

**Yukon
Coroner's
Service**

News Release

Update from Chief Coroner regarding deaths due to toxic illicit drugs

The Yukon Coroner's Service (YCS) confirms that toxic illicit drugs have claimed the lives of 25 Yukoners since January 1, 2022. Toxic illicit drugs involving cocaine, opioids and benzodiazapines continue to take lives in the Yukon. Alcohol is found to be a common contributor in many cases.

This now matches the catastrophic number of fatalities resulting from toxic illicit drugs investigated in 2021, when 25 lives were lost over 12 months. Opioids in the form of fentanyl continue to be present in most of the fatalities. The Yukon has now recorded 76 opioid-related deaths since April of 2016. Each one of these deaths is a tragedy and our communities continue to struggle with the grief and pain associated with the loss of life from the substance use health crisis.

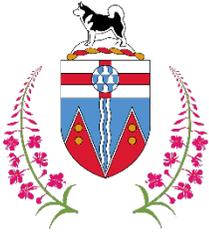
Within the 25 tragic deaths that have occurred in 2022 we see that:

- 20 are confirmed to be opioid involved, with fentanyl present in 19 of the cases and cocaine in combination with an opioid being present in 14 cases, with a full analysis pending on one case;
- benzodiazapines, or "benzos" have been confirmed in six cases;
- cocaine and its use have been confirmed in five cases not involving opioids: and
- alcohol was found to be a factor in at least seven cases.

Within the 25 tragic deaths that occurred in 2021 we saw that:

- 24 of these cases were opioid-involved and fentanyl was found in all of these cases;
- cocaine was involved in 16 of these cases;
- benzos were present in five of these cases;
- alcohol was found to be a factor in 11 cases; and
- carfentanil was present in two cases.

We know that all Yukon communities are affected by this crisis. While the Yukon took a positive step in acknowledging the devastation of these losses and taking action to make a difference by declaring a substance use health emergency in January of this year, our territory continues to lead the country with per capita toxic illicit drug-related deaths.



Yukon Coroner's Service

News Release

The Yukon Coroner's Service urges caution to anyone who might be or might consider using toxic illicit drugs. Although the holidays can be a time of celebration, we know that many people experience difficulties during this time of year and might be at risk if they are alone and using such substances. It is important that we are there for one another and offer our supports and our kindness to each other. If you are struggling, please reach out to someone you know or to the services listed below.

Supports and Services:

If you're thinking of changing or managing your opioid use, Opioid Treatment Services can help. Call 867-668-2552 to book an appointment.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use services has also established an Overdose Outreach Team.

- The team operates Monday to Friday from 8 am to 8 pm and includes support workers, social workers and community engagement workers. Call 867-333-9717 to be referred and access harm reduction education, support with system navigation and other services related to substance use.

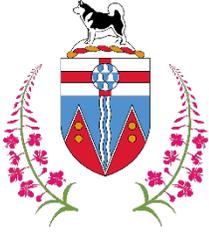
If you need counselling or help with mental wellness and substance use, support is here for you.

- To see or speak to someone right away about getting help or seeing a counsellor, phone 867-456-3838 or toll free at 1-800-456-3838.
- Counselling services are available in person, virtually and by phone in all Yukon communities. Rapid Access Counselling appointments are held within 72 hours.
- All communities also have access to services through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Hubs in Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction/Carcross, or Watson Lake.

A broad range of substance use services, including intensive treatment and withdrawal management, are also available.

To learn more about supports and services available in the Yukon, please visit Yukon.ca/mental-wellness or SubstanceUseServices.ca.

Never use alone. Phone the National Opioid Response Service (NORS) at 1-888-688-6677. This anonymous service will have someone stay on the phone with you so you can use safer.



**Yukon
Coroner's
Service**

News Release

Quote:

This crisis is affecting all of us in the Yukon. Now more than ever, we must remember to show our compassion, kindness and support to anyone struggling with substance use. It is important that we all work together to help each other as we grieve these losses across our territory.

The Yukon Coroner's Service sends our deepest condolences to all the families and communities who continue to be so severely impacted by these tragic deaths.

Chief Coroner Heather Jones

Contact

For media inquiries contact the chief coroner [email heather.jones@yukon.ca, or phone 867-667-5317; toll free 1-800-661-0408, extension 5317].