

FRASER HEALTH OVERDOSE RESPONSE PUBLIC REPORT

January – June 2022

<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/overdose>



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Surveillance Summary

June 2022

ILLICIT DRUG TOXICITY DEATHS

- The highest numbers of illicit drug toxicity deaths ever recorded in Fraser Health occurred in November to December 2021, with 76 to 87 deaths per month respectively (reported by BC Coroners Service).
- In 2022 YTD, there has been an average of 59 illicit drug toxicity deaths per month.
- Compared with 2021, deaths have increased by the largest margin in Mission & Abbotsford in 2022 YTD (Table 1).

Table 1: Illicit drug toxicity deaths within Fraser Health, January 2021 to June 2022

Community**	Jan-Jun	2021	% Change
Fraser East			
Abbotsford	48	87	10
Chilliwack	20	57	-30
Fraser North			
Burnaby	34	77	-12
Maple Ridge	20	45	-11
Fraser South			
Surrey	116	283	-18
Langley	27	58	-7
Mission	19	18	111
Other Communities	68	155	-12
Fraser Health	352	780	-10
BC	1,095	2,264	-3

Data source: BC Coroners Service to June 30, 2022.

Preliminary data, numbers subject to change. Numbers include both open and closed cases.

Illicit drug toxicity deaths reported by BC Coroners Service include those involving street drugs (heroin, cocaine, MDMA, methamphetamine, etc.), medications that were not prescribed to the deceased, combinations of the above, with prescribed medications, and where the origin of drug is not known.

**Community assigned based on location of injury and if that is missing, location of death.

*Year to date.

PARAMEDIC-ATTENDED TOXIC DRUG POISONING EVENTS

- In June 2022, there were 608 toxic drug poisoning events responded to by paramedics in Fraser Health, compared to 793 in June 2021.
- The rate of toxic drug poisoning events in 2022 YTD has decreased by 4% compared to 2021, and has decreased across most communities (see Table 2).
- The communities with the highest increasing rates are Mission (45%), Abbotsford (34%) & City of Langley (14%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Suspected paramedic-attended toxic drug poisoning events within Fraser Health, January 2021 to June 2022

Community**	2022*			2021		Rate change 2022* vs. 2021
	Jun (Avg. past 12 months~)	Jan-Jun	Rate per 100,000 Jan-Jun	Jan-Dec	Rate per 100,000 Jan-Dec	
Fraser East						
Abbotsford	94 (126.3)	830	1,177	1,224	881	34
Agassiz / Harrison^	6 (5.0)	18	371	79	826	-55
Chilliwack	54 (61.1)	300	646	752	827	-22
Hope^	<5 (6.3)	23	579	80	1,007	-42
Mission	24 (34.0)	229	1,102	311	759	45
Fraser North						
Burnaby	39 (50.4)	290	249	580	252	-1
Coquitlam	22 (41.0)	206	300	473	350	-14
Maple Ridge	33 (63.8)	319	806	683	871	-7
New Westminster	34 (44.6)	232	609	562	751	-19
Pitt Meadows	<5 (<5)	25	286	49	284	1
Port Coquitlam	14 (19.0)	73	261	270	489	-47
Port Moody / Anmore / Belcarra	<5 (5.1)	28	166	49	148	12
Fraser South						
City of Langley	26 (32.9)	199	1,579	341	1,387	14
Delta	16 (16.9)	101	197	197	196	0
South Surrey / White Rock	14 (13.4)	79	161	177	184	-13
Surrey	194 (264.1)	1,427	623	3,061	683	-9
Township of Langley	27 (25.2)	131	220	334	287	-23
Fraser Health	608 (813.5)	4,510	522	9,222	543	-4

Data source: Patient Care Record data from BC Emergency Health Services to June 30, 2022. Restricted to those 13 years of age or older.

Preliminary data, numbers subject to change. Numbers for the most recent month are likely an underestimate and will increase as entry of BC Ambulance Patient Care Form is completed. Numbers may change with data quality and analysis refinements and are not directly comparable to numbers reported previously.

Suspected toxic drug poisoning events include those associated with opioids or other drugs.

**Community assigned based on location where the paramedics attended the event.

*Rate annualized based on available months for 2021.

~Average of past 12 months, including the most recent month.

^Rates may fluctuate due to small population size.

Counts under five are reported as <5 as they are potentially identifiable.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION & SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITES

Please see the Fraser Health website for a list of [overdose prevention sites](#) and [supervised consumption sites](#).

Table 3: Visits and overdoses reversed at overdose prevention sites and supervised consumption sites in Fraser Health, January-March 2022 and April-June 2022

Site Type	Visits for consumption		Overdoses reversed [^]	
	Jan-Mar 2022	Apr-Jun 2022	Jan-Mar 2022	Apr-Jun 2022
Overdose prevention sites	10,752	10,224	73	44
Supervised consumption sites	5,147	5,341	163	65

[^]Among visits for consumption.

DRUG CHECKING

To find a drug checking site near you, please click [here](#).

Table 4: Drug checking volumes in Fraser Health, January-March 2022 and April-June 2022

Quarter	Tests performed*	Fentanyl positive (all substances)	Take Home tests distributed [~]
Jan-Mar 2022	212	167 (79%)	511
Apr-Jun 2022	511	372 (73%)	547

Data source: Agiloft, BC Centre for Substance Use, Public Health Units, Community and Mental Health Service Providers.

