

2025



Our Voices Matter

Substance Use Insights Survey



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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from a survey conducted to assess the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of substance use services in Delta, BC. The survey, carried out in collaboration with community partners and individuals with lived experience of substance use, aimed to identify the barriers faced by individuals seeking help, as well as the strengths of the current service landscape. The data collected provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving substance use services in Delta, particularly considering the ongoing toxic drug supply crisis.

The survey results revealed several key findings. A significant demand for services such as counselling, harm reduction, and medical support, including Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT), was identified. However, barriers to accessing these services were also highlighted, with long wait times, distance to services, and financial costs being among the most reported obstacles. Notably, 74% of participants reported wait times as a primary barrier, with many individuals having to travel outside of Delta to access the care and support they need.

The survey also revealed that stigma remains a pervasive issue, with many respondents reporting experiences of judgement and discrimination when seeking substance use services. While there is a strong demand for increased counselling services, the findings suggest that the current therapy services may not fully meet the diverse needs of the population, particularly in terms of session availability and specialized treatments such as trauma-specific therapy.

The report emphasizes the need for local, accessible services in Delta to reduce barriers and ensure that individuals can access the care they need in a timely manner. Recommendations include expanding the availability of counselling, harm reduction programs, and medical supports,



as well as addressing transportation challenges to improve access for all residents. The findings will serve as a basis for advocating for the expansion and improvement of substance use services in Delta, with a focus on reducing stigma, enhancing care quality, and better aligning services with community needs.

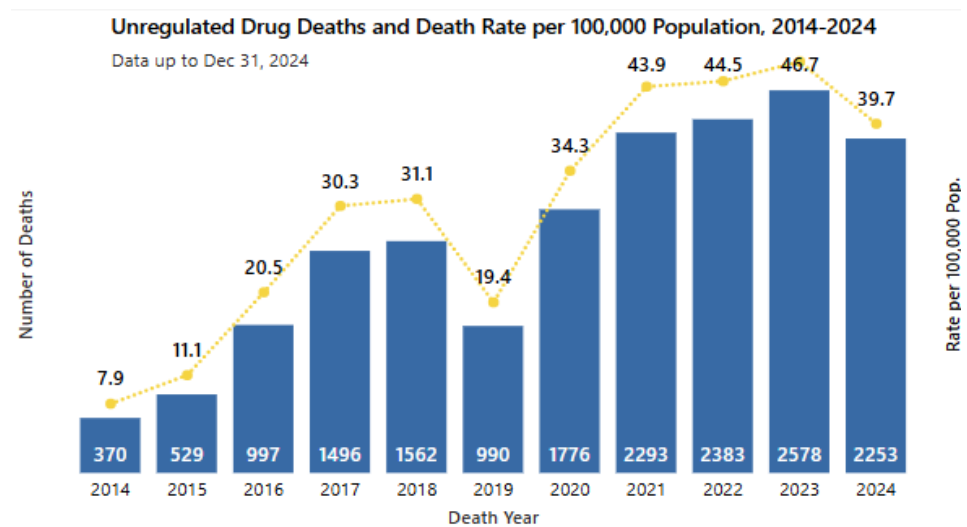
This survey highlights the importance of collaboration between service providers, community partners, and individuals with lived experience to create a more responsive and supportive system of care for those affected by substance use in Delta.

Our Team

The project was created in partnership with **Options Community Services** and the **Delta Community Action Peer Team**, a group of local residents in Delta with personal or close family experience with substance use. The initiative was supported by various community partners, including **Tsawwassen First Nation, the City of Delta, the Delta Police Department and Delta Community Action Team**. Delivery of the surveys was additionally supported by **Deltassist Family and Community Services Society**.

Background

The Toxic Drug Supply Crisis, which was declared a public health emergency in 2016, continues to profoundly affect communities in British Columbia, emphasizing the need for evidence-based solutions for substance use issues. As of October 2024, the BC Coroners Service has reported 1,749 unregulated drug deaths in the province, marking an 8%



<https://www2.aov.bc.ca/aov/content/life-events/death/coronersservice/statistical-reports>



decrease from 2023 (1).

