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## Interior Health expands innovative substance use treatment

IH-wide – A unique new option is now available for people seeking substance use treatment as Interior Health launches five new Integrated Treatment Teams.

“Stigma drives people to use alone and that isolation has been disastrous with the overdose crisis and the pandemic combined,” said Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “Embedding these new multidisciplinary teams in communities will provide a clear path for people to access the health care they need and to be seen with dignity, compassion, and respect.”

The five Interior Health teams are based throughout the southern Interior in the Penticton, West Kelowna, Kamloops, Cranbrook, and the Enderby / Salmon Arm areas.

“Everyone’s experience of addiction is unique, and their path to wellness is unique, as well,” said Susan Brown, Interior Health president and CEO. “That’s why at the foundation of Integrated Treatment Teams is the ability to meet people’s individual needs on their schedule, and to work with them towards their own personalized treatment goals.”

Members of these new substance use treatment teams have been hired and trained over the winter and are now ready to start seeing clients.

The model is designed to be as flexible as possible to accommodate people who have been unable to attend traditional inpatient or outpatient treatment programs in the past due to work schedules, lack of transportation, child-care demands, or other reasons.

“This is a brand new team and a new approach,” said Lindsay Coughlin, a member of the Integrated Treatment Team for West Kelowna. “We provide more flexible, discreet treatment options for those who haven’t reached out before, including clients at risk of overdose or those who have significant substance use issues.”

“Often, when people think about addiction treatment they immediately think about inpatient facility-based treatment or ‘rehab’. However, evidence shows that accessing treatment in a community setting can have excellent outcomes. We offer substance use counselling and treatment online that is self-paced, something we haven’t offered before, and really supports people with work schedules and other responsibilities,” added Coughlin.

Mental health and substance use services for people throughout the Interior continue to develop. New [treatment beds](#) are coming this spring to serve youth throughout the region who are 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](#).

### Quick facts:

- The confidential, discreet nature of Integrated Treatment Teams is intended to reduce feelings of shame and blame people may experience around substance use.

- Research shows stigma is a major barrier preventing people who use drugs from seeking treatment.
- In addition to traditional approaches Integrated Treatment Team members use virtual treatment platforms, such as videoconferencing, phone and e-mail to provide flexible, evidence-based substance use treatment.
- Access to services is based on the client's needs and goals which may include: counselling and other psychosocial treatments; medication (such as opioid agonist treatment like methadone and Suboxone, or those used to treat alcohol use disorder like Naltrexone); overdose prevention and harm reduction services and supports, and access to support from Peers (people with personal experience with substance use who have formal training to provide Peer support.)

For more information about Integrated Treatment Teams and other mental health and substance use services within Interior Health, visit [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca).

*Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 801,000 people living across B.C.'s vast interior. For more information, visit [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca), follow us on Twitter [@Interior\\_Health](https://twitter.com/Interior_Health), Instagram [@interiorhealthbc](https://www.instagram.com/interiorhealthbc) or like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/interiorhealth.ca](https://www.facebook.com/interiorhealth.ca).*

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