
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Dec. 1, 2022

Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

New, enhanced mental-health, substance-use services in place for B.C. young people

VICTORIA – Young people living with substance-use challenges and their families are able to access new and enhanced substance-use services closer to home through a substantial expansion of addictions care throughout B.C.

The Province is adding 33 new and expanded substance-use programs, supported by approximately 130 new health-care workers, specifically for young people. New staff includes therapists, clinicians, social workers, harm-reduction co-ordinators, epidemiologists, nurses and nurse practitioners, outreach workers, counsellors, Indigenous patient navigators and liaisons, and others.

“When young people make the courageous decision to come forward and get help, we want supports to meet them,” said Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “The services we are announcing today increases the resources available in every health authority, meaning more young people are able to access the support they need closer to home.”

The new and enhanced services vary by health authority, ranging from prevention and early intervention to intensive treatment and crisis intervention. They include:

- school and community-based prevention and early intervention;
- community-based youth substance-use and concurrent disorders services;
- crisis intervention services and intensive treatment;
- wraparound services to support youth receiving bed-based care; and
- system supports that will help create a more seamless system of care for youth

Enhancing youth mental-health and substance-use care is an integral part of A Pathway to Hope, B.C.’s roadmap for building the comprehensive system of mental-health and addictions care for British Columbians.

Learn More:

Learn about A Pathway to Hope, government’s vision for mental-health and addictions care in B.C.: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021MMHA0049-001787>

To find mental health resources, visit: <https://gov.bc.ca/mentalhealthsupports>

Contact:

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BACKGROUND

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What people are saying about enhanced substance-use, mental-health care for young people

Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development –

“We know how important it is for youth to be able to get help when they need it, and this expansion of services and supports means that young people and their families will have increased access to vital substance-use care. We know that the earlier support is provided, the better the outcome. Our goal is to help young people on a path of well-being and to help them thrive.”

Sharlynn Burke, provincial executive director, child and youth mental health programs, BC Children’s Hospital –

“There is moral distress around youth and substance use where parents and caregivers can sometimes feel powerless to protect children from the harmful effects of drugs. But the Substance Use Response and Facilitation (SURF) team at BC Children’s Hospital can help navigate those waves of emotion and provide more specialized treatment for patients. With this expansion, the SURF team members can treat patients admitted to our hospital, as well as in our emergency department. They provide expertise in the assessment of the substance-use disorder severity and facilitation of more meaningful treatment.”

Dr. Dan Lin, medical director, psychiatrist, Foundry Vancouver-Granville –

“As a psychiatrist, I see the struggles youth are facing every day, and I know that we can reduce those struggles by making it easier for youth and families to know what services are available and how they can access them at all levels of care. This expansion in service is going to go a long way in prioritizing the well-being and care of young people.”

Amanda Horne, youth peer support worker, Foundry Vancouver-Granville –

“As a previous client and current youth peer support worker at Foundry Vancouver-Granville, I understand first-hand the positive impact these services have on youth. I'm excited to see this expansion of youth substance-use services across B.C., because it means more youth will be able to access age-appropriate and specific supports in their communities.”

Tenille Lindsay, clinical co-ordinator, Child Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Service, and a member of the Port Alberni Youth Short Term Assessment and Response (YSTAR) Team –

“The creation of YSTAR teams across six communities on Vancouver Island is significantly increasing connection, supports and service access for highly vulnerable children and youth experiencing severe mental-health challenges and are using harmful substances. As a former

emergency department nurse, I know the value of quickly and effectively connecting youth and, where appropriate, their support persons with community-based services and supports. In the few months YSTAR teams have been up and running, we are already seeing positive changes and outcomes for youth who are connected.”

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