

# SUPERVISED INJECTION SITES AND NURSING PRACTICE

**THE HISTORY** The first legally sanctioned supervised injection site (SIS) in Canada (Insite) opened in 2003, following sustained advocacy efforts by drug users, community organizations, health care providers, and other stakeholders. Nurses were part of these efforts. Nurses and nursing associations were also instrumental in keeping Insite open. In 2011, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), the British Columbia Nurses Union (BCNU), and the Association of Registered Nurses of British-Columbia (ARNBC) intervened at the Supreme Court of Canada to support nurses (and the care they deliver) and advocate for the rights of people who use drugs to access SIS as part of a comprehensive harm reduction approach.

**THE PROCESS** The process to open a SIS is as follows: Under the current legislation (i.e., Respect for Communities Act formerly known as Bill C-2), an organization has to submit 26 different pieces of information including numerous letters of support, consultation records, statistics, research, financial plan, reports, and so forth. Health Canada then reviews this information and determines if it will provide an exemption under Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. During this process, additional information can be requested. There is no guarantee that an application will be considered or approved. Reasons for declining to review or approve an application remain unclear at this stage. If granted, the exemption can last a year or more.

**THE SITES** There are currently two SIS in Canada (i.e., Insite and Dr. Peter Centre) and many applications are under way. SIS can be fixed or mobile. People come to these sites with their own previously obtained substances to inject under supervision. They also come to these sites to access a range of services including harm reduction education, immunization, point of care HIV testing, STI screening, counseling, wound care, just to name a few. In a “typical” SIS, people inject their drug in the presence of a nurse. They can access clean supplies, take their time to inject, ask questions, and most importantly, receive immediate care if they show signs of overdose or anaphylaxis. They are usually invited to rest after the injection and are then provided with an opportunity to connect with peer workers and/or other members of the team for additional care.

**THE ROLE OF NURSES** It has been clearly established that the care provided in SIS falls within the legislated scope of practice of nurses and is consistent with the CNA code of ethics. In these sites, nurses act as a first point of contact with the health care system. They work directly with clients by establishing a rapport, assessing clients' level of knowledge and understanding of potential harms associated with injection drug use, providing education, preventing risky injection practices, monitoring for signs of drug overdose or anaphylaxis, and intervening in emergency situations. Based on their assessment, nurses can refer clients to addiction services, facilitate linkage to services which are often difficult to access for people who use drugs (i.e. housing, income assistance, food support), and support them in accessing primary care services.

**THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE** There are more than 90 SIS worldwide. These sites have been shown to be effective, beneficial, cost-efficient, and safer for people who use drugs. They are effective in preventing disease, overdose, and death. They are also effective in reducing drug use and increasing uptake in addiction treatment. SIS are beneficial because they allow nurses to meet people where they are at while eliminating barriers to health care and achieving greater levels of health overall. They are cost-efficient and save money. Insite alone contributes to yearly savings of \$5 million. Finally, they provide a safer environment for people to inject drugs and receive immediate care if needed.

## CANADIAN NURSING ASSOCIATIONS



CNA | Harm Reduction and Nursing Practice  
<https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/on-the-issues/better-health/harm-reduction>



CNA & CANAC | Joint Position Statement on Harm Reduction  
[https://www.cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/jps\\_harm\\_reduction\\_2012\\_e.pdf](https://www.cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/jps_harm_reduction_2012_e.pdf)



CNSA | Position Statement on Harm Reduction  
<http://cnsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2013-Resolutions-Position-Statements-.pdf>



RNAO | Statement on Harm Reduction and SIS  
<http://rnao.ca/policy/political-action/rnao-harm-reduction-access>

## RESPECT FOR COMMUNITY ACT (FORMERLY KNOWN AS BILL C-2)



Respect Communities: Say No to Bill C-2  
<http://respectcommunities.ca>



CNA | Brief on Bill C-2  
[https://www.cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/bill-c-2-an-act-to-amend-the-controlled-drugs-and-substances-act\\_respect-for-communities-act.pdf?la=en](https://www.cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/bill-c-2-an-act-to-amend-the-controlled-drugs-and-substances-act_respect-for-communities-act.pdf?la=en)



CANAC | Brief on Bill C-2  
[http://canac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/BILL-C-2\\_Brief\\_CANAC\\_FINAL.pdf](http://canac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/BILL-C-2_Brief_CANAC_FINAL.pdf)



CDPC & Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network: Critical Review of Bill C-2  
[http://www.aidslaw.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/C2-QA\\_Oct2014-ENG.pdf](http://www.aidslaw.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/C2-QA_Oct2014-ENG.pdf)

## NURSING PRACTICE, HARM REDUCTION AND SIS



Bevel Up: Drugs, Users, and Outreach Nursing  
<http://www.canadawildproductions.com/film/bevel-up/>



Welcome to Insite  
<https://vimeo.com/52037252>



The Story of BCNU's Support for Insite and Harm Reduction  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUgiidZ7fiw>



Gaining Insite: Harm Reduction in Nursing Practice  
[http://drugpolicy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Lightfoot-etal\\_09\\_Gaining-Insite.pdf](http://drugpolicy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Lightfoot-etal_09_Gaining-Insite.pdf)



The Dr. Peter Centre Harm Reduction Nursing  
<http://www.drpeter.org/media/canadiannurse-may03.pdf>



Injection supervisée : Sous l'œil du personnel infirmier  
[https://oiiq.org/sites/default/files/uploads/periodiques/Perspective/vol10no2/05\\_sante\\_publique.pdf](https://oiiq.org/sites/default/files/uploads/periodiques/Perspective/vol10no2/05_sante_publique.pdf)



The Ethical, Legal and Social Context of Harm Reduction  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17990401>



Harm reduction through a social justice lens  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18226520>



Shifting moral values to enhance access to health care:  
Harm reduction as a context for ethical nursing care  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18467086>