

# SisterSpace

## PROGRAM UPDATE

August 2018

SisterSpace, Canada's first and only women-only overdose prevention site is located at 135 Dunlevy Street in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.



**SisterSpace** provides women who use substances with a safe and supportive environment where they can use substances in the presence of peer support workers who are trained in overdose response. The program is run by Atira Women's Resource Society, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, the City of Vancouver, B.C. Housing, B.C. Women's Hospital, and the Provincial Health Services Authority.

### Available services and resources include:

- Safe space to use substances
- Harm reduction supplies
- Referrals and information about other services
- Coffee, tea, juice, and snacks
- Fentanyl testing
- Primary care with a nurse-practitioner (three mornings a week)
- Connection with Atira's housing outreach worker
- Bad date reporting
- Message board

## SisterSpace by the Numbers

- ➔ SisterSpace opened on May 15, 2017.
- ➔ Between May 2017 and July 2018, there were over **16,000 visits** to SisterSpace.
- ➔ On average, approximately **65-75 women** visit SisterSpace each day.
- ➔ Since January 2018, the peer support workers have managed 18 overdoses and administered naloxone six times. There have been **no overdose deaths**.
- ➔ Previous research has shown that overdose rates are significantly higher during the weeks when BC Income Assistance cheques are distributed, known as "cheque week." In 2018, cheque distribution did not have a significant effect on the number of visits to SisterSpace.





## Expanding Hours

- SisterSpace is open from 6 am - 12 pm and from 6 pm - 12 am.
- The busiest times of day are generally from 9 am - 12 pm and from 9 pm - 12 am.
- In June 2018, SisterSpace was open 24/7 for one week. During this time, visits to SisterSpace doubled, indicating a demand for expanded hours.
- In August 2018, SisterSpace will begin expanded hours and remain open overnight (6pm-12pm, closed in the afternoons). This is intended to better meet the needs of women who do sex work and other women in the community seeking a women-only space that is available throughout the night.



**Operation Cupcake.** In June 2018, a generous volunteer from the community baked cupcakes and made frosting for the women at SisterSpace to decorate for two community outreach events.

## SisterSpace Documentary

The Centre of Excellence for Women's Health ([www.bccewh.bc.ca](http://www.bccewh.bc.ca)) recently profiled SisterSpace as an example of gender-informed and trauma-informed programming in two new resources. These resources are being used to support training and education for health care and social service providers across the country.



- ➔ Watch the 10-minute documentary <https://youtu.be/UU-QwGwUJmg>
- ➔ Trauma-Informed Practice and the Opioid Crisis  
Download from [www.bccewh.bc.ca](http://www.bccewh.bc.ca)

Learn more about SisterSpace's program model:  
[www.atira.bc.ca/sisterspace-shared-using-room-women](http://www.atira.bc.ca/sisterspace-shared-using-room-women)

