

UPHNS HUB Video Call Minutes

October 27, 2020

Topic:

UPHNS in Hotel Isolation Sites on Vancouver Island

Presenters:

AVI Health and Community Services - Corey (Clinical Nurse Lead) and Kim (Manager of Harm Reduction Services)

Presentation:

- Prior to establishing UPHNS in hotel locations related to COVID isolation, AVI was supporting an encampment at Topaz Park where there were initially 20 tents. At its peak there were 225 tents, and it was described as feeling like “an open-air prison”.
- Staff got worried about cheque week in April 2020. There were 30 overdoses.
- Did what we could to talk to individuals and build relationships
 - ⇒ Pizza parties, popsicles
 - ⇒ Engaged with people to see what they wanted
- Had many existing relationships with people prior to the encampment and tried to expand on this while folks were at the encampment
- With the decampment as a result of COVID prevention measures, some people moved to hotels, some to other parks or other informal locations
 - ⇒ The more connected or housed individuals were, the better the services that could be offered
- AVI contracted to operate OPS/UPHNS in two hotels
 - ⇒ Established the sites in the restaurants that are attached to the hotels
 - Got creative with storage of harm reduction materials in the kitchens/former restaurant staff areas (e.g. mini-fridges used to store Naloxone kits, former food prep areas and sinks organized to hold various other supplies)
 - ⇒ Built-in smoking rooms – attached to hotel in outdoor spaces (on patios attached to hotel restaurants)

- These smoking “rooms” were positioned against the patio windows so staff could observe participants. Three walls were constructed to create booths with a bit more privacy and to help with physical distancing

Questions/Comments from the group:

What are you doing with nursing students? We need to teach students about substance use while going through school

- A few nursing students follow them around and work with experiential workers
 - ⇒ Been listed as early adopters for nurse prescribing
 - ⇒ Agreed that substance use topics should be a focus during schooling/education

In the hotels, are staff providing virtual or in-person overdose prevention services?

- All in person within the restaurant space (the UPHNS/OPS) and we need to limit the number of people to follow COVID precautions. Same with smoking room (and this has been a bit of a challenge)
- Working with hotel providers on how to better respond to overdoses within actual rooms or other spaces in the hotel. Not always using the same protocols
- Have walkie talkies – OPS workers go up to rooms with equipment when possible
- Low uptake on Lifeguard app. Apps and buttons are good for people in private residences, but not so much for clients in hotels. Unsure as to why this is, but this is what it seems like to the front-line workers.

What are the biggest challenges working with other partner agencies - Issues such as not overstepping each other? Issues of Competitiveness?

- One of the partnering organizations is very integrated, the other is very separate. Navigating this has been interesting.
- Working with hotel providers is generally good, but it has been challenging at times since there are different perspectives

When establishing the UPHNS in hotels, how did you decide on setting up in bar/restaurant space?

- We were not directly involved with the decision making on choosing space in hotel (we were brought in to operate the UPHNS)
- One of the sites is on the ground level and has good air flow
- The other is on second floor. Still has good air flow, but problems with accessibility has been the main issue

-
- Probably could have benefited from some more discussions about it, but it all happened so fast. If you can slow down process it's good to think about which space will work best for those accessing services and for the staff
 - Accessibility is huge – where it's located. Impacts relationship with community, other service organizations, etc.

Smoking rooms are “boxes” – three walls, and other wall is built up against window that goes outside (monitoring through window). Can feel a bit “fishbowly”, but again because of rapid set up, it was the best we could do. Timer going on all the time to check on them.