



# Community Action Teams (CAT): Safer Supply Talking Points for Health Providers

**The following pages may help you address commonly heard concerns in your conversations with health providers.**

## What we hear:

1. Health providers say they often feel pressure to be cautious and minimize any harm from doing safer supply.
2. Learning to support safer supply can be difficult for health care providers, especially in an evolving area of practice and with post-COVID challenges.
3. Health providers say that they believe practicing safer supply may risk professional standards of practice.

### **Safer Supply Overview Handout**

An overview of what safer supply is, who can access it and program success factors.

### **Safer Supply Project Activities to Improve Access**

Four project activity examples that consider objectives and guide implementation.

### **Safer Supply Talking Points for Health Providers**

How to address commonly heard concerns in your engagement with health providers.

**Questions? Contact us at  
[substanceuse@bcpsqc.ca](mailto:substanceuse@bcpsqc.ca)**



## What we hear:

# Health providers say they often feel pressure to be cautious and minimize any harm from doing safer supply.

The following talking points may help you address commonly heard concerns about safer supply in your conversations with health providers.

- **Strong positive evidence** from established programs like SAFER Victoria, which are continually providing evaluation, reported that 90% of program participants reduced their use of illicit supply, 86% improved mental health, 83% increased connection to health care, 66% improved overall functioning and 79% increased connections to social supports. There is no evidence that safer supply has contributed to any overdose death. [[SAFER Impacts](#)] [[Safer Research Projects](#)] [[CMAJ Study](#)]
- **Acting appropriately in a crisis** is based on fundamental ethical principles. Dr. Reka Gustafson, Vice President, PHSA says that “in an emergency situation, introducing measures to reduce deaths are essential, but with evaluation embedded so we can continuously make adjustments and improve outcomes.” [[BC Centre for Disease Control, Safer Supply](#)]
- **Clear guidelines** introduced by the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and the BC Centre on Substance Use enables health care professionals to prescribe safer alternatives. The top recommendation from the BC Coroner’s Death Review Panel is to “ensure a safer drug supply to those at risk of dying from the toxic illicit drug supply.” [[BC Coroners Report](#)]
- **Care delivery can adapt to diversion** with minimal evidence of community harms. Limiting diversion improves the effective and efficient use of resources but it should not increase an individual’s barriers to access. It is not appropriate to approach prescribing with an assumption of diversion. This can be an opportunity to initiate dialogue if a participant or community’s needs are not being met. [[Reframing Diversion](#)] [[SAFER Practice Brief](#)]

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## What we hear:

# Learning to support safer supply can be difficult for health care providers, especially in an evolving area of practice and with post-COVID challenges.

The following talking points may help you address commonly heard concerns about safer supply in your conversations with health providers.

- **Support other safer supply prescribers** by accepting their current clients who have stabilized to allow safer supply programs to enrol new clients or taking clients who do not meet the programs' eligibility criteria. Connect with local substance use clinics and providers to explore opportunities, including with call-group support. [[Page 51 - Assessment of the Implementation of Safer Supply Pilot Projects](#)]
- **Stabilize your complex patients**, improving their connection to health care, prenatal care, routine bloodwork, and less reliance on the street economy. Patients start to work on other aspects of their life. [[Page 36 - Assessment of the Implementation of Safer Supply Pilot Projects](#)]
- **Motivated community partners**, such as outreach teams, can do pre-screening and appointment follow-up, as well as other social services that can further support your complex patients. [[AVI Victoria SAFER Initiative](#)]
- **Experienced mentorship and up-to-date resources** for providers are freely available with the SAFER Knowledge Translation & Exchange (KTE) BC, as well as the National Safer Supply Community of Practice. [[NSS-CoP](#)] [[SAFER KTE](#)]
- **A variety of options are available**, with a range of medication guidance from the BC Centre on Substance Use, as well as different distribution and program structures, including telehealth, to meet your needs. [[BCCSU Prescribed Safer Supply](#)]

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## What we hear:

# Health providers say that they believe practicing safer supply may risk professional standards of practice.

The following talking points may help you address commonly heard concerns about safer supply in your conversations with health providers.

- **Harm reduction saves lives:** Redefine success with improving stability and relationships. There is no evidence that increasing access to safer drugs will increase future addiction rates. [[BCCSU OUD Practice Update](#)][[Pharmacist Roundtable](#)]
- **Safer supply supports team-based care (TBC),** elevating professional practice while supporting complex patients with clear roles for clinical and community partners, such as pharmacists. TBC fosters trust and longitudinal care, producing long-term health and wellness benefits. [[Health Canada Early Findings](#)]
- **Improve the quality of your care** across broad dimensions, including safety, appropriateness, respect, accessibility, equity and efficiency. [[BC Health Quality Matrix](#)]
- **CMA Code of Ethics and Professionalism** prohibits discrimination of patients on the grounds of their medical condition, such as substance use disorder. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC does not prevent safer supply and lays out the professional responsibilities of physicians in relation to opioid prescribing; some of these responsibilities are being met on a provincial level, i.e. the AVI Victoria SAFER Initiative. [[College of Physicians and Surgeons BC - Prescribed Safer Supply](#)][[AVI Victoria SAFER Initiative](#)][[Human Rights Case for Safer Supply](#)]
- **BC Legislature Select Standing Committee** is urgently engaging regulatory colleges to identify and resolve barriers to providing a prescribed safer supply. [[BC Legislative Assembly - Expanding the Response](#)]

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