



Welcome to the second edition of the CRISM National Newsletter, your quarterly snapshot of the research, partnerships, and community-driven initiatives advancing substance use health across Canada.

The first few months of 2026 have already brought significant momentum across the Network. In this issue, you'll find highlights of the impactful work underway across CRISM's Nodes and national initiatives, from new studies and funding opportunities to emerging tools, partnerships, and publications shaping the field.

These updates reflect a strong start to the year, with much more to come as we continue to build, connect, and advance evidence into action together.

Thank you for being part of the CRISM community.



NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

CRISM Addiction Rounds: System Dynamic Modeling in the Opioid Crisis

Missed our latest session? [Watch the newest CRISM Addiction Rounds](#) featuring Dr. Kay Rittenbach (University of Calgary, Department of Psychiatry). Dr. Rittenbach brings experience across clinical trials, health systems, and government, and focuses on using administrative data and community-informed insights to improve care for marginalized populations. In this session, they explore how system dynamic modeling can help better understand and respond to the opioid crisis.

Register for future CRISM Addiction Rounds [here](#).



New Publication: Advancing Canada's Safe(r) Opioid Supply Research Agenda

A new paper contributed by CRISM members across multiple nodes, published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*, provides important clarity on "safe(r) supply" as a harm reduction strategy in Canada. Drawing on a review of 95 studies, the paper distinguishes between medicalized ('safer supply') and community-based ('safe-supply') approaches, and outlines key models within each. The findings highlight the need for clearer definitions and more standardized program parameters to better evaluate outcomes and inform evidence-based responses to the drug poisoning crisis.

Read *A scoping review and concept analysis to inform Canada's safe(r) opioid supply research agenda* [here](#).



Project Update: Expanding Rapid Access in Emergency Departments

CRISM continues to advance the implementation of buprenorphine/naloxone rapid access in emergency departments across Canada. Led by Drs. Andrew Kessler and Kathryn Dong, this project is supporting 12 emergency department sites across six provinces (BC, AB, MB, ON, QC, NS) to implement a best practices checklist for caring for people who use non-prescribed opioids. The checklist, developed through a Delphi study and endorsed by the [Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians](#), is currently being implemented, with results and knowledge translation expected following the project's completion in May.

Learn more [here](#).

Help Shape the CRISM National Repository

CRISM is inviting members to [complete a short, optional survey](#) to support the development of a new national CRISM Repository, designed to complement local node membership. This repository will map expertise, projects, and areas of interest across the Network, making it easier to connect, collaborate, and strengthen knowledge sharing across nodes.

Your input is an important step toward building a more connected and collaborative CRISM community. Access the survey [here](#).

Follow CRISM National on LinkedIn

Stay connected with what's happening across the Network by following CRISM-ICRIS on LinkedIn. We'll be sharing national updates, publication, funding opportunities, and highlights from across nodes, helping keep you informed and connected across CRISM.

Follow along and stay engaged [here](#)!



CRISM ATLANTIC

New Funding Opportunities – Atlantic Region

CRISM Atlantic has launched two new funding calls to support research and collaboration in the Atlantic Region:

1. **Working Group Funding Call** – Focused on supporting the Research Priority Themes in the Atlantic Region: Youth and Substance Use; Concurrent Disorders; and Rural Access and Telehealth.
2. **Research Development Program** – Providing seed funding to support building research initiatives relevant and specific to the substance use (SU) intervention needs within the Atlantic Region.

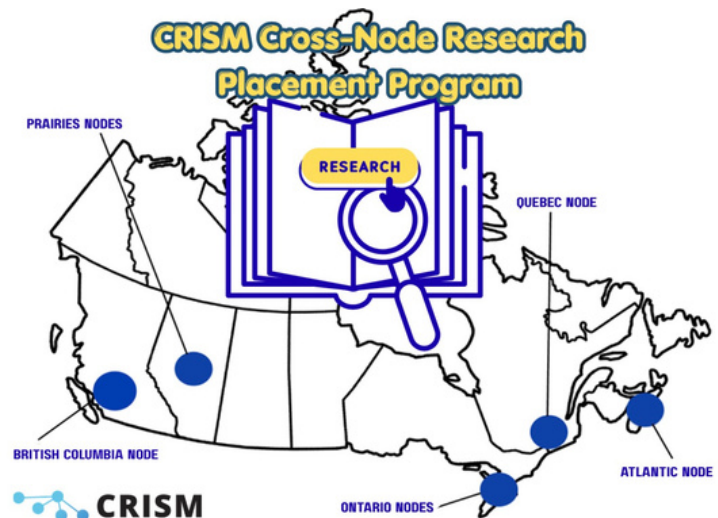
Both calls close April 10 (4PM AST)



