



2025 Report V1: Demand analysis required to provide opioid addiction treatment services when and where needed across Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Health Authority needs to consistently offer clients with opioid use disorder appropriate medication during detox to decrease risks of relapse, illness, or death

REGINA—June 3, 2025: In her **2025 Report – Volume 1**, Chapter 6, Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett examined the Saskatchewan Health Authority's processes to deliver opioid addiction treatment services in the province. She made eight recommendations.

Drug toxicity deaths continue to rise in Saskatchewan due to prevalent drug use and toxicity linked to substances such as fentanyl and other opioids. Provincial drug toxicity deaths increased over 22% from 2022 to 2023. Opioid abuse comes with significant risks such as dependence, addiction, overdose, and death.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority directly operates medication-assisted, outpatient treatment programs—Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) and Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine (RAAM)—across the province for clients with opioid use disorder. The Authority does not analyze wait times at its clinics or supply and demand for opioid addiction treatment services across Saskatchewan. Our testing found clients waited an average of 4 days in Kamsack and 4.75 days in Saskatoon (but 1.75 days in Regina) in 2024 from initial program contact to their first appointment with an OAT program prescriber (physician); good practice recommends clients wait no more than 3 days. Moreover, we found Lloydminster and Estevan had higher average drug toxicity deaths between 2022 and 2024 but do not have OAT programs.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority needs to implement standardized approaches (e.g., work standards, central IT system) for its opioid addiction treatment services not only to streamline treatment practices, but also to improve its data that informs operational decision-making and resource allocations. We found the wait-time reports for the four most active OAT programs (Kamsack, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon) unreliable because of errors and inconsistencies. For example, in June 2024, the report noted the wait time for the four facilities was 17.45 days (the sum of each facility's wait time), instead of 4.5 days (the average of the facilities' wait times).

The Saskatchewan Health Authority also needs to offer OAT medication (methadone) consistently to clients with opioid use disorder during inpatient detox services to decrease risks of relapse, illness, or death. Further, it needs to always complete opioid withdrawal assessments *before* prescribing OAT medication and provide timely treatment (initial and follow-up) to clients receiving outpatient opioid addiction treatment services.

"Opioid abuse can devastate people, their families, and our communities," said Tara Clemett. "When clients experience waits to access treatment, it puts them at risk of relapse and not seeking treatment. Effectively delivering timely opioid addiction treatment services can reach those struggling with addiction, reduce the risk of overdose or death, and help address this public health crisis."

The full Provincial Auditor's 2025 Report – Volume 1 available online at auditor.sk.ca.

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Figure 1—Saskatchewan Coroners Service Confirmed Opioid Toxicity Deaths 2018–24

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 ^A	2023 ^A	2024 ^A
Saskatchewan Toxicity Deaths	114	123	257	316	279	341	175

Source: Saskatchewan Coroners Service, Drug Toxicity Deaths, Saskatchewan, 2016 to 2025, p. 4. [publications.saskatchewan.ca](https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/90505) #/products/90505 (18 March 2025).

^A Statistics for 2022, 2023, and 2024 are preliminary until the Saskatchewan Coroners Service has concluded on all death investigations.

- \$4.6 million budgeted in 2024–25 for outpatient clinics providing OAT and RAAM; budgeted over \$306 million on mental health and addictions services
- RAAM clinics are in North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon
- 13 OAT programs in 11 communities providing treatment to over 4,600 clients (May 2024)
- 12 Authority-operated inpatient addiction facilities