This decline is encouraging but should be considered cautiously as a single data point (1).

In Delta, the rate of unregulated drug deaths per 100,000 residents has significantly dropped to 11.7 in October 2024, down from 18.8 in 2023 (1).

Initiatives that work closely with People with Lived or Living Substance Use Experience (PWLLE), such as the Delta Community Action Team (DCAT), have consistently highlighted a common concern: there is a shortage of substance use services in Delta, BC, along with significant barriers to access, especially amid the ongoing toxic drug supply crisis.

It is reported that existing services are limited in scope and capacity, often requiring individuals to travel to neighbouring regions, such as Richmond and Surrey, for treatment and support. This situation presents considerable barriers, particularly for those struggling with substance use, as the added travel burden can result in delays, decreased access to care, and increased risk of harm.

The survey was conducted to assess the current service landscape, identify opportunities, and ensure that the voices of those directly affected by substance use in Delta are heard. Addressing these barriers is a vital step toward mitigating the impacts of the toxic substance supply crisis and improving the well-being of the local community.

Objectives

The primary goal of this survey was to assess the availability and accessibility of substance use services in Delta, BC. The survey aimed to identify both barriers and strengths within the current system, providing valuable insights for future improvements. The key objectives and outcomes are as follows:

Provide insights for local service providers:

- Help advocate for the expansion of services.
- Identify opportunities to increase care options and improve service quality.
- Highlight ways to reduce stigma and enhance the safe delivery of services.

Support harm reduction and mental health services:



- Ensure these services are well-resourced and impactful.
- Focus on substance use prevention and mental health services to meet community needs.

Assess service utilization:

- Identify frequently used services and those that are underutilized.
- Examine barriers to access such as availability, cost, transportation, and wait times.

Evaluate the safety and comfort of services:

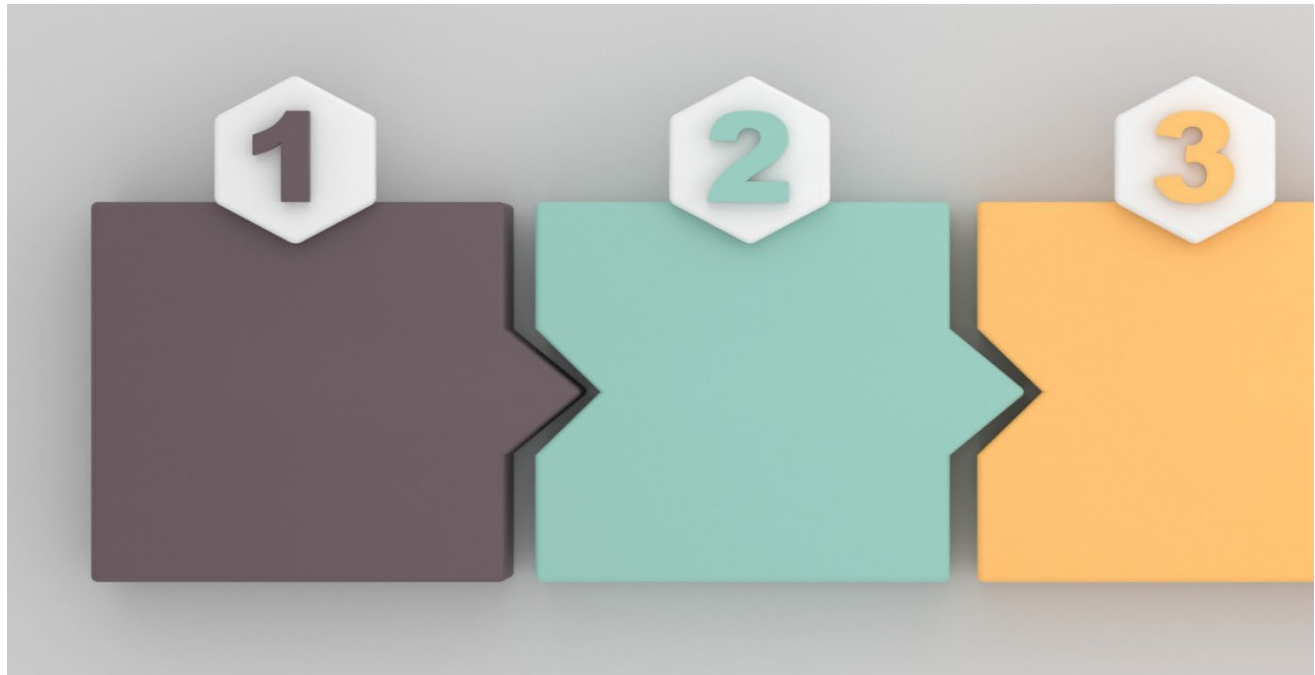
- Gauge whether individuals feel comfortable accessing services without fear of stigma.

