



Updating the Provisions for Hospitals and Practitioners in Regulations Under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*

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Introduction

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) recognizes the importance of Health Canada's consultation on modernizing the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA) and its associated regulations. Since the CDSA was created, there has been a significant shift toward understanding that substance use is part of whole-of-health care. This perspective is critical to ensuring that regulations better reflect the needs of people who use substances.

Modernizing the CDSA presents an opportunity to align the regulatory framework with contemporary substance use healthcare practices, which have expanded to include community-based care, virtual care and integrated services. This alignment would support a more seamless continuum of care, reduce barriers to access, and enhance the consistency and quality of services for people who use substances. Additionally, removing requirement of healthcare professionals that have proven to be time consuming and not relevant to the well-being of their patients is critical to support our over-burdened healthcare system.

Our responses are categorized by the consultation's two main questions:

- Question 1: Whether there is a need to enable activities with controlled substances in health care facilities other than hospitals, and
- Question 2: Whether there is a need to authorize activities with controlled substances by additional categories of health care professionals

Question 1

Enabling activities with controlled substances in healthcare facilities beyond hospitals is essential to meet the evolving needs of people who use drugs and improve the continuity of their care. Restricting activities with controlled substances to hospitals creates barriers to



timely and appropriate care for individuals who would benefit from services in their community or home-based settings.

The modernization of the CDSA's regulations should reflect shifts in healthcare delivery, which extends beyond hospital settings to include community-based care, virtual care and home care. The regulation should be reviewed for barriers and facilitators to activities with controlled substances in these settings to improve access and continuity of care.

- People who use drugs face large barriers to health care and may need a range of healthcare and support services, such as wound care, mental health support and social services. Expanding the settings where controlled substances can be provided would enable the continuity of care by removing barriers to a more integrated and holistic approach to care (Moallem et al., 2021).
- Ensuring access to opioid agonist therapy and other controlled substances in emergency departments and during transitions from hospital to community care can significantly enhance outcomes for people who use drugs (Bouck et al., 2022).
- Addressing access to controlled substances in northern, remote, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, where hospitals may not be available, is essential for equity in care delivery (Høj et al., 2023).
- Medications under the special access program should be reviewed to ensure equitable access for equity-deserving groups.
- People with lived and living experience from diverse communities should be engaged in the design and development of any solutions, to respond to their needs, including culture.

Question 2

Authorizing additional categories of healthcare professionals to perform activities with controlled substances is crucial to enhance patient care, optimize healthcare resources and improve access to vital services. By broadening these activities to trained and capable healthcare professionals, bottlenecks in service delivery would be removed, allowing for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to substance use health.

- The regulatory framework should enshrine the [Section 56 exemption used during COVID-19](#), where pharmacists and other health professionals were temporarily allowed to carry and deliver controlled substances. This would ensure these measures are formally recognized in the act (Chang et al., 2022). This temporary measure increased access in northern and remote regions, as well as continuity of care during the pandemic (Bishop & Rosenberg-Yunger, 2022; Bouck et al., 2022; Watema-Lord et al., 2024).
- Expanding the scope of practice for regulated healthcare professional in correctional facilities and transitions from custody to community would also support continuity of care (Berg & Burke, 2023). The risk of opioid toxicity death is significantly higher for people being released from a correctional facility, so the provision of opioid agonist



treatment in the transitional facility could greatly reduce the risk of death (Butler et al., 2023; McLeod et al., 2024).

Additional Considerations

- As it did during the [Cannabis Regulatory review](#), CCSA reiterates that it is too soon to evaluate the effects of cannabis legalization and regulation, so the regulation should retain a public health priority.
- CCSA supports the continued prioritization of the health of youth in vaping and tobacco products, including restricting the flavouring of products, as stated in the [previous consultation](#).
- Regulatory changes should not exacerbate stigma or limit access to care for equity-deserving populations, including individuals experiencing homelessness.

Who We Are

CCSA is Canada's trusted, non-partisan authority on substance use and addiction. Since our establishment through an act of Parliament in 1988, we have provided national leadership on substance use issues, using scientific evidence to drive meaningful change and collaborating with partners across all sectors to advance solutions that reduce harm.

Our Core Capabilities include:

Bridging Science and Action

We are committed to unbiased, evidence-based contributions that inform policies rooted in science and compassion.

Convening Experts and Communities

CCSA connects sectors, organizations and communities, offering an impartial space for dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Advancing Community-Based Solutions

Through partnerships, we support integrated, community-focused initiatives for effective, scalable solutions to substance use challenges.

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About CCSA

CCSA was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.



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