

# Street Community Survival in COVID Times: What's Open / Closed / New / Different in Lkwungen Territory (aka 'victoria')

compiled by [Indigenous Harm Reduction Team](#) volunteers

Last updated: Tue Apr 7, 1:30 PM

This document was compiled to try to help people navigate all the things shifting as things change with the COVID-19 situation. **If you have an update please comment in this document.** We will also be monitoring organizations' Facebook pages as best we can and updating as we get new information. See [https://victoriahomelessness.ca/covid19\\_serviceproviderupdates/](https://victoriahomelessness.ca/covid19_serviceproviderupdates/) for statements by specific service providers.

If you are accessing this document online you can see a list of sections/skip to specific sections by clicking "View" in menu at the top of the screen, then choose "Show document online". Section titles will come up on the left and you can click on them to go to that section.

We are as part of daily updates flagging new changes (in past 2 days) with **red bold text**.

## Money

- **For people getting welfare (income assistance or PWD):**
  - **\$300 topup for everyone:** April, May, and June cheques will be automatically [topped up by \\$300](#) (starting on Apr 22). No application is needed for this COVID-19 crisis supplement. Low-income seniors who get the BC Seniors Supplement and people in care who get a "comfort allowance" will also get their usual \$49/month topped up to \$300 for April, May, and June.
  - **\$52 top up for people on PWD who get BC Bus Pass:** If you are on Disability Assistance (PWD) and getting the BC Bus Pass, your April cheque will be automatically [topped up with \\$52](#) Transportation Supplement and this will continue every month as long as BC Transit is suspending bus fares.
    - Your bus pass is still good, it's not cancelled and you won't need to reapply for the pass again after things go back to normal with buses.
    - People who already opted for the Transportation Supplement and don't have the BC Bus Pass won't get this top-up.
  - **Special supplement for people who are sick:** On Mar 24 the government sent a letter to health/social service agencies from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. This letter says: "To support those who are impacted by COVID-19 (through self-isolation and/or quarantine) the ministry has enacted the Emergency/Disaster Supplement, funding that can be used for COVID-19 needed supplies only. Clients can contact our office via 1-866-866-0800 to request this support." We have reached out to find out if there are any local agencies that can help people who do not have phones to apply.
- **Increases to tax rebates (GST & Climate Action)**
  - People who have low incomes and have filed a tax return automatically get a payment to refund some of GST and climate tax.

- These payments are issued near the start of the month in Jan / Apr / Jul / Oct, normally about \$100.
- If you usually get this, you will get your usual amount on April 3 and then on April 9 that same amount again, as a special early top-up of the [GST rebate](#). You don't have to file your 2019 taxes to get the April amount, but to keep getting GST rebate after that will need to file your 2019 taxes.
- **Apr 6 update:** If you file your 2019 taxes and you are age 19 or older, [in July](#) there will be another one-time extra amount under the "Enhanced Climate Action Tax Credit". This is usually \$43.50 but will get increased to \$218 in July, then back to regular amounts after that.
- **Support fund for former youth-in-care (foster care etc):** Up to \$1,000 for youth age 18-29 who are financially strained as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Can be used for emergency needs including rent, food, household supplies, counseling, technology support, etc. Must have been in care of Ministry of Children and Family Development / Delegated Aboriginal Agency, or on a youth agreement as of your 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, or eligible for the Agreement with Young Adults Program. [Online application process](#) including requirement for documentation that you were a youth in care. We are trying to find out if any agencies in town can help with application. First-come, first-served.

## Transportation

- [Buses are free](#): **Apr 6 update --** Time extended for free bus fare, now to Apr 30 (for both handyDART and regular bus). Please get on via the back door if you can. If you need a ramp or to have the bus lowered, use the front door. Note that as of Mar 19 bus [schedules are changing day-to-day](#). BC Transit is cancelling some trips to reflect that overall people are using buses 50% less than usual. Changes can be confirmed by calling 250-382-6161, checking their website at <https://www.bctransit.com/victoria>, or checking NextRide at <https://nextride.victoria.bctransit.com>.
- [713 Outreach](#) / "Intensive Case Management" (Island Health/[AVI](#)): As of Mar 17 only seeing people face-to-face for medical issues, not doing transportation to appointments, food banks, etc.
- Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)): Client service workers are not accompanying clients off-site.

