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For Immediate Release

## **Overdose Prevention Site on Trunk Road Now Operated by Island Health**

**Background:** In 2016, a Ministerial Order was issued under the Emergency Health Services Act and Health Authorities Act in response to the opioid crisis. The order allowed for the establishment of temporary overdose prevention services. In response, as part of a program funded by Island Health and operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association Cowichan Valley Branch, the Duncan Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) was established in September 2017.

Although the site was initially intended as a temporary fixture, ongoing and increasing need has resulted in the program being extended. The OPS offers clients a safe, supervised environment to utilize pre-obtained drugs. Clients have access to a ten-seat injection space, and a four-seat inhalant use space. Trained staff monitor both areas.

In addition to monitoring drug use and intervening when necessary, the OPS offers access to harm reduction supplies, naloxone distribution and training, safe disposal of used supplies, education pertaining to safer drug use and overdose prevention, drug checking using fentanyl test strips, and referrals to mental health and substance use services and other health and social care organizations. Moreover, staff at the OPS offer clients connection, support and compassionate care, while listening without judgement. The non-judgemental environment at the OPS helps clients develop trusting relationships with staff which in turn, facilitates connection to key services and programs that clients might not otherwise access.

**Results:** From September 2017, to December 2020, the CMHA Cowichan Valley Branch OPS achieved the following results:

- 75,904 all client visits for consumption
- 511 clients (approximate number of individuals)
- 398 overdose events were responded to on site
- Zero overdose deaths
- 23,289 visits for information or supplies (clients did not use)

After over 3 years of operation, the site has now changed operators; it is now being run by Lookout in partnership Island Health. CMHA Cowichan Valley Branch Executive Director Lise Haddock says, “The CMHA Cowichan Valley Branch is proud of the work done to establish and provide Overdose Prevention Services (OPS) in the Cowichan Valley. We wish our friends at Island Health all the best moving forward and we will continue to support members of our greater community in other ways.”

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