

Community Dialogues on Opioid Use

Funding Available

The **BC Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General** has provided funding to the **University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CARBC)** to support community dialogues in response to the opioid overdose crisis in British Columbia.

Community coalitions from every region of the province are invited to submit a **letter of interest** in engaging their community in dialogue about opioid and other drug use. CARBC will provide selected communities with **grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000** to assist with costs associated with hosting a community dialogue.

The letter of interest should include:

- Identification of a host organization that will receive, manage and report on any funding awarded
- List of community partners committed to working with the host organization in supporting the dialogue(s) – this must include partners from the health and policing sectors and should include partners from some other sectors (e.g., social services; child, youth and family; education; faith communities)
- Identification of those elements (voices) in the community currently not well-engaged in the discourse or represented on the current coalition and that the proposed grant will help include and engage

Please note that the letter of interest does not need to include:

- A plan for the dialogue(s)
- A budget

Those details can be worked out in consultation with CARBC once your community is selected for a grant.

Letters of interest should be sent to carbcbvan@uvic.ca and will start to be evaluated as of **18 April 2017**. Letters of interest will continue to be accepted after that date and until available funding is fully expended.

Why dialogue?

We have become used to debates that pit one against another: idea against idea, agenda against agenda, and person against person. But debates don't build community. Those who lose do not go away, they simply stop taking part. Disconnection actually contributes to the tensions and divisions that are having devastating consequences in our world. People who are disconnected have important knowledge that can help us build safer and healthier communities. By talking to people from different backgrounds and vantage points, we become more informed. When we are more informed, we tend to make better choices. Those choices affect everybody.

What is dialogue?

Dialogue is a method of communication that involves two-way conversation where people not only speak to each other but also really *listen*. This kind of listening involves empathy. Each partner in a dialogue is curious about the experiences of the other partners – about their assumptions, beliefs and values. The goal is to leave the conversation with a better understanding.

Unlike many other forms of public communication (e.g., debates or negotiations), dialogue is not meant to lead immediately to agreement or action. Instead, the hope is that participants will come away with a better understanding of the subject, of each other and of themselves. This new understanding means community members will be able to work together more effectively. Communities will be more flexible. Individuals and communities will have a greater sense of control over their own lives and well-being.



Community dialogue can also take many forms. It is not limited to a public meeting or sitting around a table. It could involve walking tours facilitated by different members of the community. It could be art show or a series of “ask me anything” sessions. The sky’s the limit. The only critical requirement is that it helps us listen to, and understand, each other.

Why dialogue about opioid use?

Opioid overdose deaths in British Columbia have led to the declaration of a public health emergency. But different people hold different views about how to address the emergency in our communities. No one has all the answers. Even the best efforts of recognized experts have not solved the crisis or reduced the overdoses. Now is a good time to begin having honest and open community dialogues about drugs and drug policy.

Dialogue to address the opioid crisis is far more than talking about drugs. Since addiction is not simply about drugs but results from a breakdown in the fabric or connectedness of human community, the dialogue needs to help us understand each other and build social relationships that support individual needs, preferences and autonomy. The breakdown of this integration of the community and all its members is at the root of addiction. Dialogue is an important tool in re-building this integration.

Why CARBC?

CARBC has extensive experience in the addictions field in building bridges and bringing people together. We are currently leading a national project to facilitate dialogue about changing cannabis policy and recently completed a project helping opioid substitution treatment patients develop a handbook for other patients that has been approved by professionals across the system. CARBC is committed to supporting communities in understanding dialogue and planning and implementing strategies to promote dialogue in their unique contexts and settings.

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