

OPIOID REPLACEMENT THERAPY IN SHORT-TERM CUSTODY PROJECT SUMMARY

The goal was to improve access to opioid replacement therapy (ORT) for detainees at risk of withdrawal while in short-term custody with West Vancouver Police (WVPD) and North Vancouver RCMP

WHY WE DID THIS

OVERDOSE RISK

Fatal opioid overdoses remain high in BC. The illicit drug supply is increasingly toxic.

SUBSTANCE USE & CUSTODY

Many people in custody report using substances and are at high risk of withdrawal and overdose.

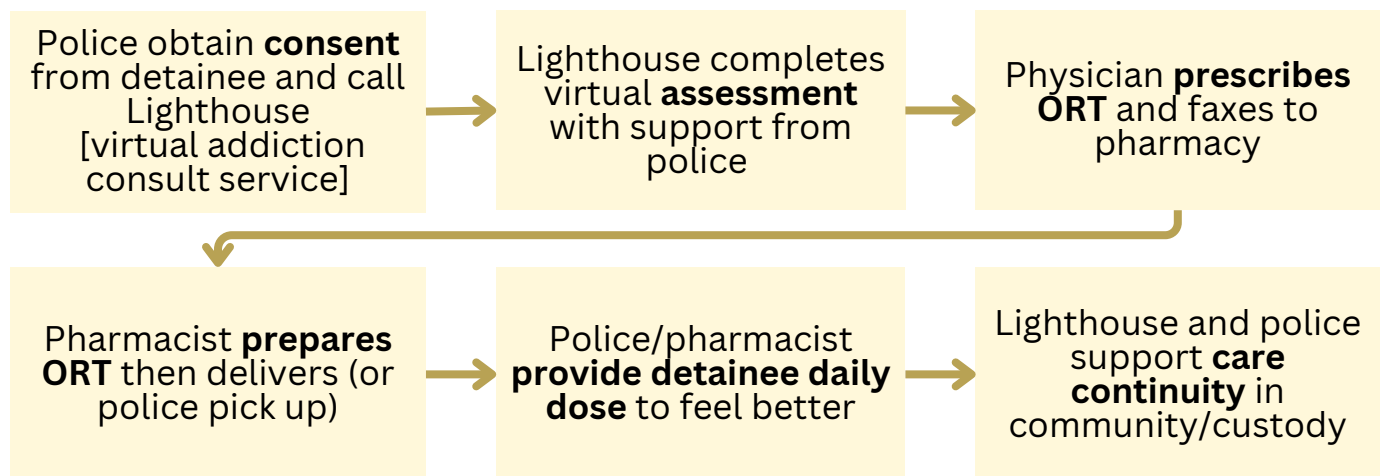
SAFE MEDICATION

ORT is safe and effective for alleviating withdrawal symptoms and reducing overdose risk on release from custody.

RESOURCE USE

Reduces the need for police to accompany detainees to overburdened emergency departments.

ORT PROTOCOL



OUTCOMES OF THIS WORK

At least **41 North Shore detainees received ORT** through this protocol (Dec 2023- Aug 24)



Developed clear and easy to use ORT protocol



Trained 123 police officers/cell guards to use the ORT protocol



Reduced opioid withdrawal symptoms and overdose risk for detainees after custody



Decreased emergency department visits (use of health and law enforcement resources)



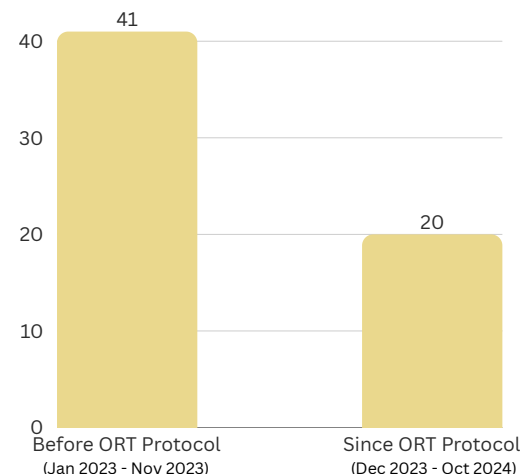
Created positive impact on detainees and officers/cell guards (see reverse for feedback)



Improved collaboration between frontline providers (police, pharmacy, physicians)

RCMP Medical Calls

[calls to EHS and/or detainee transported to hospital]



WHAT WE HEARD FROM OFFICERS

73 officers/cell guards completed post-training survey:

Most felt the session increased their opioid use disorder knowledge, was relevant to work, and was easy to follow

11 officers/cell guards who used the ORT protocol responded to a survey:

Everyone felt confident managing detainees at risk of withdrawal and that the training improved their skills

Officers/cell guards who were interviewed spoke about:

Safety: detainees who received ORT were less irritable and agitated. Officers noticed a decrease in confrontation and biohazard risk

Wellbeing: ORT decreased detainee withdrawal symptoms and discomfort. Officers noted that detainees were more cooperative and increased comfort may have led to better outcomes (ex: more composed in front of judge)

*“There was no need to bring the custody person to hospital and, with their symptoms at bay, they were less difficult to manage.”
– police officer*

“On our end, it costs us nothing.... There are little to no risks. It's hard to find something as low risk and low cost as this. I'm finding a hard time seeing where anybody would suggest that the more responsible option would not to be participating in a program like this.” – police officer

WHAT WE HEARD FROM DETAINEES

Five detainees who receiving ORT responded to a survey:

Everyone felt they were treated with respect and dignity from the officer/cell guard involved in their care.

Most felt the officer explained care options clearly and they received their ORT before becoming uncomfortable.

“Now that you are here, I know I will feel better soon – detainee

WHAT COMES NEXT

NORTH SHORE SUSTAINABILITY

- Work with WVPD/NV RCMP and regularly offer training sessions to officers/cell guards
- Work with partners to sustain ORT prescribers (especially after hours)
- Explore additional data collection opportunities

PROVINCIAL SPREAD

- Work with other communities in BC to adapt the protocol to their contexts
- Share learnings widely so more communities can benefit from this initiative
- Collect meaningful data

WANT TO LEARN MORE? contact us at hci@nsdivision.ca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project would not have been possible without the dedication of many people including clinicians at Lighthouse and pharmacists at Shoppers Drugmart and Pharmasave. Special appreciation is extended to WVPD and NV RCMP leaders, champions, officers, and cell guards for their commitment to implementing the ORT protocol. Their efforts and engagement in this work has laid the groundwork for creating a safer environment for those in short-term custody.

This project took place on the unceded ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples, the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.