Improve service accessibility and participation:

- Seek insights into how to better align services with community needs.
- Focus on reducing substance use-related harms and promoting overall mental well-being.

Scope

The scope of this survey focuses on evaluating substance use services in Delta, BC, with an emphasis on identifying both the barriers and strengths related to accessing care. It includes an assessment of local harm reduction, substance use prevention, and mental health services, specifically examining their availability, accessibility, and quality. The survey targets individuals with lived experience of substance use who currently live or have lived in Delta, BC, and have experience accessing or attempting to access substance use services within the area. Questions were designed to filter out responses from those outside this target group, ensuring the survey accurately reflects the experiences of the intended population.



Survey Design

The survey was developed by a group of six People with Lived and Living Substance Use Experience (PWLLE) from the Delta Community Action Team (DCAT) in collaboration with local community partners. The members of this group with lived experience played a key role in shaping the survey questions, ensuring that their insights directly influenced the survey's development. By sharing their firsthand knowledge of the barriers and challenges individuals face when accessing services, they helped ensure that the questions reflected the real concerns and relevant issues within the community of individuals seeking substance use services.

The survey included a mix of multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert scale questions to assess participants' experiences with substance use services in Delta. The Likert scale questions asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with statements related to service accessibility, stigma, and quality of care. Responses ranged from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Key areas of



focus included access to services, treatment effectiveness, and experiences of stigma, which align with the primary themes identified in the survey analysis. See Appendix A.

Optional demographic questions were included at the end to gain further insights into which demographics might benefit from advocacy efforts, with the option to decline answering in order to respect personal confidentiality and make the survey process more comfortable.

Data Collection

The data was collected through surveys, which were made available both online via a QR code and in-person through paper copies. The survey, which consisted of 21 questions, was anonymous and did not collect any personally identifying information from participants, except for demographic details such as age, gender, and location. The data collection took place over an approximately three-month period, from September to November 2024.

To ensure broad outreach, the survey was distributed through informal community connections and existing networks that support individuals affected by substance use. Community partners, including Delta Police Department, Deltassist Family and Community Services Society and Tsawwassen First Nation, helped facilitate the survey's delivery. Although ethnicity was not a mandatory question, the collaboration with Tsawwassen First Nation aimed to ensure Indigenous perspectives and experiences were respectfully included.



Key Findings



Overview

The survey uncovered several key findings regarding the availability and accessibility of substance use services in Delta, BC. Notable results include a clear demand for expanded services, such as counselling, as well as barriers like long wait times and the lack of convenient service locations. Additionally, there was significant demand for a broader range of medical support and treatment options. The greatest need was for Opioid Agonist Therapy, with 1 in every 6.5 individuals expressing the demand, closely followed by Residential and Housing Services, with 1 in every 6.9 individuals reporting the need.

Participation

Most participants (over 85%) reported personal lived experience with substance use and a history of receiving substance use services for themselves or a close relative. The majority of participants (96%) lived in Ladner, Tsawwassen, or North Delta. The gender distribution was 62% male and 37% female. The largest age group represented was 26-35 years old (46%), followed by 36-45 years old (23%).

