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Interior Health amalgamates primary care, mental health and substance use services

KELOWNA — Interior Health has amalgamated pre-existing mental health, substance use, and primary care services under one roof.

Over the past year, Interior Health has been working with stakeholders, clients and neighbours, to coordinate merging the Outreach Urban Health primary care clinic with the pre-existing mental health and substance use services in Kelowna.

“Bringing mental health and substance use supports under one roof is more important than ever before,” says Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “As our government continues to bridge the gaps in life-saving services, more people are accessing the vital supports they need, close to home.”

The space will provide increased opportunities for collaboration, enhanced convenience for patients, improved care continuity and additional privacy, safety and security.

“We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has helped bring this project together,” said Interior Health president and CEO Susan Brown. “With the community’s support, we were able to find a larger space for the Outreach Urban Health primary care clinic and bring these formerly disbursed services together.”

Kelowna resident Devon says today’s announcement is welcome news. The 30-year-old regularly accesses supervised consumption service, one of the programs moving this spring. In his view, it just makes sense. “Having a one-stop shop for these services will really help.”

“These are really important services. I can speak from personal experience. Overdoses are getting more and more complicated with the toxicity of the drug supply. This is the only place I feel safe,” says Devon.

The relocated space builds on Outreach Urban Health’s longstanding success and will retain that clinic’s name. It will begin opening this week with a phased approach. Clients and patients have been contacted directly about changes in service and location and they are being supported to ensure a smooth transition.

Mental health and substance use services for people throughout the Interior continue to develop. [Integrated Treatment Teams](#) are working throughout IH to embed multidisciplinary outreach to people who need flexible support that works for them. New [treatment beds](#) are coming this spring to serve youth experiencing substance use issues; access to Opioid Agonist Treatment is expanding, with the [first cohort of Interior Health’s nurse prescribers](#) for Suboxone having just completed training; and access to community mental health services has improved with the launch of the [310-MHSU phone number](#).

About the teams that are moving:

- **Outreach Urban Health Primary Care Clinic:** Is a primary care centre providing team-based care as well as harm reduction, mental health and substance use counselling services, social work supports, wound care and more, in a supportive setting designed to meet the specific

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health needs of a marginalized and urban-based population. Currently located at 455 Leon Ave., the clinic provides multidisciplinary primary care services and outreach services for vulnerable people.

- **Injectable Opioid Agonist Therapy (iOAT):** Is an evidence-based, high intensity treatment for individuals with opioid use disorder that have not benefited from oral medications. Injectable medications are provided in a clinic setting, reducing risk of overdose and other health and social harms associated with injection drug use, and engaging individuals in clinical support and care. It is currently located in the Community Health Services Centre. Open daily, including holidays.
- **Supervised Consumption Services:** First launched in 2017 in Kelowna, supervised consumption services provide supportive, hygienic environments where people can use drugs more safely. Staff provide support including supplies, teaching on safer use, overdose response, and build relationships and connect clients to other health system supports such as nursing care and mental health and substance use services. Currently, a mobile service based in an RV travels between Rutland and downtown Kelowna locations. Open daily, including holidays.
- **Assertive Community Treatment (ACT):** Provides flexible, individualized support – including community living, psychosocial supports and recovery – for adults with serious, complex and often persistent mental health challenges that make it difficult to manage day-to-day activities.
- **Community Response Team:** A mobile service that provides daily mental health support to community members with significant mental health and substance use concerns, on an outreach basis.
- **Police and Crisis Team:** a mobile service in which RCMP and an Interior Health clinician work together responding to mental health and substance use-related calls in the community.

For more information regarding mental health and substance use and primary care programs within Interior Health visit www.interiorhealth.ca.