



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Decriminalization: The Facts

What you need to know

On Jan. 31, 2023, **possession of small amounts of certain illegal drugs was decriminalized** in British Columbia. In May 2024, Health Canada and the Province of BC made several important changes to decriminalization in BC. To minimize misinformation about what drug decriminalization is and what it isn't, here are some facts.

What is Decriminalization?



Applies to adults 18+



Includes opioids (heroin, morphine and fentanyl), cocaine (powder or crack), methamphetamine (meth) and MDMA (Ecstasy)

Personal possession of listed substances is permitted **ONLY** in:

- Private residences
- Places that unhoused individuals are legally sheltering
- Overdose prevention sites (OPS), drug checking sites, supervised consumption sites
- Places that provide out-patient addiction services (rapid access addiction clinics)



Police will provide resource cards with information on supports and will make voluntary referrals



2.5g cumulative threshold with police discretion above



Police training and monitoring and evaluation framework



NO fines, tickets or other administrative sanctions in the permitted locations as listed above



NO mandatory treatment or diversion

What decriminalization **COULD** do

- ✓ Reduce stigma, shame and fear. People who are using substances need support and not judgment.
- ✓ Decriminalization may allow people to be more open about their use, ensuring they are connected and cared for which in turn may lead to a healing path that will allow them to openly discuss their options for healing.
- ✓ Reduce the risk of toxic drug poisoning and save lives and relationships.

- ✓ Keep people safe while using and help prevent toxic drug poisoning
- ✓ Make substance use and the toxic drug crisis a public health issue and not a criminal one.



What decriminalization **WON'T** do

- ✗ Enable substance use – without decriminalization people will still use but in an unsafe and unsupported way.
- ✗ Legalize substances – trafficking and producing remains illegal.
- ✗ Override First Nations authority – Nations will still be able to decide what works for them on their own land.

Visit our Decriminalization Q&A to learn more

www.fnha.ca/harmreduction



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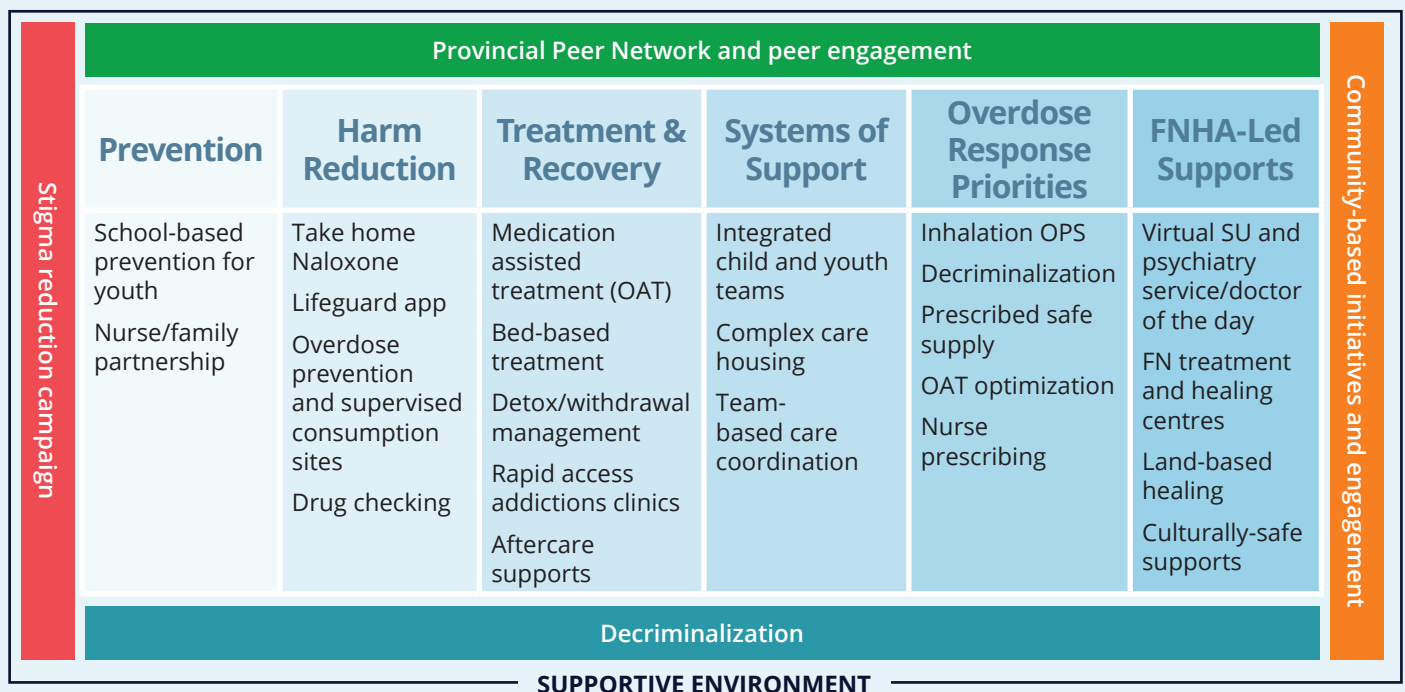
What you need to know

How will decriminalization help?

Decriminalization alone won't solve the toxic drug crisis, but together with harm reduction strategies, treatment and recovery options, overdose prevention, community-based initiatives, and systems of support, decriminalization will help save lives and relationships.

Decriminalization is an important part of a larger response to the toxic drug crisis.

Building a System of Care: Our initiatives span the continuum



Decriminalization is for and by people who use substances

The BC government consulted with people who use drugs to understand their needs and concerns because they are the people most impacted by the toxic drug crisis.

Decriminalization didn't come into effect because of government-to-government engagement at any level, it came from the province engaging with people who use drugs, their advocates and their loved ones.

How is the FNHA addressing the toxic drug crisis?

The FNHA's framework for addressing the toxic drug crisis is to support people on their healing journeys, create an accessible range of treatment options, keep people safer while using, and prevent people who experience drug poisoning from dying.

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