## Emergency shelters

Status of shelter options usually provided by community agencies:

### Adults

- Arbutus ([PHS Community Services Society](#)): Open for existing residents but not taking anyone new. Meals are takeaway only.
- My Place ([Our Place](#)): Reduced mats, not taking anyone new
- Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)): Open for existing residents but not taking anyone new, reducing beds as people leave
- [Salvation Army ARC](#): Open for existing residents but not taking anyone new, reducing beds as people leave
- Sandy Merriman House ([Cool Aid](#)): Open for existing residents but not taking anyone new, reducing beds as people leave
- Seasonal shelters (normally open till Mar 31):

- [Our Place](#): Seasonal shelter at 919 Pandora closed as of Mar 18, reduced mats at First Met and not taking anyone new
- [VNFC](#): still open as of Mar 17
- CATS at Downtown Community Centre ([Cool Aid](#)): closed as of Fri Mar 20
- [Extreme Weather Protocol](#): As of Mar 24 suspended until further notice - all spaces used by the EWP have been reallocated to other services

## Youth

- [Kiwaniis youth shelter \(Youth Empowerment Society\)](#): Still open, but with reduced spaces (max 4 youth in the shelter). Doing screening and will isolate anyone with COVID-19 symptoms. Residents are able to stay in the shelter all day and are encouraged to stay in to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- [Out of the Rain](#) youth shelter (age 25 and under): Shelter closed as of Wed Mar 25 but still open 9 AM-noon and 4-7 PM for takeaway meals, socks, and hygiene supplies; and drop-off/pickup of laundry. All supplies are only available during meal pickup times. No washroom available for use during these pickup times.

## Housing referral programs

These programs don't directly provide shelter but may be able to help with referrals and up-to-date information about applying for extraordinary shelter options (as government creates new options) as well as longer-term housing.

- [Downtown Outreach Services](#) (Pacifica Housing): As of Mar 17 communicating by phone only (outreach offices closed), call 250-220-8064 to talk with housing worker
- [Homeless Family Outreach \(Burnside Gorge Community Association\)](#): As of Mar 20 BGCA doing housing support by phone only, call 250-388-5251 to talk with housing worker
- [Threshold Housing Society](#) (youth only): As of Mar 17 doing housing support by phone/email only, 250-383-8830, [assist@thresholdhousing.ca](mailto:assist@thresholdhousing.ca). **Apr 7 update**: Confirmed no new intakes being done at this time, continuing to work with youth already on waitlist.

## The government's plan for people who are currently sheltering outside

Victoria mayor Lisa Helps [posted Mar 21](#) that the municipal government, Island Health, BC Housing, GVCEH, and some health/social service agencies have come up with a 2-phase plan for people sheltering outside -- including people living in tents, cars, etc. However the plan as originally conceived has not moved forward and as of Apr 2 it seems that [there is no comprehensive plan](#). As government is not posting updates on this document (despite repeated requests that they do this) you may want to check <https://victoriahomelessness.ca/covid19/> and <https://www.victoria.ca/EN/meta/news/news-archives/2020-news/covid-19-information.html> to see if there is any news there.

The government plan at this point:

- **Tenting in one, and eventually two, designated sites** - this is aiming to get people more spread out so there are not as many people concentrated in the 900 block of Pandora.
  - There are specific designated areas where there will be some food, water, washrooms, and health information. People will be able to keep their tents up 24/7 (i.e., bylaw preventing daytime sheltering will not be enforced) as long as people comply with the City's plan for where to put tents (a grid has been set out), people are practicing "social distancing", and people are

complying with fire regulations. It is not yet clear what sheltering supplies and other resources the City will be providing so people living outside can do what the City is requiring, or how showers and laundry will be accessed.

- Currently there is only ONE open location that is a City-designated site: the southwest corner of Topaz Park (Topaz & Blanshard). The two regular Topaz Park bathrooms now open 24/7 but not consistently supplied with soap/toilet paper, 4 portapotties have been removed. There is a tap with running water, and breakfast and dinner. No showers or laundry access at this time.
- Royal Athletic Park is planned to be opened at some point as a second designated site, but there is no specific timeframe for this.
- The City announced [Mar 26](#) that plans for a third site at MEEGAN (Beaconhill Park) have been discontinued. It is not yet clear what that means for people who have already moved to MEEGAN and are now set up there - whether the City will now go back to enforcing the bylaw that prohibits daytime sheltering from 7 AM to 7 PM. With the decision not to have an area at MEEGAN it appears the City's previous plan to have a designated area for people who are living in cars, vans, RVs, etc. to park and access washrooms, food, etc. has now been abandoned. Four portapotties that had been set up have now been removed, regular park bathrooms open dawn to dusk.

- **Indoor sheltering**

- The City's original plan was that City-owned buildings that are closed right now would be repurposed into shelters but on Apr 2 announced they have [abandoned this plan](#).
- BC Housing has secured 115 motel/hotel rooms for unhoused people who have no COVID symptoms and fit other specific criteria, for temporary stay. To qualify people have to apply using a set process and only through designated agencies.
- Sheltering with medical monitoring: Five rooms have thus far been secured for unhoused people who do not need to be hospitalized but test positive for COVID, or are symptomatic but test results not back yet. On April 16, 32 rooms will be available.

