

# SUBSTANCE USE CARE IN BC

## WHAT WE HEARD

### What was the goal of this member engagement?

Doctors of BC recognizes the significant public health impact that harmful substance use has had on many British Columbians. We have an existing [policy paper](#) on substance use that was published in 2009; however, the substance use care landscape has shifted dramatically since then. The toxic drug crisis has become a long-standing public health emergency, and alcohol and other substances continue to cause significant harms to the public. Population-level health outcomes have not improved, and substance use care remains fragmented and difficult to access. Therefore, we are developing an updated policy paper on substance use care to better reflect this new landscape and ensure our position is in keeping with best practices.

This engagement was intended to better understand member perspectives on substance use care to inform the recommendations in our updated policy paper. The findings will help to inform our modernization of Doctors of BC's advocacy position on this issue.

### How did we seek member input?

We sought member input through a survey hosted on our [Have Your Say online member engagement platform](#).

### Who participated?

25  
registered  
members

#### Type of practice

Family physician: 56%  
Specialist: 40%  
Other: 4%

#### Practice setting

Community-based: 36%  
Facility-based: 20%  
Both: 44%

#### Geographic setting

Urban: 52%  
Semi-urban: 20%  
Rural: 28%

### What did we ask?



We asked members to indicate how strongly they supported our proposed policy recommendations on substance use care and if we were missing anything.



We also asked questions pertaining to substance use resources and supports for physicians.

# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

## Recommendations and commitments

Most respondents (80% to 100%) indicated that all of the proposed recommendations were either “important” or “very important.” These recommendations included:

- Calling for the development of an action plan to implement the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction’s *Adult Substance Use System of Care Framework*.
- Better supporting health care providers in providing substance use care.
- Prioritizing prevention.
- Developing robust evaluation mechanisms for substance use care initiatives.

Respondents expressed similar levels of support for the proposed actions Doctors of BC would commit to, which included:

- Engaging with physicians to better understand their perspectives on substance use care.
- Raising physician awareness of clinical resources/supports.
- Working with government and other stakeholders to ensure physician perspectives are heard.

## Resources and supports

- 54% of respondents indicated that they were very familiar with existing resources/supports to provide care to patients experiencing harms related to substance use; 42% were somewhat familiar and 4% were not very familiar.
- Regarding resources/supports physicians would need to direct patients to appropriate care services, a common theme was the establishment of a single, unified referral network. Respondents also indicated that lack of access to these services was a critical issue.
- 52% of respondents indicated they knew a lot about the province’s Prescribed Safer Supply program launched in 2021, while 28% knew a little about it and 20% did not know anything about the program. 24% indicated they had no interest in participating in the program as a provider, while 32% might be interested but felt they did not have enough information or supports in place. Those who were not interested in participating in the program were concerned about negative effects of prescribed safer supply, such as diversion, or simply did not have the capacity to participate.
- Finally, many respondents emphasized that lack of access to care was a core issue in the existing substance use care system, and that prevention must be prioritized more to have a meaningful impact on harmful substance use.

## WHAT’S NEXT

*Doctors of BC will use these findings to inform refinement of our recommendations and commitments. The policy paper will undergo further consultation and is anticipated to be finalized and shared later this year.*