

September 17, 2021

**To:** All Paramedics

**From:** Dr. Russell MacDonald                      Leo Tsang  
Medical Director                                      A/Deputy Chief, Operations

**Re:** Documenting Suspected Opioid Overdoses

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As we work through the fourth wave of the pandemic due to SARS-CoV2, we cannot forget that in its shadow is an epidemic of opioid-related overdoses and deaths. In 2017, Toronto Paramedic Services began collaborating with Toronto Public Health to share call information for suspected opioid overdoses attended by Paramedics in Toronto.

The information that you provide about suspected opioid overdose patients is invaluable to Public Health. It helps find cases, identify trends, and target public health program and harm reduction interventions. We review and share data with Public Health daily, and no other agency or service can provide such up-to-the-minute information about suspected overdoses. You can see how the information you include in your ePCR is used by Public Health by clicking on <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-inspections-monitoring/toronto-overdose-information-system/>. The information includes the numbers and neighbourhoods of cases where responding Paramedics suspect opioid overdoses have occurred.

### **ePCR Documentation**

In recent months, we are finding calls where "yes" to a probable opioid overdose is checked but, upon review, it appears opioids were not involved or there was no overdose.

If checking "yes", please ensure you have confidence that opioids were likely involved in the overdose. This may be based on information from the patient or bystanders (e.g., "smoking/shooting fentanyl"), what you find at the scene (e.g., drug paraphernalia), or your findings during the patient assessment (e.g., pinpoint pupils, slow respirations or apnea). This will help make the data we collect more reliable.

A call gets included in the daily list of suspected opioid overdoses when you flag it on your ePCR:

The screenshot shows the TabletPCR application interface. At the top, the title bar displays 'TabletPCR' and the date/time '9/14/2021 10:54:29 AM'. Below the title bar is a navigation menu with tabs: 'Admin', 'Required Info', 'Clinical Information', 'Physical Exam / Injury', 'Vital Signs', 'Treatment / Procedures', 'General Admin', and 'Review'. The 'Clinical Information' tab is active. On the left side, there are buttons for 'Status', 'Aid to Capacity', and 'REFUSAL Signatures'. The main area is divided into two sections. The left section is a list of fields under 'Final PC' and 'Final Status'. The 'Probable Opioid OD' field is highlighted in blue and has a red arrow pointing to it. The right section is a form titled 'Probable Opioid OD: (10 of 27)'. It contains two radio buttons: 'No' and 'Yes'. The 'Yes' radio button is selected and has a red box around it with a red arrow pointing to it. At the bottom of the form is an 'Unselect' button. The bottom navigation bar contains icons for 'Inbox', 'Complete PCR', 'Help', 'Options', 'Attach', 'Previous', and 'Next'.

If you have any questions about this, or our partnership with Public Health in addressing the opioid crisis in Toronto, please contact Commander Adam Thurston by email at [Adam.Thurston@toronto.ca](mailto:Adam.Thurston@toronto.ca).

Thank you for your ongoing efforts in caring for the people of Toronto. Please stay well and stay safe.

Sincerely,

*(Original signed by)*  
Dr. Russell MacDonald

*(Original signed by)*  
Leo Tsang

c. P. Raftis, Deputy Chiefs, Operations Commanders, A. Thurston, J. Burnett, M. Jordison,  
Deputy Commanders, Multimedia