

# Harm Reduction Commission

Meeting Minutes  
December 17, 2018  
3:00-5:00 pm

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Date of meeting: Monday, December 17, 2018

Start time: 3:05 pm

End time: 5:10 pm

Location: McCormack Building, One Ashburton Place, Conference Rooms 1 & 2, Boston, MA 02108

Members present:

- Marylou Sudders – Executive Office of Health and Human Services (Chair)
- Monica Bharel, MD, MPH – Department of Public Health
- Jeffrey N. Roy – State House of Representatives
- Cindy Friedman – State Senate
- Marty Martinez – Designee of the Mayor of Boston
- Marc McGovern – Mayor of Cambridge
- Jessie M. Gaeta, MD – Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
- Matilde Castiel, MD – Worcester Health and Human Services
- Robert Roose, MD – Mercy Medical Center
- Leo Beletsky, JD, MPH – Northeastern University
- Aubri Esters – Massachusetts resident
- Deirdre Calvert, LICSW – Column Health
- Gary Langis – Education Development Center

Members absent:

- Armando Gonzalez – Massachusetts resident
- Frederick Ryan – Arlington Police Department

## **Proceedings**

Secretary Sudders called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. She proposed holding the discussion of the commission's updated meeting agenda and vote to approve the minutes from the previous meeting at the end of the meeting as a courtesy to the invited panelists who were speaking to the commission via video link from Canada.

Secretary Sudders welcomed the presenters and invited them to introduce themselves. Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer for British Columbia, provided an overview of the scope of the opioid crisis in British Columbia and the province's ongoing harm reduction efforts. Dr. Henry noted that in 2017, there were over 1,450 overdose deaths in British Columbia, representing a third of the overdose deaths in Canada. She provided an overview of the province's harm reduction strategy, a central pillar of which is increasing access to naloxone, including a Take Home Naloxone (THN) program that distributed nearly 100,000 naloxone kits from September 2017 to September 2018. (See PowerPoint presentation posted online to the commission's meeting materials webpage for additional details.)

Scott Elliott, Executive Director for the Dr. Peter Centre in Vancouver, presented a detailed overview of the Dr. Peter Centre's work. Mr. Elliott explained that the Dr. Peter Centre is located in a residential area in Vancouver and primarily offers services for an HIV+ patient population as part of a comprehensive, continuum of care healthcare model. Mr. Elliott highlighted a potentially helpful resource that includes a

summary of supervised injection services research (pages 8-10) available at the following link: <http://www.bccsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BC-SCS-Operational-Guidance.pdf>. (See PowerPoint presentation posted online to the commission's meeting materials webpage for additional details.)

Paul Loo, Director of the Office of Controlled Substances for Health Canada in Ottawa, provided an overview of Canada's supervised consumption services (SCS), which include overdose prevention sites (OPS). In his presentation, Mr. Loo explained that Canada experienced a dramatic rise in opioid-related deaths in recent years, which reached 4,000 overdose deaths in 2017, resulting in an increase in pressure from the public for the Canadian government to establish more SCS and OPS nationwide. (See PowerPoint presentation posted online to the commission's meeting materials webpage for additional details.) Mr. Loo noted that under the current administration, the federal government has placed harm reduction as one of the central pillars in the government's public health agenda. He noted that in developing harm reduction services, the Ministry of Health has prioritized the inclusion of residents with lived experience with opioids and substance use disorder.

Mr. Elliott noted his support for the Canadian government's efforts to increase federal exemptions for SCS to operate under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) and to view substance use through a medical lens rather than a moral lens.

Secretary Sudders thanked the panelists and highlighted her admiration for British Columbia's province-wide anti-stigma and opioid addiction awareness campaign established in partnership with the city's professional hockey team ([www.stopoverdose.gov.bc.ca](http://www.stopoverdose.gov.bc.ca)).

David Solet, Chief Legal Counsel for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, presented a detailed overview of the federal and state laws that are relevant to the potential operation of a harm reduction site in the Commonwealth (see PowerPoint presentation posted online to the commission's meeting materials webpage for additional details).

Adam Chapdelaine, Arlington Town Manager, presented an overview of the local zoning issues related to opening and operating a harm reduction site (see PowerPoint presentation posted online to the commission's meeting materials webpage for additional details). In response to a question from the commission, he noted that operating a SCS might be a newly-defined use, which would require approval at the local level.

Ms. Esters proposed that Professor Beletsky draft a document for the commission that summarizes potential legal defenses to existing federal laws impacting the opening and operation of SCS in the United States.

Mr. Langis informed the commission that he had been in contact with representatives from the Boston Area Users Union (BAUU) and is exploring opportunities to meet with their members to solicit feedback on their preferences related to a SCS. Dr. Gaeta requested inviting representatives from the BAUU to present at one of the remaining commission meetings.

Secretary Sudders reviewed the updated schedule and agenda for the commission's remaining two meetings and requested feedback from the members. In response to a question from Mr. Martinez regarding the commission's findings and recommendations, Secretary Sudders noted that the commission's final deliverable could be a document structured to address each aspect of the commission's charges.

Professor Beletsky proposed that the commission consider reorganizing the agendas for the final two commission meetings to create additional time for discussion of harm reduction approaches the commission had not yet had opportunities to discuss. He requested that members vote on whether to pursue a later

submission date to the legislature of March 1, 2019 for the commission's findings and recommendations. In response, Senator Friedman noted that she could explore the possibility but that the extension would have to be approved by the legislature.

**Vote:** Secretary Sudders called for a vote on the possibility of exploring a 30-day extension to the submission date of the commission's findings and recommendations to the legislature. The motion was seconded by Senator Friedman and approved unanimously by the members.

Secretary Sudders summarized members' input related to the agenda, noting that her staff will revise the agenda for the meeting scheduled for January 9, 2019 to allow for more time for discussion of the commission's findings and recommendations, and will invite representatives from the BUU to present at the commission meeting scheduled for January 28, 2019.

**Vote:** Secretary called for a vote to approve the minutes from the previous meeting on November 20, 2018, which was seconded and approved unanimously by the members.

**Vote:** Secretary Sudders called for a vote for the meeting to adjourn, which was seconded and approved unanimously by the members.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.