

UPHNS HUB Video Call Minutes

October 5, 2020

Topic:

- Today's presentation is on the Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs (CAPUD) resource "This Tent Saves Lives: How to open an OPS". This will be followed by a discussion and Q&A
- A PDF version of the "This Tent Saves Lives: How to Open an Overdose Prevention Site" document is available on the CAPUD website: <https://capud.ca/node/131>

This Tent Saves Lives: How to open an OPS

- Prior to this resource development in 2016, activists set up a tent that was quite successful with no deaths
- This document is primarily about OPS establishment in tents across Canada and other "popup sites"; not all aspects will apply directly to UPHNS set up in shelters, but many points are useful in various contexts and locations

How to Open an OPS summarized in 15 steps:

1. Funding – Often given provincially, but you can work with other organizations that can give you harm reduction supplies
2. Location – Needs to be accessible to people. Regardless of if it is a tent or building, it needs to be a safe space where people will want to come and use
3. Supplies (listed in original document – please see link above)
4. Opening hours – Best time that would work with the community; consult with those who will be using the service
5. Volunteers – Many different roles for people who want to help
6. Support – Individuals to support the "organizational" aspect of the OPS, including support for individuals using the site and volunteers
7. Training and Screening – How to use Naloxone for as many people as possible, and ideally at least one person has CPR
8. Protocols – For needle stick injury, stimulant overdose, etc.
9. Outreach – If possible, conduct outreach in local community (education, discussion, needle pick up)

10. Referrals to Local Services – Having a list of these ready for people who may ask for them
11. Data Collection – anonymous data is preferred. Build capacity within your team to collect and report (often required for funding)
11. Media spokesperson – The media will want to cover all aspects of the OPS, especially at the beginning. Have someone to be the spokesperson
12. Partnerships and Networking – Reach out to existing OPS to learn about what they have learned during their own process
13. Governance
14. Police liaison – Having someone onsite who is experienced in working with police is very important. Always document each police interaction

Examples of recent, highlighted OPS

- Windsor OPS in 2019 was an unsanctioned site that was moved a couple of times
- Lethbridge OPS Sept 2020
 - ⇒ Just opened as a pop up and has faced community backlash. Doing lots of outreach right now.

Questions:

Can you speak more to the forming/planning stage of opening an OPS?

- Weekly meeting with core group and volunteers to form ideas and think about sustainability, how to debrief, how to govern
- The people who are responding to overdoses most likely have some ongoing trauma so need to think about how to create a safe environment for people who work there

What are your thoughts on opening an OPS on federal land and/or First Nations land?

- If tents don't have provincial or municipal support and they are unsanctioned, can they be on federal or First Nations land?
 - ⇒ Don't know any that would be on First Nations land, would assume that it would be up to individual communities to allow this.

Do you know if running an unsanctioned OPS could potentially put a UPHNS exemption at risk? For example, we have UPHNS status for drug checking but not for consumption.

- You should probably be able to make a small change to your exemption, depending on if it is set up for consumption
- The scope of exemptions has really expanded since COVID started; the community of practice will continue to explore discussing these.

⇒ Immediate / direct questions around UPHNS applications and exemptions can be directed to hc.exemption.sc@canada.ca