Demand for Services

The survey highlighted a strong demand for a wide variety of local substance use services, with 65% of participants or their close relatives seeking additional supports. Services in high demand included counselling and therapy, group and peer support, harm reduction and medical support, and residential housing services.

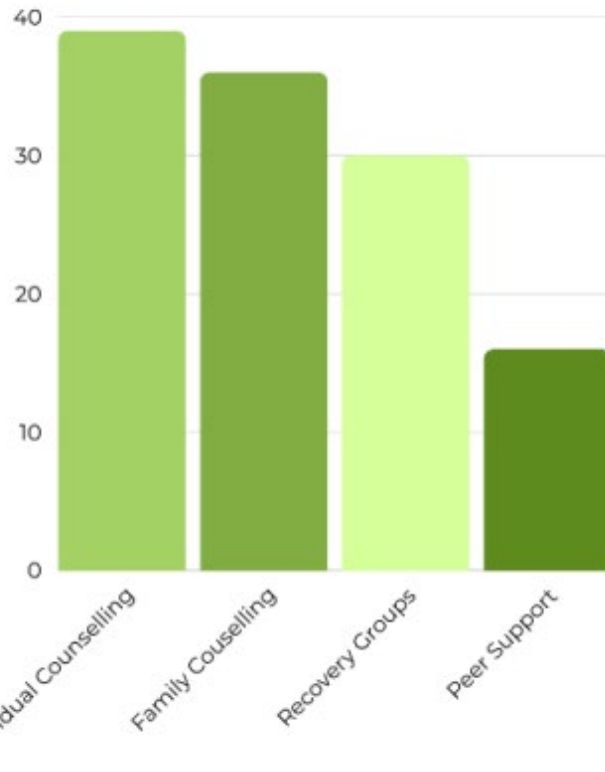
*65% Seeking
additional
services*



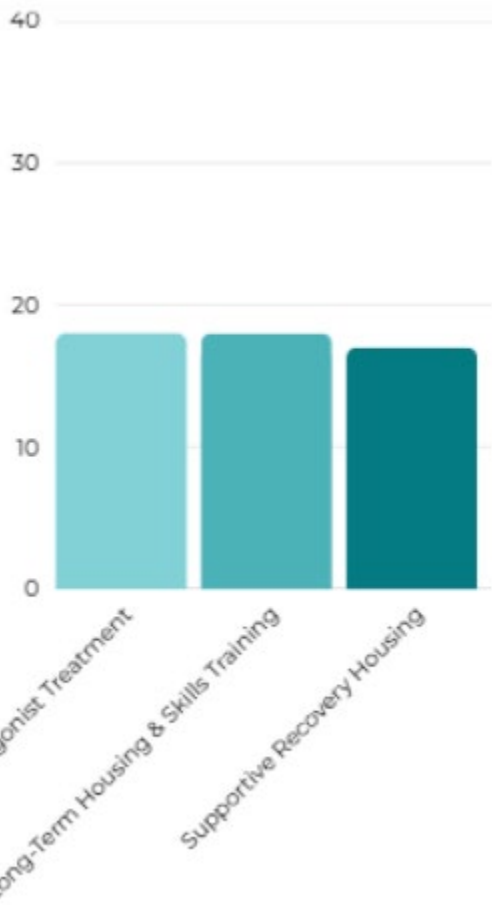
The most requested counselling

services included:

- Individual counselling (39 requests).
- Family counselling (36 requests).
- Trauma-specific counseling (20 requests).



requests).
(20



Medical support services in most demand included:

- Opioid Agonist Treatment (18 requests)
- Harm reduction programs (14 requests)
- Detox services (10 requests)





Barriers to Accessing Services

Several barriers to accessing services were identified, including:

Wait Times



74% Reported long wait times

The most frequently cited barrier was long wait times, reported by 74% of participants. The average wait time for accessing services ranged from less than one month to up to three months.