CRISM's Cross-Node Research Placement Program

CRISM is excited to launch the first initiative in our new Training Program: the **Cross-Node Research Placement Program**. This is an opportunity for CRISM member trainees, undergraduates (minimum 4th year), graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows, to gain cross-network substance use research training at a non-home node. Submission date: April 10th (4PM AST)

Find more details [here](#).



The DECYDE (Drug Education Centres on Youth Decision Empowerment)

The DECYDE is a drug education and awareness strategy created by an interdisciplinary research team at Memorial University, co-led by Drs. Lisa Bishop and Jennifer Donnan. The site features **"Substance Snapshot"** summaries, **education resources** on topics like harm reduction stigma, and substance emergencies, and **ready-to-use lessons and activities** for learning environments.

Check out the open-access resources [here](#).

Publications of Note

- *"Anybody who Looks at This Program and Doesn't See the Positive Side from it Doesn't Fully Understand": Participant Perspectives on an Injectable Opioid Agonist Treatment Program in New Brunswick, Canada* (Contemporary Drug Problems)
 - *Testing the healthy immigrant effect on youth alcohol use: A longitudinal study.* (Social Science and Medicine)
 - *Examining the factor structure of the Substance Use Risk Profile Scale (SURPS) in emerging adults: An exploratory structural equation modeling approach.* (Psychological Assessment)
 - *Cocaine Use, Unhealthy Alcohol Use, and Pain Interference Among People with HIV* (AIDS and Behaviour)
 - *Development and Evaluation of the Psychometric Properties of the Modified College Eating and Cannabis Behaviors Scale (CECBS).* (Development of Mental Health and Addiction)
 - *Access to healthcare among managed alcohol program participants: A mixed methods study.* (International Journal of Drug Policy)
 - *Clinical outcomes and health care costs among people entering a safer opioid supply program in Ontario.* (Canadian Medical Association Journal)
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Project Update: Mobile Health Program for Youth with Psychosis Who Use Cannabis

The CRISM-supported mobile health program, led by Dr. Didier Jutras-Aswad in collaboration with multiple investigators across Canada, includes two complementary digital interventions for youth with psychosis who use cannabis: **CHAMPS** and **iCanChange (iCC)**. These tools are designed to be integrated within early intervention services (EIS) and to address different goals along the spectrum of cannabis use.

CHAMPS is a harm reduction-focused mobile intervention aimed at reducing cannabis-related harms for youth with psychosis who do not want to stop or decrease their cannabis use, while iCanChange (iCC) is designed to support youth who wish to reduce or cease cannabis use.

Pilot testing of CHAMPS demonstrated strong engagement and acceptability, supporting the feasibility of the intervention and of conducting a randomized controlled trial in this population. Findings from the CHAMPS pilot trial have been published (doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2025.116553). Encouraging results from the iCC pilot study, as well as findings from a qualitative evaluation conducted during the pilot phases of both interventions, are currently under review for publication.

