

The Compassionate Intervention Act

- Questions & Answers

The Compassionate Intervention Act establishes a legal framework in Saskatchewan to support the stabilization, assessment and treatment of individuals with severe substance use disorders who are unable to seek help on their own

What is *Compassionate Intervention*?

Compassionate Intervention is an addiction treatment model established under *The Compassionate Intervention Act* that allows adults with severe substance use disorders to receive treatment when they are unable to seek help themselves. This will occur only in rare cases where a person's substance use puts their own life or the lives of others at serious and imminent risk. The goal is to help more people get the support they need to overcome addictions and live healthy lives in recovery.

Involuntary addictions treatment gives people a chance to withdraw from substances and begin recovery with medical and mental health support by intervening before it is too late. This applies only in rare cases where strict legal criteria are met, including risk of harm and lack of decision-making capacity.

Why is this *Compassionate Intervention* needed?

Right now, addictions treatment is voluntary, but people with severe addictions can lack the capacity to get help even when their lives are in danger. In many cases, these people also deal with mental illness, trauma and other health problems.

Communities are also affected by rising addiction-related health and safety concerns.

Will families be able to request *Compassionate Intervention* for someone?

Anyone can apply to the Provincial Court for an order to have someone assessed if they meet the required criteria. This could include family members, community leaders and others. Law enforcement can also intervene if a person's substance use is putting their own life or the lives of others at serious risk.

Legal officials and health-care professionals will play an important role in helping to inform this legislation and implementation.

How is this different from the current Complex Needs Facilities (CNF)?

CNF provides short-term care for people who are intoxicated and have been detained by police under *The Summary Offences Procedure Act* (SOPA). CNF offers medically supervised support for up to 24 hours.

Compassionate Intervention is intended for people who need longer-term support for complex substance use disorders.

Will *The Compassionate Intervention Act* infringe on someone's human rights?

Like other laws already in place, such as *The Mental Health Services Act* and *The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act*, the Act includes legal safeguards to protect individual rights at every stage. Several checks and protections are built into the process to ensure compassionate intervention is used fairly and only in the most serious situations:

- The process begins only when a person is at serious risk due to substance use. They may be brought to a Compassionate Intervention Assessment Centre by police, referred by a medical professional, or through a judge's warrant.
- At the Compassionate Intervention Assessment Centre, the person is stabilized and assessed within 24 hours.
- An independent hearing panel of the Compassionate Intervention Board reviews the evidence and hears submissions from all parties. Hearing panels receive only relevant and necessary records and information.
- At all stages, the person is entitled to free legal representation through patient counsel.

Will evidence be needed to take someone into compassionate intervention?

Only evidence that is relevant and necessary to determine whether legal criteria are met will be considered.

What will happen when someone is taken to a Compassionate Intervention Centre for assessment?

The person will be medically stabilized and assessed, and their case will be reviewed. The assessment includes a medical evaluation and evidence such as a conveyance report or addictions-related history. If legislated criteria are met, the hearing panel may issue an In-patient or Out-patient Recovery Order. At that time, capacity will be reassessed.

What is the role of the hearing panel?

Hearing panels of the Compassionate Intervention Board are made up of a legal expert, an addiction specialist and community representatives. The hearing panel reviews the evidence and input from a multidisciplinary team, as well as submissions from the patient, and ultimately decides whether the legal threshold has been met. If the hearing panel determines the threshold has been met, it may order either an In-patient or Out-patient Recovery Order.

What is an in-patient order?

An In-patient Recovery Order is a legal order requiring someone to receive treatment in a secure treatment facility.

What is an out-patient order?

An Out-patient Recovery Order is a legal order requiring someone to participate in community-based care, such as counselling or treatment programming.

Where will treatment be offered?

Implementation will begin in North Battleford, with assessment and treatment services delivered through designated facilities. Additional locations will be added as part of a phased provincial rollout in 2027.

Will transportation to treatment be available for individuals under this legislation?

A comprehensive transportation plan will be developed and implemented as the phased approach expands across the province.

What happens if the individual refuses to engage in any programming/aspect of treatment while under mandatory care?

Individuals who are assessed as having decision-making capacity have the right to refuse treatment. The care team will explain the benefits and reasons for treatment at all stages.

Under *The Compassionate Intervention Act*, capacity means the ability to understand information relevant to a treatment decision and appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of making or not making a decision. Capacity is assessed during the assessment period and again at the hearing.

A lack of engagement during an Out-patient Recovery Order may lead to reassessment. The hearing panel may decide to issue an In-patient Recovery Order if community-based care is not working.

How is this different than probation orders and community treatment orders etc.? Will clients be on multiple orders concurrently?

This is a health-based treatment model and is not part of the criminal justice system. However, clients may have overlapping legal orders. Coordination between health, justice and community services will be important in managing multiple orders.

What if the patient wants to transition to the voluntary system?

Patients can request a review if they believe circumstances have changed since the original recovery order was issued.

A hearing panel will review the new information and decide on the patient's care, which may result in discharge from compassionate intervention and transition to voluntary services.

What happens after treatment?

Compassionate intervention focuses on helping people build the personal, social and community supports they need to achieve long-term recovery. People who complete compassionate intervention will continue to receive support after leaving the program. This includes a plan for ongoing care and services to support recovery.

After compassionate intervention treatment, patients will be connected to a full range of services to support their recovery.

How will compassionate intervention fit in with services that already exist in the province?

Saskatchewan offers care ranging from early prevention to long-term recovery. People leaving compassionate intervention will have access to available programs, including:

- In-patient treatment programs
- Out-patient and virtual programs
- Transitional and recovery supports such as safe housing, peer groups and ongoing aftercare

These services help people stay safe, build strong recovery supports and reduce the risk of relapse after leaving compassionate intervention.

How will Indigenous people be supported through the process?

The Compassionate Intervention system is being designed with input from Indigenous stakeholders to help ensure cultural safety and trauma-informed care.

How long until Compassionate Intervention is in place?

The legislation passed in May 2026. The first phase will begin in North Battleford in fall 2026, with expansion across the province beginning in 2027. The assessment centre will be located at the North Battleford Union Hospital, while in-patient treatment will take place at Sask Hospital North Battleford (SHNB).

How are decisions reviewed?

Individuals may request a review of a recovery order if their circumstances change. Decisions can also be appealed to the Court of King's Bench.