Location and Travel



71% Reported travel outside of Delta

While 16% of respondents cited location as a barrier, 71% reported needing to travel outside of Delta for services. Travel distance and time were significant deterrents for many individuals.

Lack of Awareness

Though 80% of participants knew where to access services in Delta, there was still a notable gap in awareness for some.

Financial Barriers

15% of participants identified financial costs as a significant barrier to accessing services.

Stigma

12% of participants reported experiencing stigma, and 50% reported experiencing stigma when accessing or receiving services.



Access to Medical Support & Treatment

80% Reported travel outside of Delta to access prescriptions

Sixty-five percent of participants had experience accessing medical support, particularly opioid agonist therapy (OAT). However, 80% of these participants were unable to access their prescriptions locally in Delta, forcing them to travel outside the community.



Treatment Experiences & Stigma



50% Encountered Stigma



64% Reported Compassion and Respect

While many respondents had positive experiences, 50% reported encountering stigma when accessing substance use services. However, 64% of respondents felt that they were treated with compassion and respect, and 61% stated they would feel comfortable seeking services in Delta if needed. Respondents shared personal experiences of stigma, citing fears of judgement and cultural pressures. Some individuals noted that interactions with medical staff could be dismissive, reinforcing stigma.

“My emotional toll of stigma is significant. I was coping with negative stereotypes and discrimination that lead to chronic stress and self-doubt.”

Other Considerations in Service Accessibility

Geography

Delta's large geographic spread, divided into three distinct areas by extensive agricultural land, creates significant challenges in accessing services. The 2014 My Community, My Health survey revealed that 71% of Delta residents rely on personal vehicles for commuting to work compared to 55% of Metro



https://www.google.com/search?q=delta+bc&rlz=1C1GCEB_enCA852CA852&oq=delta+bc&gs_lcrp=Eg

Vancouver residents (4). Additionally, the median one-way public transit commute time for Delta residents was 60 minutes, while the median time for Metro Vancouver residents was 45 minutes (4).

Transportation

Moreover, proposed cuts to TransLink services over the coming years could further exacerbate these challenges. These transportation issues, combined with the dispersed nature of services, create significant barriers for individuals who do not live near service locations or along major transportation routes.

Meeting Individual Needs

While service providers report no wait times for individual and family counselling related to substance use, the demand for increased counseling services raises questions about the dynamics between current supply and demand. Accessibility is one contributing factor, but offering a wider range of



counsellors could also be helpful in ensuring individuals are matched with professionals who meet their specific needs. It's important to recognize that not all therapy or counseling styles are suitable for everyone, and it may take time for some individuals to find the right counsellor.

Additionally, the current therapy services may not fully address the needs of the population, particularly in terms of session availability or the variety of therapy techniques, such as trauma-specific therapy, which may not be readily accessible. This highlights the need for further research to ensure that future funding can adequately support the diverse needs of the community.

Stigma & Bias

The perceived under-service in Delta may also be linked to stigma and bias, with differing views on treatment approaches possibly hindering broader community support for increased funding and services. Additionally, the relatively low number of deaths from the unregulated drug supply crisis in Delta—compared to neighboring communities—could affect how resources are allocated, potentially resulting in fewer services in the area. However, it's important to recognize that drug-related deaths are just one data point. There is a lack of information on the broader scope of substance use in Delta, including the long-term and short-term harms that do not result in death.

“Feeling judged, misunderstood, or labeled by others often contributed to my experience of stigma, especially when there was a lack of awareness or empathy about my situation.”

Limitations and Challenges

The survey process faced several limitations and challenges, including issues with the length and phrasing of the questions, the delivery method, and difficulty in reaching a more diverse population.

Survey Length and Readability

One major challenge was the length of the survey, which made it difficult to keep participants engaged while still gathering the necessary information. Ensuring the survey was both “Feeling judged, misunderstood, or labeled by others often contributed to my experience of stigma, especially



when there was a lack of awareness or empathy about my situation.” 15 comprehensive and easy to complete proved to be a delicate balance. Additionally, some participants struggled to fully understand the scope of the questions, and many required facilitations to break down the questions further to aid comprehension. This may have impacted their understanding of certain questions, potentially affecting the accuracy and consistency of their responses.