Upcoming 2026: Efficacy Trials for Digital Interventions

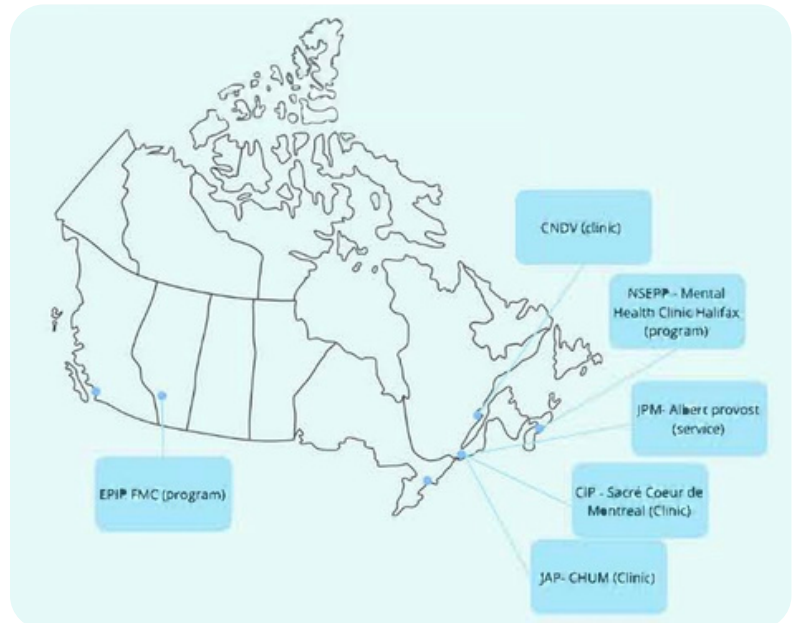
CRISM-affiliated teams, under the leadership of Didier Jutras-Aswad and in collaboration with co-principal investigators Amal Abdel-Baki, David Crockford, Marc-André Roy, and Phil Tibbo, have secured funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to launch two multisite clinical trials evaluating these digital interventions for youth experiencing psychosis who use cannabis.

Both trials are supported by the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse and will be conducted across the same provinces (Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Alberta). One trial will evaluate CHAMPS, a mobile harm reduction-focused intervention, while the second trial will evaluate iCanChange (iCC), aimed at decreasing or ceasing cannabis use.

Together, these projects bring together national and international collaborators, alongside people with lived and living experience, to advance evidence-based, accessible digital supports and strengthen the integration of digital innovations into real-world care.

If any EIS clinics are interested in joining the project, please contact

Catherine.provost.chum@ssss.gouv.qc.ca



CRISM ONTARIO

New Studies Launched

CRISM-supported teams have launched two new studies focused on strengthening overdose response and service access for people who use drugs.

“Needs Assessment for Comprehensive Overdose Response in Toronto Shelters”:

This two-phase, multi-site qualitative study is examining the feasibility of incorporating oxygen administration into overdose response protocols in Toronto shelters, in response to the evolving drug supply and recent service changes.

The study engages shelter staff to assess current practices and readiness, people with lived experience to understand perceptions and comfort with oxygen use, and healthcare professionals to identify clinical and implementation considerations.

Phase I interviews with staff and clients are wrapping up, with Phase II focus groups now underway.

Meeting Clients Where They Are: A Multi-Stakeholder Needs Assessment to Strengthen PQWCHC (Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre) HART Hub Engagement Among People Who Use Drugs:

This is a multi-stakeholder needs assessment that examines barriers and facilitators to service access, trust and engagement factors, and programming needs from both client and staff perspectives.

Phase I is underway, with virtual and telephone interviews being conducted with staff and clients at the PQWCHC HART Hub and UHN Stabilization spoke site.

Project Update: Decriminalization Evaluation

The Ontario CRISM Node was granted a five-year operating grant from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) to evaluate British Columbia’s decriminalization policy, examining impacts across people who use drugs, the general population, policing and the justice system, health systems, and economic outcomes.

While the pilot formally concluded as of January 31, 2026, OCRINT’s evaluation remains ongoing. The evolving policy context presents a unique opportunity to assess implementation dynamics and unintended consequences, with findings expected to inform future drug policy decisions across Canada.



Standards and Quality Practices in Ontario Withdrawal Management Services (WMS): A Provincial Survey

This survey aims to establish a baseline of governance, operational, and evaluation practices across publicly funded WMS. It will examine existing resources and approaches guiding service quality, with findings used to identify gaps and inconsistencies and inform future standardization, implementation strategies, and policy development.