## Mobile outreach

As of Mar 17 most drop-in/fixed-site services are only providing support through phone or email, i.e., the drop-in offices are closed. Some organizations that have provided mobile outreach services are also moving to phone only or reducing their services, while others are expanding their outreach to get survival supplies to people sheltering outside, in squats, or otherwise outside of formal agency-run shelters.

- [713 Outreach](#) / "Intensive Case Management" (Island Health/[AVI](#)): Services reduced. As of Mar 17 only seeing people face-to-face for medical issues (so no appointment transportation etc.), all other worker communication by phone only (info line: 250-882-0816).
- [AVI Health and Community Services](#): Mobile meal delivery to PWP clients. Mobile harm reduction service shifting frequently, schedule for now is = 2:30-5:30 PM at Topaz Park (including pop-up overdose prevention site), 5-7 PM roving outreach (may be at Topaz, Pandora, Rock Bay).
- [Dandelion Society](#): not sure, no info on their Facebook page - have contacted them, awaiting response
- [Doctors of the World](#): No Mobile Health Clinic (van) and no direct nursing care except in emergency. Nurses will do outreach on foot to assist community partners with distribution of wellness supplies & provide health info. **Apr 7 update**: Schedule this week -- Tue Apr 7 = 7-9 PM at Pandora 900 block; Wed April 8 = 11 AM - 1 PM at Mustard Seed; Thu April 9 = 11 AM - 1 PM at Topaz Park.
- [Indigenous Harm Reduction Team](#) is doing outreach most nights to places where people are sheltering, distributing supplies as available (incl. snacks/food, hygiene & wellness supplies, harm reduction

supplies, DIY handwashing stations, tents/tarps, bottled water), getting info to people about survival services, and checking about people's needs and impacts of service closures.

- [Peers](#): Night outreach will be starting Mon Apr 6, on the stroll Mon / Wed / Fri at usual time (around 7:30 PM) with food and harm reduction supplies. As of Apr 4 Peers will be delivering hot food, food hampers, and harm reduction supplies to clients, Mon/Wed/Fri starting around 3 PM; please call or text 250-744-0171 to request delivery.
- [SOLID](#): Harm reduction outreach team at 900 block Pandora 9:00-10:30 AM daily and at Centennial Square 5:30-7 PM daily.

## Meals

### **Summary of take-away meal options:**

- **Breakfast/morning**: 8-9 AM outside Our Place, 8:30-10 AM Soup Kitchen at St Andrews, 9:30 AM Topaz Park - parking lot off Blanshard & Topaz, 9 AM - noon at Out of the Rain (youth only, age 25 and under)
- **Lunch/afternoon**: 1-6 PM at Alliance Club (youth only), noon outside Mustard Seed, noon - 1 PM outside Our Place, Mon-Fri 11:30 AM - 1 PM at Rainbow Kitchen, Mon / Wed / Fri 11:45 AM - 12:15 PM at Salvation Army ARC; 4 PM Sunday only, Food Not Bombs at Centennial Square
- **Dinner/evening**: 5-6 PM outside Our Place; 5:30 PM till food runs out at Topaz Park (off Topaz/Blanshard); snacks 7-9:15 PM outside AVI; Fri / Sat only 6 PM at Mustard Seed chapel doors

