the highest opioid fatality rate in Alberta (Government of Alberta, 2018).

After the development phase and having obtained an exemption from Health Canada, Northreach Society's Mobile Supervised Consumption Service began providing services on March 11, 2019. In September 2021, the Northreach Mobile SCS received its license to operate under newly introduced provincial legislation which established requirements for SCS programs across the province.

SCS Services

The SCS is a mobile health facility wherein individuals may access basic health services and referrals to community and recovery-oriented supports. Nurse and paramedic staff supervise consumption activities and respond to medical emergencies inside the SCS and surrounding areas, preventing calls to emergency services.

During the first 3 years (2019-2022), 429 unique individuals accessed the service 26,494 times. 2230 referrals were provided to external health and social services, including 131 referrals to detox, 73 referrals to addiction treatment and 217 referrals to Opioid Dependency Programs. SCS staff responded to 372 adverse events (367 overdose events, 5 other) preventing 348 calls to EMS.

NORTHREACH SOCIETY'S COMMITMENT

Northreach values the ongoing support we receive from agencies, businesses, and residents of Grande Prairie. To ensure continuing support, Northreach has made the following commitments:

- Maintaining provincial licensure and providing services in accordance with provincial and federal regulations;
- Addressing and mitigating concerns through yearly meetings with stakeholders and engagement with law enforcement and emergency response teams;
- Decreasing nuisance factors by performing routine garbage clean up and disposal, discouraging loitering and arranging for client washroom access in nearby facilities;
- Ensuring safety in the vicinity of the site by contracting security personnel and through live video monitoring outside, as well as recorded monitoring inside, the SCS;
- Addressing concerns related to needle debris by conducting daily and routine clean up in the vicinity of the SCS, providing needle disposal boxes, and employing one full time staff member dedicated to needle debris.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

General complaints and concerns related to the SCS can be made through the survey found on the Northreach SCS website at northreach.ca/scs-2/. Alternatively, complaints and concerns can be emailed to scs.info@northreach.ca. This is the preferred method for complaints where follow-up is requested.

Complaints may be managed directly and immediately through internal policies and actions or through consultations with the Northreach Society Board of Directors and external stakeholders.

Northreach is committed to reviewing all complaints and concerns; however, follow-up will only occur when a complaint is actionable, more information is required, and the complainant has requested follow-up and provided their contact information.

CONSUMPTION DEBRIS COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

Northreach is committed to addressing discarded needles and consumption supplies by providing needle debris recovery services and ensuring clients and residents of Grande Prairie have appropriate collection and disposal options.

To demonstrate our commitments, Northreach operates the discarded needle reporting service hotline with staff members dedicated to needle debris recovery throughout the city. Locations frequently identified to have debris, or “hot spots” are checked routinely. For needle collection and disposal options, Northreach provides 15 needle disposal boxes in locations throughout Grande Prairie and clients are offered biohazard bins which can be returned to Northreach for proper disposal. Our programs also provide a variety of community education services including safer needle pick up and disposal.

Complementing Northreach Society’s debris collection and disposal services, the SCS program offers biohazard bins for safe disposal and a bin is located on the outside of the mobile SCS vehicle. To address discarded needles and debris within the vicinity of the SCS, staff conduct needle and debris recovery twice a day and will collect any consumption debris they encounter during their duties. Once a week, staff conduct a search of the high pedestrian traffic area, indicated in the second picture below.

To learn more about Northreach’s needle disposal services click [Needle Disposal](#) or to learn more information on methods for safer needle pickup [click here](#).

Daily consumption debris search and recovery area



Weekly consumption debris search and recovery area



LEGAL STATUS OF COMMITMENT

Specific terms within this document are legislated requirements of SCS's within Alberta and Northreach Society is committed to adhering to all legislation; however, this document itself is not a legally binding contract. Commitments contained herein are subject to change pending provincial or federal regulation amendments. Northreach reserves the right to modify this document as per legislation or Society direction.

References

Government of Alberta (2018). *Opioids and substances of misuse - alberta.ca*. Retrieved January 8, 2023, from <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/1cfed7da-2690-42e7-97e9-da175d36f3d5/resource/78ceedbd-ddc9-4a33-834b-8668a3ad5b31/download/Opioids-Substances-Misuse-Report-2017-Q4.pdf>

Northreach Society (2024). *Northreach Society - Harm Reduction & HIV Support - Grande Prairie, AB*. Retrieved January 8, 2023, from: <https://northreach.ca/>