Publications of Note

- [Drug decriminalization and policy alienation among frontline police in British Columbia: A qualitative study.](#) (Criminology & Public Policy)
- [Shifting views on decriminalization in British Columbia: insights from public opinion polling, 2024–2025.](#) (The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse)
- [Decriminalization of drug possession in British Columbia and hospitalizations for opioid poisoning.](#) (Public Health)
- [Understanding opioid use within the substance use journeys of adults receiving treatment: a qualitative study protocol of the participant-led timeline mapping approach.](#) (BMJ Open)
- [Drug harms in Canada: A multi-criteria decision analysis.](#) (Journal of Psychopharmacology)
- [Non-medical use of prescription opioids: use to experience subjective effects vs. other non-medical use among adults in Ontario, Canada from 2020 to 2024.](#) (Drug and Alcohol Dependence)
- [Framing decriminalization: A mixed-methods study on media narratives, government resources, misinformation, and public support of British Columbia's drug decriminalization policy.](#) (International Journal of Drug Policy)

CRISM PRAIRIES

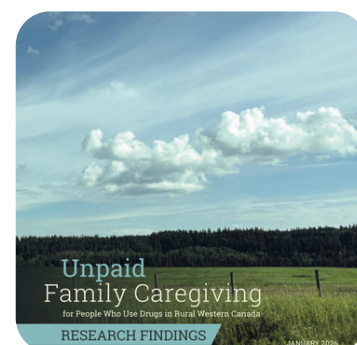
New Report Released

The final report, **“Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI) among people who inject drugs in Canada: Edmonton Tracks PWID Survey Phase 5, 2024 Summary Report”**, is now available. This report provides important insights into STBBI trends among people who inject drugs in Canada and supports ongoing research, policy, and program development. Access the [full report](#) and [infographic](#).

Unpaid Family Caregiving in Rural Canada

A new CRISM Prairie Node-supported report highlights the critical, and often invisible, role of unpaid family caregivers supporting people who use drugs in rural communities. Drawing on interviews with caregivers across the Prairies, the findings show that families are often filling major gaps in health and social services, providing extensive emotional, financial, and medical support, often at a significant personal cost.

The report underscores the needs for stronger formal supports, reduced stigma, and system-level changes to better support both people who use drugs and those who care for them. The report can be found [here](#).



Publications of Note

- *Community-based participatory research to improve resident wellness in a supportive living facility in the Northwest Territories.* (Harm Reduction Journal)
- *Limitations and Future Directions in Pharmacological Treatment for Amphetamine-Type Stimulant Use Disorder.* (The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry)
- *Long-term, bidirectional associations between depressive symptom severity and opioid use among people with HIV: A prospective cohort study.* (Addictive Behaviors Reports)
- *A qualitative investigation of the feasibility and acceptability of lower risk gambling guidelines.* (Harm Reduction Journal)
- *Correlates of Problem Gambling in Canada: The Moderating Effect of Sex.* (Journal of Gambling Studies)
- *Characteristics of Adults With Addictions and Mental Health Problems Who Have Experienced Homelessness: A Population-Based Study From Alberta, Canada: Caractéristiques des adultes aux prises avec des problèmes de dépendance et de santé mentale et ayant connu l'itinérance : une étude fondée sur la population de l'Alberta, Canada.* (Canadian Journal of Psychiatry)
- *Examining the impact of the first wave of COVID-19 on equitable access to emergency care across Alberta demographic groups: a retrospective observational study.* (BMJ Open)
- *We are all connected: reimagining care for people experiencing houselessness.* (Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine)
- *The relationship between COVID-19 and opioid-related emergency department visits in Alberta, Canada: an interrupted time series analysis.* (Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention in Canada: Research, Policy and Practice)
- *Rural community-based participatory research with families of people who use drugs: key considerations from a multi-provincial research partnership.* (Harm Reduction Journal)
- *Expanding supervised consumption services in rural Canada: Bridging gaps.* (Canadian Journal of Public Health)
- *Differences in overdose rates by gender at supervised consumption services: an explanatory sequential mixed methods study.* (Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy)



INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

In Development: Ethical Research with Indigenous Peoples

The IEP is working with CRISM nodes across Canada to develop national guidelines for ethical research with Indigenous Peoples. This emerging toolkit will focus on best practices for engagement by and for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, with opportunities for CRISM members to provide input as the work progresses.

New Publication

CRISM-IEP nominated principal investigator Dr. Robert Henry and colleagues have published a new article in *Health Promotion International* titled [Promoting self-determined Indigenous data governance in Canada: The Métis Health Research and Data Governance Principles](#).

This work outlines a distinctions-based framework for Métis governance, emphasizing the importance of Métis-specific approaches to health research, data sovereignty, and meaningful engagement with Métis rights holders. The principles aim to ensure that Métis values and perspectives are embedded throughout the research process and support more representative, self-determined data systems.

Read [here](#).



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