

## Engaging in Overdose Prevention Conversations

Patient/client discharge (planned or patient decision) or scheduled leaves from a program are opportunities to support people in taking *measures to prevent overdose*. This is of particular concern within the context of the public health emergency relating to opioid overdose. Like most conversations supporting wellness, there is no one-size-fits-all formula; however there are elements that support *good engagement* and effective prevention rooted in evidence and existing practice frameworks.

In general, pay *mindful attention* to avoiding language that can come across as directive, parental, shaming, disqualifying or denigrating. For example:

- "You should..."
- "You need to..."
- "If you don't listen..."
- "The problem *with addicts* is that..."
- "I really need you to listen..."

Here are some **examples** of key points and questions that can be effectively explored:

1. Start the conversation by *asking for permission* to explore plans to stay safe. *Imposing or forcing* the conversation risks alienating the person or having them to feel threatened or shamed.
  - a. "Before you head out, is it *ok if I speak with you* a bit about your plans to stay safe?"
2. Ask the person to help you understand *their level of concern* about the risk of overdose (for themselves, and for their family and friends).
  - a. "What are *your thoughts or feelings* about the chance of overdose (for you, and for your family and friends)?"
  - b. "Have you personally experienced an overdose?"
  - c. "What concerns might you have about someone you know overdosing?"
3. *Listen without judgement*. The objective is to provide an opportunity for the person to *safely explore* their experience and any concerns.
4. Continue to explore these themes with a view to reaching a *shared understanding* of any risks (for the person, or for their family or friends).
5. If indeed there is some level of concern, *invite the person to describe* what steps they have taken, in the past, to help keep themselves or others safe.
  - a. "What are some of the things *you do* to keep yourself or others safe?"
6. Gently invite the person to describe, based on their lived experience, what steps they will take to protect their safety (or the safety of others around them) once back in the community.
  - a. "Based on what *you know*, what are some of things you will do or pay attention to, when you leave here, to help stay safe (or help others around you stay safe)?"
7. Invite the person to describe *what else* may be of benefit.
  - a. "What else would be helpful?"