### **Summary of meal delivery options:** AVI-PWP clients only (lunch), Peers (sex workers, M/W/F)

- [AVI Health and Community Services](#): PWP delivering bagged lunch to its clients.
- Alliance Club (youth only; [Youth Empowerment Society](#)): as of Mar 19 takeaway bagged lunch/snacks only, reduced hours 1-6 PM Mon-Thu and closed Fri, max 10 youth in the space at any time and can stay for max 10 min
- [Anawim House](#): Drop-in services closed as of Mar 17
- [Burnside Gorge Community Association](#): Community dinners cancelled as of Mar 17
- [Food Not Bombs](#): Confirmed still serving as usual (Sunday at Centennial Sq). With physical distancing requirements no longer one big group cook (individuals will each bring food), so serving time is a little less predictable but hoping servings to start between 3:30-4:30 PM.
- [GVCEH](#) / [Boxes of Hope](#): Breakfast at 9:30 AM & dinners at 5:30 PM at Topaz Park (in the parking lot off Topaz/Blanshard). Dinners that were happening at MEEGAN (Beaconhill Park) were discontinued as of Mar 30, Centennial Square dinners that happened Mar 20-22 are no longer happening.
- [Mustard Seed](#): Inside closed. As of Mar 26 serving hot coffee at lobby doors from 9 AM to 2 PM every day, with to-go lunch at noon (at chapel doors) every day and hot takeaway dinner 6 PM Friday and Saturday (at chapel doors). People asked not to stay after getting coffee/food due to numbers of people lining up
- [Oasis Society](#): All programming cancelled as of Mar 16 including community meals
- [Our Place](#): Takeaway bagged meals 8-9 AM, noon-1 PM, and 5-6 PM; drop-in/courtyard closed as of Mar 17
- [Out of the Rain](#) youth shelter (age 25 and under): Shelter closed as of Wed 25 but still open 9 AM - noon and 4-7 PM for takeaway meals (plus socks, hygiene supplies and laundry pickup/dropoff). No washroom available for use during these pickup times.
- [Peers](#): As of Apr 4 Peers will be delivering hot food (and food hampers) to clients, Mon/Wed/Fri starting around 3 PM. Please call or text 250-744-0171 to request delivery. Note that drop-in is closed.
- [Rainbow Kitchen](#): As of Mar 17 lunch is takeaway only, but still open. Mon to Fri, 11:30 AM - 1 PM at front door.

- Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)): Meals for residents only, drop-in closed as of Mar 17
- [Salvation Army ARC](#): Takeaway hot lunch Mon / Wed / Fri 11:45 AM - 12:15 PM
- Sandy Merriman House ([Cool Aid](#)): Meals for residents only, drop-in closed as of Mar 17
- Soup Kitchen at [St Andrews](#): Takeaway breakfast only, usual hours (Mon-Fri 8:30-10 AM)

## Food banks / hampers

- [Good Food Box program](#): Cancelled Mar 16 until further notice
- [Living Edge](#): Some neighbourhood markets closed in mid-March but some have come back, yay! Open at this point -- markets at Central Baptist Church (Mon 5-6 PM), Quadra Village Community Centre (Thu 11AM-noon), Esquimalt Neighbourhood House (Sat 11AM-noon). Markets at First Baptist Church and Emmanuel Baptist Church remain closed (closed as of Mar 17). For additional markets in Langford and Saanich check [Living Edge FB page](#).
- [Mustard Seed](#): Mar 30 update - Grocery store inside closed; pre-made hampers available for pickup at The Market door 10 AM to 1 PM - come early and expect lineup.
- [Peers](#): As of Apr 4 Peers will be delivering food hampers (and hot food) to clients, Mon/Wed/Fri starting around 3 PM. Please call or text 250-744-0171 to request delivery. Take-away food and harm reduction supplies also available at Peers front door at 1 PM Mon/Wed/Fri but drop-in is closed.
- [Rainbow Kitchen](#): Along with take-away hot meals, also may have take-away produce, bread, dairy, juice (as available). Mon to Fri, 11:30 AM - 1 PM at front door.
- [St John the Divine](#): Open usual hours (Tues & Fri 10 AM - noon) as of Mar 17
- [St Vincent de Paul](#): Food bank open for pickup 10:30 AM - 2:30 PM. They have indicated their hours may change after Apr 7, check with them for updates before heading over (and we'll post here as soon as we hear anything).
- [Salvation Army Stan Hagen Centre](#): As of March 16 M/W/F coffee drop-in closed, daily vegetable distribution continuing but in pre-packed bags
- [VNFC](#): Working on a plan for food hampers, contact [reception@vnfc.ca](mailto:reception@vnfc.ca) or talk to your VNFC outreach/support worker if you need food support

## Drinking water

- Currently City has not set up foot-pedal drinking water stations anywhere people are camping.
- [Indigenous Harm Reduction Team](#) is doing outreach most nights to places where people are sheltering, distributing bottled water as available, and is working on getting larger water jugs that can safely be operated for water bottle refilling.
- Note that outside faucets and hoses are not 100% safe for drinking water -- there are health risks from heavy metals in the faucets and heavy metals/plastic leaching from hoses, plus water that has been sitting in a hose can be contaminated with bacteria / mold.

## Bathrooms

- [Our Place](#): Drop-in closed but bathrooms open to 2-3 people at a time, expect a 5-10 min wait. Closes at 8 PM.
- City bathrooms (Centennial Square and parks):
  - All regular bathrooms in 'victoria' parks open dawn till dusk, except 2 bathrooms at Topaz Park open 24/7 (no soap and frequently out of toilet paper).