Confidentiality

Another challenge arose from the presence of counsellors who completed the survey with their clients. This could have influenced responses, as clients may have felt obligation to report positive experiences or may not have felt comfortable answering honestly, fearing judgement or concerns about confidentiality.

Reaching the Hidden Population



Another challenge identified was capturing the perspective of the “hidden population”—individuals who use substances but are not accessing available services, making them difficult to reach. There are assorted reasons why people may avoid services, such as not perceiving their substance use as harmful or fearing the stigma and potential consequences they might face if identified. This underscores the need for further research into the specific needs of this group, to address and prevent the harms associated with hidden substance use.

Recommendations



Overview

The survey findings highlight several crucial areas for improvement in substance use services in Delta. Participants identified barriers such as long wait times, the need to travel outside of Delta to access services, experiences of stigma, and financial challenges. These recommendations aim to address these barriers by focusing on expanding localized services, improving accessibility, reducing stigma, and expanding treatment options. Implementing these recommendations would help ensure that the needs of residents are met by offering localized, timely, and compassionate care for individuals facing substance use challenges.

Increase Medical Support, Treatment, and Counselling

There is a clear demand for expanded access to wrap-around services in Delta, BC, including individual and family counselling, as well as medical treatments such as Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) and detox/withdrawal management. Further, respondents indicated a need to expand access to supportive recovery residences and transitional housing programs. This would include offering wrap-around services that include skills training, career development, and transportation to support community reintegration.

“Expand harm reduction programs such as supervised consumption sites and needle exchange programs. These services help reduce the health risks associated with substance use and offer a pathway to treatment when the individual is ready.”



“They should make it available to different localities so that you won't have to go too far to access it.”

Many respondents expressed the need for harm reduction measures like safe consumption sites, accessible Narcan kits, and safer supply programs. One respondent suggested, "expand harm reduction programs such as supervised consumption sites and needle exchange programs. These services help reduce the health risks associated with substance use and offer a pathway to

treatment when the individual is ready." In addition to expanding treatment options, there is a significant need to make these services local, accessible, low-cost, de-stigmatized, and culturally appropriate.

A recurring theme among respondents was the challenge of accessing services outside of Delta due to travel distance and time, which created a major barrier for many in need of treatment. Expanding local services is critical to addressing this issue, with respondents calling for more outpatient and inpatient treatment centers, as well as mobile health clinics to help reduce travel barriers. One individual stated, “They should make it available to different localities so that you won't have to go too far to access it.”

“Expanding access to affordable and timely counselling, increasing community outreach programs, and providing more education on substance use prevention could greatly improve services in Delta... creating a stigma-free environment for seeking help is also essential.”

Furthermore, providing local prescription services such as OAT and improving public awareness of available services were emphasized. Launching a public awareness campaign in Delta to inform residents about available substance use services and how to access them would ensure better utilization of local resources. A respondent noted, “Expanding access to affordable and timely counselling, increasing community outreach programs, and providing more education on substance use prevention could greatly improve services in Delta... creating a stigma-free environment for seeking help is also essential”



Improve Wait Times & Service Availability

Long wait times (ranging from one to three months) and the limited availability of services remain key challenges. To address this, increased staffing and funding for substance use services is critical to reduce wait time for appointments and treatment. Suggestions to improve accessibility could include:

- Existing services can be expanded to offer evening and weekend hours to accommodate those
- with work or family commitments.
- A service hub could also be a solution for more remote communities such as in south Delta.
- Urgent care options can also be utilized such as walk-in clinics for substance use concerns to provide same-day or next-day access to meet people where they are at when they are in need.

Expand Anti-Stigma Education & Training

"Eliminate discrimination and make services more convenient."

