


Rate of Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths

Year to Date Performance	27.0	Performance Assessment	 Yellow
Island Health Target	Less than or equal to 5.0	Performance is outside acceptable range; monitor and take action as appropriate.	

What do we measure and why?

On April 14, 2016, the Public Health Officer of BC declared an emergency due to the increase in overdose deaths, driven in part by the increasing presence of potent opioid analogues such as fentanyl. The response to this emergency situation and the reduction of preventable deaths remains a high priority.

This indicator reports the number of deaths classified by the Coroner's Office as accidental or undetermined deaths (confirmed and under investigation) where cause of death indicates apparent illicit drug overdose, as a rate per 100,000 population. "Illicit drugs" include street drugs, medications NOT prescribed to the deceased, combinations of the two, and/or cases where the origin of drug is not known.

What is the target?

The target for 2018/19 is fewer than 5.0 deaths per 100,000 population. This target is based on average annual rates prior to 2011, when rates began to increase due to the increased presence of fentanyl. A decrease from the 2017 rate of 29.5 per 100,000 indicates a move in the right direction and therefore place the indicator in the yellow zone. Any increase above 29.5 would place the indicator in the red zone.

How are we doing?

For 2018, Island Health's rate of deaths due to illicit drug overdose was 27.0 per 100,000, which did not meet the target. This rate is slightly lower (better) than the 2017 annual rate, but is a 43% increase compared to 2016.

What actions are we taking?

While the rate of overdose deaths remains high, it would likely be much higher without the significant response efforts aimed at reducing the number of preventable deaths. These efforts include widespread distribution of naloxone, increased outreach, the opening of nine Overdose Prevention Sites in communities across Island Health, and other harm reduction efforts as well as increased referral and access to treatment options including opioid agonist therapy.

The response to this emergency situation and the reduction of preventable deaths remains a high priority across Island Health and British Columbia.