- **Apr 7 update:** All regular [bathrooms in 'saanich' parks](#) that are normally open year-round are still open regular hours, from around 7 AM to 11 PM. The closest ones to downtown are at Gorge & Austin, and Gorge & Admirals (both on #11 bus route).
- Temporary portapotties removed from Topaz Park, MEEGAN (Beaconhill park), and Pandora.
- **Apr 7 update:** All portapotties normally in 'saanich' parks temporarily removed.
- City announced [Mar 23](#) washrooms will be available at Royal Athletic Park but the park is not open yet so these are not accessible.
- Except for Our Place, all organizations that have closed their drop-in programs and are only doing take-away food / supplies also no longer have drop-in bathroom access (e.g., no bathrooms at [Anawim House](#), [AVI](#), [Mustard Seed](#), [Oasis](#), [Peers](#), [Rainbow Kitchen](#), etc). Shelters that are still open still have bathrooms for their residents, but no drop-in bathroom access.

## Showers and Laundry

- [Anawim House](#): Drop-in services closed as of Mar 17
- [Our Place](#): Hygiene area closed as of Mar 17.
- [Out of the Rain](#) youth shelter (age 25 and under): Shelter closed as of Wed 25 but still open for laundry drop-off/pickup 9 AM - noon and 4-7 PM. Drop-in closed and no bathroom access.
- Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)): Open to residents; as of Mar 17 drop-in hygiene 9-11 AM and 1-3 PM, expect waitlist for showers

## Handwashing

- [AVI Health and Community Services](#): Mar 30 update -- bathrooms closed; handwashing station set up at 713 Johnson entrance (along with harm reduction supplies and food) during set hours. Hours for services at 713 entrance are in flux so check back here for changes. As of Fri Apr 3 handwashing station will be available at front door of 713 Johnson from 7:00-9:30 PM, will likely change again a few days after that.
- Alliance Club (youth only; [Youth Empowerment Society](#)): Handwashing stations posted around the building, and takeaway toiletries including hand sanitizer. As of Mar 19 reduced hours 1-6 PM Mon-Thu and closed Fri, max 10 youth in the space at any time and can stay for max 10 min.
- [Anawim House](#): Drop-in services closed as of Mar 17
- [Our Place](#): Can wash hands in bathroom, open till 8 PM. Hygiene area closed as of Mar 17.
- Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)): Open to residents; as of Mar 17 drop-in hygiene 9-11 AM and 1-3 PM, expect waitlist for showers
- As of Mar 31 the City had installed one handwashing station on 900 block of Pandora and unlocked the running water tap at Topaz Park.
- **Apr 6 update:** [Free hand sanitizer](#) from Fort Royal Pharmacy, Wed April 8, 11 AM - 3 PM, 797 Hillside Ave and 11 AM - 3 PM Thu, April 9 at 2217 Oak Bay Ave. Must bring your own bottle, up to 100 ml.

### ***Harm reduction-based DIY handwashing stations***

As government has not yet made enough public handwashing stations available, people are coming up with DIY solutions.

- [Indigenous Harm Reduction Team](#) (IHRT) and [AVI Health and Community Services](#) have delivered foot-pump handwashing stations (using Boy Scouts design) to 900 block of Pandora and IHRT has delivered more to other locations. More are under construction. Locations delivered to thus far:

- 3 on Pandora
  - 1 outside Rock Bay Landing
  - 1 at Gorge Park
  - 1 outside SOLID
  - 1 outside AVI in the evening during harm reduction hours (see above)
- Some people living in houses in North Park have set up their outside garden hoses with soap dispensers and signs encouraging people to use as needed, and have given IHRT permission to post locations here. We have asked them to clean the faucet taps / hose nozzles frequently to try to reduce risk of COVID transmission. Locations as of Mar 26, hopefully more to come soon:
    - 1605 Rebecca St (Rebecca Street is off Mason Street, between Cook and Chambers)
    - 954 Queens Avenue (one block north of Crystal Pool park)