Stigma remains a significant barrier, with many respondents reporting experiences of self-stigma or social discrimination. To address experiences of stigma, it is recommended to develop and implement anti-stigma education programs that target service providers,

community support agencies and employers. This would encompass providing training to health care and social service providers on compassionate and non-judgemental care for individuals with substance use challenges. One respondent urged, "eliminate discrimination and make services more convenient," a sentiment echoed by others who advocated for a more compassionate and sensitive approach to care. Another respondent stated, "strengthen the training of medical personnel to enable them to better identify and handle drug abuse issues". Furthermore, many respondents highlighted the importance of confidentiality to ensure privacy of medical and personal information. Public education campaigns are needed to create a more welcoming environment and reduce stigma associated with seeking help.



Support Peer - Led Initiatives

The importance of having people with experience support when going through substance use issues was another key area emphasized by respondents. It is recommended to involve peers with lived experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating substance use services to ensure services address community needs. Within this project, having the involvement of peer voices was crucial to understand the issues that exist when accessing substance use services. Therefore, it is recommended to provide funding and training opportunities to enhance capacity and leadership within support programs.

Address Financial Barriers

Providing free or subsidized services for individuals facing financial difficulties who are experiencing substance use issues is critical to ensure people can access support when needed. This would require advocating for additional

“Have treatment available that is covered by medical or social services...most

government funding to support affordable treatment options and eliminate financial barriers. This was a sentiment echoed by several respondents. For example, one respondent stated, “The cost should be relatively low and readily available to the public”. Another respondent echoed this by stating “Have treatment available that is covered by medical or social services...most addicts or alcoholics have no finances available”.



Conclusion



This report underscores the critical need for expanded and improved substance use services in Delta, BC, in light of the challenges identified through the survey. The findings reveal a clear demand for a wider variety of accessible and timely services, including counselling, harm reduction, and medical support, as well as significant barriers such as long wait times, travel distances, stigma, and financial costs. The survey also highlights the need to address the needs of the "hidden population"—those who use substances but do not currently access services. To mitigate these challenges and better support individuals affected by substance use, it is essential to invest in local services, reduce wait times, and create a stigma-free environment for care. The recommendations outlined in this report, including enhancing service availability, expanding harm reduction programs, and addressing financial and transportation barriers, are vital steps toward creating a more responsive, compassionate, and accessible system of care in Delta. By collaborating with community partners and individuals with lived experience, Delta can take meaningful steps to reduce harm and improve the well-being of all residents facing substance use challenges.



Appendix A



Urban Matters Peer Microgrant Survey

1) Do you have experience accessing substance use services in the community of Delta for either yourself or a close relative? (Y/N)

2) Do you identify as having personal lived experience with substance use? (Y/N)

3) * Have you or a close relative ever received substance use services in the past? (Y/N)

If yes, where did you receive services and supports?

- Phoenix Society
- Deltassist Family and Community Services Society
- Lookout Society
- Fraser Health Authority
- First Nations Health Authority
- Other (please specify) _____

4) * Are you or a close relative interested in receiving substance use services? (Y/N)

If yes, what type of substance use services are you interested in receiving?

- Individual counselling
- Family counselling
- Trauma specific counselling
- Recovery groups
- Prescribed alternative medication such as Opioid Antagonist treatment (OAT)
- Residential treatment centers
- Supportive recovery residences
- Supports and resources for community integration after or while treating substance use (accessible and affordable long-term housing, skills and career training, access to



transportation)

- Support or treatment for harms related to substance-use (physical or brain injuries)
- Detox/withdrawal management services
- Safe consumption sites
- Safer supply
- Narcan Kits
- Peer support or groups
- Outreach services
- Free access to exercise facilities
- Faith based programs
- Workplace managed programs
- Other (please specify) _____

5) * Do you know where to go to access substance use services in Delta? (Y/N)

- What method did you use to find the services you were looking for?
- Delta Community Action Team website
- Fraser Health Authority website
- BC211
- Asked someone you know
- Other (please specify) _____

6) * Did you have to travel outside of Delta to receive the substance use services you were looking for? (Y/N)

