

## News Release

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# Inner-City COVID-19 Response Strategy based on three pillars: Prevent, Test and Trace, Support

Vancouver, BC – Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is implementing an Inner-City COVID-19 Response Strategy to reduce the impacts of the opioid overdose and COVID-19 public health emergencies for people living in Vancouver’s inner-city communities, including the Downtown Eastside (DTES). The strategy takes a three-pillar approach – Prevent, Test and Trace, and Support – to ensure a coordinated, comprehensive response. Much of the work is already underway.

**Prevent: Helping to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among vulnerable people in the DTES and care providers working in the community.**

VCH has worked with BC Housing and the City of Vancouver to open temporary emergency response centres at two community centres — Coal Harbour and the Roundhouse — with capacity to house over 130 people. This will help prevent COVID-19 transmission in crowded shelters by allowing clients to physically distance.

VCH continues to centrally coordinate personal protective equipment (PPE) for its managed and contracted services, and is working with all community partners to provide PPE training.

VCH has also collated resources for community organizations who work with vulnerable populations. Clinical educators are providing frequent education sessions for community staff.

**Test and Trace: Ensuring access to testing for vulnerable people and care providers in the DTES, as well as public health follow-up for any suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19.**

VCH and Providence Health Care (PHC) have implemented COVID-19 testing for clients and frontline service providers who work with this community. This includes mobile, on-site and drive-through testing teams.

Any lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19, or potentially exposed contacts, are followed-up daily by a VCH public health team.

Additional support services, including environmental cleaning and infection control measures, are mobilized as part of public health follow-up to support each client.

**Support: Ensuring vulnerable people have access to the care they need to be safe in the community, including access to overdose prevention services, temporary housing, and clinical care needed to safely self-isolate for those who have been exposed to, or diagnosed with, COVID-19.**

Existing health care services have been strengthened with a COVID Assessment Team that supports homeless and precariously housed people to self-isolate, and a COVID Outreach Team that provides nursing care for people who have COVID-19.

With local prescribers and pharmacists, the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU) and the provincial government, VCH has introduced new prescriber guidelines to support people who use drugs who may experience withdrawal symptoms while in self-isolation due to COVID-19.

Overdose Prevention Sites and Supervised Consumption Sites are essential services to address the ongoing overdose public health emergency. We are working with operators to ensure that they have the supplies, workers and training to continue running these sites safely.

Temporary housing, in partnership with BC Housing, is being opened at hotels in downtown Vancouver to provide people who are homeless or precariously housed with space to self-isolate safely. VCH and PHC are providing clinical and support services to people in these facilities.

For more information on COVID-19 and testing, please visit [www.vch.ca/COVID19](http://www.vch.ca/COVID19).

VCH is responsible for the delivery of \$3.6 billion in community, hospital and long-term care to more than one million people in communities including Richmond, Vancouver, the North Shore, Sunshine Coast, Sea to Sky corridor, Powell River, Bella Bella and Bella Coola. VCH also provides specialized care and services for people throughout BC, and is the province's hub of health care education and research.

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