## Health care

- [Cool Aid](#) dental clinic: The clinic is closed. People with a dental emergency (due to infection, acute pain, or accident) can call the clinic receptionist at 250-383-5957, Mon-Fri 9 AM - 1 PM. Depending on the situation an on-call dentist may be able to follow up with you by phone to help you figure out options.
- [Cool Aid](#) health clinic: Encouraging phone appointments if possible (250-385-1466 to talk to doctor, nurse, or pharmacist, expect to have to leave a voicemail and number you can be called back at); open 9:00-4:30 Mon-Thur, 9-3 Fri, 10-2 Sat
- [Doctors of the World](#): No Mobile Health Clinic (van) and no direct nursing care except in emergency. Nurses will do outreach on foot to assist community partners with distribution of wellness supplies & provide health info. **Apr 7 update:** Schedule this week -- Tue Apr 7 = 7-9 PM at Pandora 900 block; Wed April 8 = 11 AM - 1 PM at Mustard Seed; Thu April 9 = 11 AM - 1 PM at Topaz Park.
- [Foundry Victoria](#) (youth only, ages 12-24): Drop-in clinic closed but services still available via phone, with some in-person services available (e.g., injections) if no respiratory symptoms. Can call 250-383-3552, 10:30 AM - 5 PM Mon-Fri, to make appointment for same-day tele-health, tele-counselling, peer support, outreach services, and some in-person medical services such as injections (in-person only if no respiratory symptoms). Foundry can prescribe OAT, suboxone, and some Methadone, and on a case-by-case basis other drugs following government's temporary safer supply guidelines.
- Island Health street nurse: Operating as usual
- [Our Place](#) (wound care): Drop-in services closed as of Mar 17
- [Peers](#): Drop-in services closed (so no drop-in health clinic), but health staff can be reached by phone during their usual hours. Staff will be focusing on supporting campers at various sites and persons in temp motel rooms, but can arrange testing support on an individual basis as needed, [health@peers.bc.ca](mailto:health@peers.bc.ca); phone at 250-217-5937 will be answered Tue / Wed / Thu noon - 4 PM, or text any time.
- Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)) - nurses/Dr. Price: Drop-in services closed

Victoria News reported [Mar 23](#) that BC Housing has purchased the property at 938 Mason Street (formerly used by Girl Guides) and will "temporarily use the site as a triage centre and COVID-19 test site for Victoria's homeless population". Not yet clear how this will work, will post more details as we find out more.

## Prescription drugs



[As of Mar 16](#) pharmacies have been given expanded powers to authority to give out medication and decide on medication delivery.

### **Getting more medication**

Under these emergency prescribing measures pharmacists can provide refills and emergency supplies of medication without getting a prescription from a doctor. So, [you can ask a pharmacy](#) directly rather than having to see a doctor first, for:

- Refills (if you already have a prescription): If your supply is near running out, or if you want to get a refill a bit early to provide enough in case you have to self-isolate and won't be able to go to a pharmacy. This might mean 14 day supply if you have no other risks, or longer if you are considered higher risk for COVID-19.
- 30 day emergency supply if you have an expired prescription - includes narcotics, and psychiatric drugs e.g., anti-psychotics). This emergency supply can be repeated for another 30 days if necessary.

Note that the way these emergency measures are worded it is up to a pharmacist to decide what is best -- they do not have to say yes to giving you a refill without a prescription and we have already heard that in some instances pharmacies have said no to early refill for Ativan.

### **Getting Opiate Agonist Treatment (OAT) delivered (incl methadose, Kadian, Suboxone)**

- Nurse practitioners can now prescribe OAT, not just doctors.
- You no longer need doctor authorization to get OAT delivered to you, the pharmacist can now decide to do this if in their opinion it is "safe, appropriate, and in the best interests of the patient", unless your prescribing doctor/nurse has specifically indicated on the prescription that it should not be delivered to you.
- You don't have to have it delivered to your home address, you can have it delivered to any street address (not a PO Box) as long as the pharmacist feels it is safe, private, and will maintain your confidentiality.
- You and the pharmacist have to agree on a time and date for the delivery, and what happens if they try to deliver and you aren't there (how will you get your OAT another way). It can't be left if you aren't there. OAT has to be delivered to the person who is named in the prescription, it can't be left with someone else.
- If you ask a pharmacy to deliver to you and they can't do it, they are supposed to tell you another pharmacy you can go to.
- **Apr 6 update:** Unless your prescription says that witnessed consumption is required you do NOT have to do witnessed consumption, to reduce need for face-to-face contact with a pharmacist.

## **Substance use**

- **Getting prescription alternatives to street drugs -- Apr 6 update:**

The COVID-19 crisis is making it harder for people to find OK quality drugs putting more people in withdrawal, increasing number of people using alone (so increasing risk of OD), and also putting people at risk of getting COVID when they have to go out to get drugs.

In late March the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU) put out [new guidelines](#) to increase options for people to get prescription alternatives to street drugs. The [BC / Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors](#) did an excellent summary of the guidelines that was adapted by Christopher for a

[printer-friendly version](#). Some more details below. This is a new system and it's not clear how well it's going to work. If you aren't getting access you can ask [BC / Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors](#) for help, text/call 778- 801-5920.

- To qualify you have to be:
  - At risk of COVID or have a suspected case -- everyone in the street community is at risk of COVID so should qualify; AND
  - Be already using opiates (heroin/fentanyl/etc including people already on OAT who chip), stimulants (meth/coke/etc), or benzos (Ativan/Valium/Klonopin etc), AND
  - At high risk of OD, withdrawal, or other potential harm related to substance use.
  - Both adults and youth are eligible. Youth < age 19 will have to go through "education" and OAT will be recommended as alternative.
  
