
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Nov. 17, 2023

Ministry of Health

Relational security officers foster safer workplaces for health-care workers

VICTORIA – Health-care workers and patients benefit from safer work environments as the Province fulfils its commitment to recruit 320 new relational security officers throughout B.C. as part of the new security model announced in 2022.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing toxic-drug crisis have exacerbated challenges in the health-care system, and compromised the safety of the workplace for some health-care employees and quality care of patients,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “That’s why a year ago, we made a commitment to hire 320 new relational security officers by fall 2023 to rectify the situation. Today, I am pleased to report that 320 workers have been hired within the health authorities for all 26 sites that were identified. This commitment will significantly improve the safety of our health-care facilities and help us better retain and recruit health workers, as well as care for our patients.”

All protection-services personnel receive training in workplace violence prevention and mental health. They also receive trauma-informed practice training to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and language to apply a trauma-informed perspective to interactions with patients, families, clients and colleagues.

In October 2022, the Province provided health authorities with funding to establish a relational security model in 26 health-care settings and hire staff to support it. The new model ensures all security personnel have an acute awareness of patients and their surroundings, as well as how to anticipate, de-escalate and ultimately prevent aggression. It is based on trauma-informed practice, which integrates knowledge of how people are affected by trauma into procedures, practices and services to create a safer environment for staff and patients.

“As minister of labour, workplace safety is a top priority. We owe it to health-care workers who are dedicated to taking care of sick and injured people to provide them with safe work environments,” said Harry Bains, Minister of Labour. “Today’s announcement will help ensure people working in health-care facilities are protected from violence.”

Indigenous cultural safety and anti-Indigenous racism are key components of the training. Engagement with unions and Provincial Health Service Authority’s Indigenous Health have taken place, including consultations with First Nations Health Authority and Fraser Health.

Work to create safer health-care workplaces through the relational security model is part of B.C.’s health human resources strategy announced on Sept. 29, 2022. The strategy is focused on putting people first by ensuring they get the health services they need and are cared for by a healthy workforce. The strategy focuses on 70 key actions to recruit, train and retain health-care workers, while redesigning the health-care system to foster workplace satisfaction and

innovation.

Quotes:

Kane Tse, president of Health Sciences Association –

“B.C.’s health-care system is facing severe shortages of specialized health professionals like registered psychiatric nurses, social workers, respiratory therapists and over 70 other professions who struggle with excessive workload to keep the system running every day. Violence against those who deliver front-line care only makes these shortages worse, threatening to push many health professionals out of the system and leaving British Columbians without the care they need. HSA welcomes the government’s goals for reducing violence in the health-care system. We look forward to shared efforts to address the deeper issues which continue to drive aggression and violence against the people who care for all of us.”

Meena Brisard, secretary-business manager of Hospital Employees’ Union –

“It’s great news that we now have the resources in place to move forward with this initiative to improve patient and worker safety in health settings across the province. Under this new security model, workers in protection services will be trained to manage tense and sometimes violent scenarios with a trauma-informed perspective to help de-escalate situations in a safe and respectful way.”

Quick Facts:

- Workplace violence is defined as incidents where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health.
- For nurses and health-care assistants (both predominantly female workforces), violence was the third-most common cause of time-loss claims between Jan. 1, 2020, and Oct. 16, 2023, the first being patient handling, followed by communicable disease.

Learn More:

To learn about B.C.’s health human resources strategy, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022HLTH0059-001464>

To learn about the relational security model, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022HLTH0204-001579>

A backgrounder follows.

Contact:

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BACKGROUND

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What to know about upcoming, existing relational security model hospitals

The Province is providing health authorities with funding to establish the relational security model in the following 26 health-care settings:

Fraser Health

- Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre
- Burnaby Hospital
- Chilliwack General Hospital
- Delta Hospital
- Langley Memorial Hospital
- Peace Arch Hospital
- Royal Columbian Hospital
- Surrey Memorial Hospital

Interior Health

- Cariboo Memorial Hospital
- East Kootenay Regional Hospital
- Kelowna General Hospital
- Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital
- Penticton Regional Hospital
- Royal Inland Hospital
- Vernon Jubilee Hospital

Island Health

- Cowichan Lodge Tertiary Mental Health Facility
- Saanich Peninsula Hospital

Northern Health

- Mills Memorial Hospital
- Prince Rupert Regional Hospital
- University Hospital of Northern British Columbia

Providence Health Care

- Mount Saint Joseph Hospital
- St. Paul's Hospital

Provincial Health Services Authority

- BC Women's Hospital/BC Children's Hospital

Vancouver Coastal Health

- Lions Gate Hospital
- Richmond Hospital
- Vancouver General Hospital

The relational security model is already in place with about 100 full-time-equivalent protection services officers in seven acute and two mental-health sites in Island Health as follows:

- Royal Jubilee Hospital
- Seven Oaks Tertiary Mental Health Facility
- Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health
- Victoria General Hospital
- Cowichan District Hospital
- Nanaimo Regional Hospital
- North Island Hospital Comox Valley
- North Island Hospital Campbell River and District
- West Coast General Hospital

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