7) * Is travel distance and time a deterrent to getting to appointments or services outside of Delta? (Y/N)

8) * Have you been prescribed medications to treat substance use disorder, including replacement therapies such as prescribed opiates or opioid agonist therapy (OAT)? (Y/N)

a. I had to travel outside of Delta to see a new doctor for the prescription? (Y/N)

b. Filling my prescription required regular travel outside of Delta?

c. Did any difficulties related to accessing your prescription or medication, such as seeing a doctor or travel requirements, deter you from trying to access or continuing to access medical treatment? (Y/N)



9) *What barriers, if any, have you experienced in accessing substance use services in Delta?

- Cost
- Location
- Wait Times
- Lack of awareness of services available
- Stigma
- Limited availability of services
- Lack of specialized programs
- Insufficient number of services available
- Lack of trained professionals
- Other (please specify):

10) On average, how long did you have to wait to access the service(s) you were looking for?

- Same day or next day appointment
- Less than one week
- Less than one month
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- More than 6 months

Answer according to the level that you identify with the following statements:

- Strongly
- agree
- Agree Neither
- agree or
- disagree
- Disagree Strongly
- Disagree



- 11. Substance use services in Delta are accessible
- 12. I would feel comfortable seeking substance use services in Delta if I needed too
- 13. When I accessed substance use services, I felt like I was treated with compassion and respect
- 14. I felt like the substance use services I received were effective and met my needs

15. Did you ever experience stigma when accessing or receiving substance use services?

Please explain any factors that contributed to your experience of stigma below

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

16) Do you have any suggestions on how to improve substance use services and/or resources in Delta? (please elaborate below)

Demographic Questions: Optional

17) Where do you currently live?

- Ladner
- Tsawwassen
- North Delta
- Other Metro Vancouver community (please specify) _____



18) Do you have a family doctor? (Y/N)

- Yes
- No
- On a waitlist
- Still looking for one

19) Which age group do you currently belong to?

- 19-25 years old
- 26-35 years old
- 36-45 years old
- 46-55 years old
- 56+
- Prefer not to answer

20) What gender do you identify as?

21) What is your total personal income before taxes and deductions for the year ending December 2023?

- \$0-19,999
- \$20,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$79,999
- \$80,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$119,999
- \$120,000-\$139,999
- \$140,000 or greater
- Prefer not to say



LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD



Are you someone who has needed substance use services while living in Delta, BC?

We want to hear from YOU! Share your experiences and help shape better substance use services in our community.



Why Participate?

- Raise Awareness
- Drive Change
- Empower Others



Who Can Participate?

Anyone with lived experience of substance use or those seeking services, specific to Delta, BC.



Survey Details:

- Confidential & Anonymous
- Takes about 10 minutes to complete
- People who fill out in person will receive a **\$10 Tim's card** as a thank you! *While quantities last.*

How to Participate:

- Scan the QR code **OR**
- **To receive \$10 Tim Hortons Gift Card**, email us at:

deltaCATeam@outlook.com

to set up a time to complete the survey in person at one of our partner locations.



In Partnership With

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CAI
Community
Action
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options
COMMUNITY
SERVICES

Source Information



1 Unregulated Drug Poisoning Emergency Dashboard [Internet]. www.bccdc.ca. Available from: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/data-reports/substance-use-harm-reduction-dashboard>

2 Health Canada. The Canadian drugs and substances strategy: The Government of Canada's approach to substance use related harms and the overdose crisis [Internet]. www.canada.ca. 2023. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthyliving/canadian-drugs-substances-strategy-approach-related-harms-overdose-crisis.html>

3 Coroners [Internet]. Province of British Columbia; 2025 [cited 2025 Feb 13]. Available from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/life-events/death/coroners-service/statistical-reports>

4 Half of transit services cut without new funding model [Internet]. Translink; [cited 2025 Feb 13]. Available from: <https://www.translink.ca/news/2024/july/half%20of%20transit%20services%20cut%20without%20new%20funding%20model>