- Options that can be prescribed:
  - Opiates: hydromorph (dillies = Dilaudid) and/or M-Eslon (slow release morphine), or OAT (suboxone / Kadian / methadose). People already on OAT can get higher dose.
  - Stimulants: dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine) or methylphenidate (Ritalin)
  - Benzos: whatever specific benzo you've been using, e.g., diazepam (Valium), lorazepam (Ativan), clonazepam (Klonopin), alprazolam (Xanax) - not all benzos are covered under PharmaCare so may be recommended you switch to one that is covered, so you don't have to pay
  
- Finding a prescriber:
  - If you have a GP or nurse practitioner, start with them.
  - Other options:
    - [Cool Aid](#) health clinic: Encouraging phone appointments if possible (250-385-1466 to talk to doctor, nurse, or pharmacist, expect to have to leave a voicemail and number you can be called back at); open 9:00-4:30 Mon-Thur, 9-3 Fri, 10-2 Sat
    - [Foundry Victoria](#) (youth only, ages 12-24): Drop-in clinic closed but services still available via phone, 250-383-3552, 10:30 AM - 5 PM Mon-Fri, to make appointment. Foundry can prescribe OAT, suboxone, and some Methadone, and on a case-by-case basis other drugs following government's temporary safer supply guidelines.
    - Rapid Access Addictions Clinic (RAAC): 250-519-3485 (note that as of Apr 6 they are only willing to prescribe suboxone and methadose)
  
- Deliveries: Like other prescriptions, pharmacies can now deliver these drugs to you if you're sick or at risk of getting sick. See earlier info on delivery of prescriptions.
  
- Carries:
  - Under the guidelines the preference is that medication be delivered to you daily so the script will most likely say "daily dispensed" (esp if the person who's prescribing hasn't seen you before now).
  - But the guidelines also say 7-day carry can be given depending on your situation - you'd need to prove you can keep it safe and not have it stolen (e.g., be living somewhere with a lockable door, or give it to an outreach worker who can bring it to you).

- For [opiates](#) the prescriber needs to feel you are able to space out how frequently you're using, i.e., that a 7-day carry wouldn't put you at risk for OD.
    - A carry may be more likely to happen if you are potentially contagious (e.g., fever, cough), to make it more possible to stay where you are and have the delivery person be less frequently in contact with you.
  - Rules on witnessed consumption have changed, not everyone will need witnessed consumption any more (even if you're getting daily delivery). The person prescribing needs to write "not witnessed" on the script if this is the case.
  - Prescription is supposed to be at least 23 days (can be extended) and not end on a weekend or stat holiday.
- **Nicotine and smoking / vaping: Apr 6 update** -- With fewer people outside it's a lot harder to find cigarette butts and smoking used butts is high risk for COVID transmission. Some things that might help reduce risk:
  - Don't smoke the butt directly, re-roll the tobacco so you're not putting your mouth on someone else's filter. Use hand sanitizer on your hands after you've touched the butts.
  - If you can, leave the butts for a couple days before smoking them (so have different bags for different days of collected butts, so you are smoking your butts collected Mon on Wed, smoking your Tues butts on Thurs, etc.).
  - Try not to share vapes, or if you have to share use an alcohol wipe to clean between people using the vape.
  - Another possible option: under the BC Smoking Cessation Program you can get [free nicotine replacement](#) -- patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers, etc. -- or prescriptions that help reduce nicotine cravings (e.g., Zyban). It's usually up to 12 weeks coverage but because of COVID recommendation is to consider extending longer right now. You don't need a doctor's prescription, just pharmacist approval.
- **Alcohol:**
  - Government alcohol stores (BC Liquor): As of [Wed Mar 25](#) are still open but with reduced hours. All are closed on Sundays (as of Sunday Mar 29) and some may be reducing other hours as well.
  - Alcohol withdrawal can result in seizures and other dangerous complications. A supported alcohol program has been needed here for a long time and now with this COVID crisis people are working on getting it going ASAP. We will post more as we find out more.
- **Overdose prevention/response & witnessed consumption sites:**
  - [AVI Health and Community Services](#): Injection room is closed. Mobile harm reduction service shifting frequently, schedule for Fri Apr 3 - Sun Apr 5 = 3 PM to 5:30 PM at Topaz Park (including pop-up overdose prevention site), 5:30-7:00 PM roving outreach (may be at Topaz, Pandora, or Centennial Square).
  - [AVI Health and Community Services](#): Mobile harm reduction service shifting frequently, schedule for now is = overdose prevention site 2:30-5:30 PM at Topaz Park (including witnessed inhalation)
  - Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)): Injection room and smoking room still open as of Mar 20, reduced numbers of people allowed in at any time and asking people move through as fast as possible