*A revised data collection instrument was implemented effective March 2021 to improve completeness of reporting.

[~]Data collection began March 2021.

Table 5: Drug checking by substance in Fraser Health, January-March 2022 and April-June 2022

Buy-as	Tests performed		Fentanyl positive		Benzodiazepine positive ⁺	
	Jan-Mar 2022	Apr-Jun 2022	Jan-Mar 2022	Apr-Jun 2022	Jan-Mar 2022	Apr-Jun 2022
Opioid [^]	64	233	63 (98%)	218 (94%)	38 (59%)	112 (48%)
Stimulant	17	51	2 (12%)	2 (4%)	0	0
Psychedelic	3	8	0 (0%)	1 (13%)	0	0
Depressant	0	8	0	0 (0%)	0	6 (75%)
Other ^{**}	16	37	7 (44%)	15 (41%)	2 (13%)	6 (16%)
All substances	100	337	72 (72%)	236 (70%)	40 (40%)	124 (37%)

Data source: BC Centre for Substance Use.

[^]Opioid includes heroin, fentanyl, or 'down'.

^{**}Other includes substances mixtures. For example, heroin and methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin.

⁺Due to limitations with Benzodiazepine Test Strips (BTS), BTS are only used in combination with Fournier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy at Fraser Health, and are not provided for take home use.

Program Updates

The power of a person-centered approach to harm reduction

By Tammy Theis, Senior Communications Consultant, Communications & Public Affairs

Peer witnesses at Foxglove supportive housing use new technology and shared experience to reduce stigma and reframe conversations around substance use.



(Left to right) Becca Hill, peer witness and Rachel Plamondon, manager of Peer and Harm Reduction Services at RainCity Housing and Support Society.

“If you asked me five years ago – before I ended up in jail – if I’d be a scientist, I would have laughed at you,” says Becca Hill. Becca is a peer witness at Foxglove supportive housing in Surrey, where her main role is to be present in the site’s safe consumption space, supervise residents’ consumption, hand out harm reductions supplies and respond to overdoses.

She and one of her peer witness colleagues have also been trained to use one of Fraser Health’s fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) machines, which will allow her to test what’s in people’s drugs – a vital tool in helping reduce overdoses and potentially save lives.

“I was pretty intimidated by the training at first but now that I’ve done it, it’s been a really good learning experience,” she says. “I feel smart, and everyone is excited about the drug testing we’re going to be doing. It will be great to give people more information about drug toxicity [in the substances they might use]. Hopefully there will be fewer overdoses because of it.”

This opportunity for information sharing is a crucial component to Foxglove’s success: feeling seen, heard and understood is central to helping people who use substances, or who have experienced homelessness, combat internalized stigma, which can be a barrier to them reaching out for support and care.

Becka acknowledges the role peer workers play in supporting vulnerable people and these important conversations, but stresses that they can sometimes feel “different” from other staff because of their own lived experience of homelessness or substance use.

Rachel Plamondon, manager of Peer and Harm Reduction Services at RainCity Housing, works to ensure all Foxglove peer witnesses understand how central they are to building trust between residents and staff and, importantly, that they feel embedded in the larger Foxglove team.

“This isn’t something you can learn in school,” Rachel says. “From the very beginning, the peer team has been engaged within the entire Foxglove team (inclusive of RainCity Housing and Fraser Health nurses, doctors and social workers). One of the keys to the success at Foxglove is having peers with lived and living experience share common ground and experience and build trust and rapport with the residents.”

For many of Foxglove’s residents, talking to peers in the safe consumption space is their first “normal” interaction after years of experiencing homelessness.

“I don’t preach or push them towards things,” Becka says, “I just share my experience. When I was homeless and in addiction – it would have been great to have someone who understood around.”

She has seen firsthand the uptake in support from residents, and knows that the FTIR spectrometer will also continue to help residents reach out, in particular when combined with the opportunity to connect person-to-person with a peer witness.

“Initially clients moved in and didn’t want help, but now they are asking for it. I’ve been told, ‘Thanks for having my back.’”

Learn more about harm reduction and overdose prevention at www.fraserhealth.ca/overdose.

Join community events to remember, without stigma, the lives lost to toxic drugs on International Overdose Awareness Day August 31

By Tammy Theis, Senior Communications Consultant, Communications & Public Affairs



[B.C. Coroners Service data](#) shows that over 1,000 people lost their lives to overdose in B.C. in the first half of 2022 – more overdose-related deaths between January and July than ever before in the province. Overdose deaths in our region were also the highest they've been in the first seven months of any calendar year since the public health emergency was declared in 2016.

Each year, August 31 marks International Overdose Awareness Day – the world's largest annual campaign to end toxic drug deaths, remember without stigma, those who have died and acknowledge the grief of family and friends left behind. It is important to remember that these losses are not simply numbers – they are members of our family, our friends and the valued people who make up our communities.

Fraser Health residents, members of our staff and overdose Community Action Teams participate in International Overdose Awareness Day in many ways, with events taking place in most of our region's communities. The events' activities will include memorial moments, food and refreshments, door prizes, music and art installations, substance use-related education and resources and Take Home Naloxone kit training.

For more details and a full list of events across Canada, please visit <https://www.overdoseday.com/canada/>.

For more information about overdose prevention and response and to find support resources for dealing with grief and loss from overdose, please visit www.fraserhealth.ca/overdose.