- The Harbour ([Lookout/SOLID](#)): Consumption room and chill room closed (no inside services) but in the process of setting up mobile / pop-up witnessed consumption. Will post more details when available.
- [Drug checking](#) (Substance UVic): As of Mar 31 has moved from in-person services to a different system. Drop-off of drugs / pick-up of results through SOLID Outreach, 1056 North Park, 10 AM - 4 PM Mon-Fri. May take 1-2 business days for results to be ready. Can't return any leftover sample at this time, it will be destroyed after the check.
- **Harm reduction supplies (syringes, pipes, etc):**
  - [AVI Health and Community Services](#): Mobile harm reduction service shifting frequently, schedule for now is = 2:30-5:30 PM at Topaz Park (including pop-up overdose prevention site), 5-7 PM roving outreach (may be at Topaz, Pandora, Rock Bay), 7-9:15 PM supplies & snacks outside 713 Johnson Street
  - [Daily Dose Society](#): Not sure, waiting for confirmation
  - [Peers](#): Take-away harm reduction supplies (and food) available at Peers front door at 1 PM Mon/Wed/Fri, drop-in is closed. Harm reduction staff can be reached at 250-217-0410, answered Mon-Thu 10 AM - 4 PM or text any time. Staff will be focusing on supporting campers at various sites and persons in temp motel rooms, but can arrange harm reduction support on an individual basis as needed. Night outreach will be starting Mon Apr 6, on the stroll Mon / Wed / Fri at usual time (around 7:30 PM) with food and harm reduction supplies.
  - Rock Bay Landing ([Cool Aid](#)): As of Mar 23 confirmed staff will bring harm reduction supplies to the door, people not staying at RBL can't go inside.
  - [Sobering Centre](#) (Island Health): As of Mar 21 supplies available for pickup
  - [SOLID](#): All health education groups are cancelled, drop-in space is for supplies and CSP pickup only. Supplies pickup at outreach office 9-4 Mon-Sat. Contact Fred (250-686-6776) if you need harm reduction supplies delivered in downtown region. Contact Mark (250-891-9299) if you live in a residence/SRO/supportive housing unit that needs supplies for multiple units in Victoria, Esquimalt, Gorge area etc.
- **Other services:**
  - [Pandora Clinic](#) (OAT including suboxone, methadose, and sometimes Kadian) - **Apr 7 update:** From [Cool Aid website](#) - "Remains open to existing patients at regular hours. They expect to limit hours at short notice over the coming weeks; changes will be posted on the door. Some changes in service including limit of 4 patients at a time in waiting room and limited amount of time with the doctor. Some practitioners are moving towards tele health over the next few weeks." Regular hours posted on [Pandora Clinic website](#) are Mon-Fri 9 AM - 5 PM.
  - [Sobering Centre](#) (Island Health): As of Mar 20 still doing new intakes, with reduced beds - usually full by 9 PM. Best to call first, 250-213-4441. From [Cool Aid website](#) - "Sobering and Assessment Centre is down to 4 female beds and 8 male beds." [Not clear how non-binary people are able to access services, we hope to have news soon]
  - Detox (Island Health): Sobering Centre advised us Mar 20 that detox is still open but anticipate reduced spaces and even before reduced space was often full (so expect waitlist to access bed). From [Cool Aid website](#) in early April - "Detox is now only taking clients with acute medical needs at the moment (i.e. yes for alcohol, no for stimulants, and case-by-case for opiates). Service changes will include dropping total numbers to 10 clients." In the past has required referral from The Harbour but now that it's shut not clear how referrals will work. Best to call first to check anticipate waitlist wait time, 250-519-3485 / 250-213-4444.

## Communication

- [As of Mar 14](#) Shaw made its WiFi hotspots free to the public. If you have a phone or other electronic device and can find a place to charge it, once you register (the first time you connect to a Shaw WiFi hotspot) you'll automatically connect any time you're close enough to a Shaw hotspot in future. Shaw WiFi hotspots are located in many places downtown, see <https://www.shaw.ca/internet/wifi> for map with locations and instructions on how to connect.
- No [phones/computers](#) available at usual drop-in locations as these are all closed right now (so no computers accessible at libraries, community centres, Disability Resource Centre, Our Place/Rock Bay Landing computer rooms; and no phones at any of these locations or Pacifica Downtown Outreach Service or Sandy Merriman House).