

February 5, 2023

In response to a City of Vancouver (CoV) council motion, *Enabling the Requisitioning and Hiring of 100 New Police Officers and 100 Mental Health Nurses* (November 22, 2022), Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), in partnership with Vancouver Police Department and CoV staff, has proposed an *Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Framework* to enhance delivery of local mental health services.

Urgent Mental Health and Substance Use Service Enhancements Framework

For the first year of the initiative, VCH has prioritized responsive services from the Framework to address the most acute needs of the population and city.

Increasing capacity of police-partnership services

Expansion of the Car 87/88 program and of the Assertive Outreach Team (AOT).

Car 87/88 is a long-standing program that sends a clinician and a police officer to mental health crisis calls where there is a risk of harm while additional nurses are in an office doing other supportive work such as collecting information from police and health records. The partnership allows the system to provide a health response, rather than a criminal justice response during a mental health crisis, even when the individual is at risk of causing harm to themselves or others.

AOT primarily serves as a transition, bridging, and stabilization team for adults identified in recent emergency department or police contacts that may be suffering from moderate to severe mental health and/or co-occurring substance use issues. Team members provide short-term care on an outreach basis until a client is connected to the appropriate community services.

Moderate (non-police) de-escalation

This program does not currently exist and would use CoV resources to add the following mandate to an existing team. In certain instances where a person's mental health presentation is deteriorating, this service would:

- Work in partnership alongside shelter, housing providers, park rangers, store owners, service providers etc., to engage the individual needing support with a trauma-informed and relationship-based approach;
- Be comprised of nurses, social workers, cultural support workers, peers and community liaison workers and support from a psychiatrist;
- Work to help mitigate the behaviour/mental health presentation by connecting the individual to, or re-engaging them with a number of service options;
- Incorporate specific training in de-escalation and how to engage people who are using stimulants, or other substances, with risk mitigation strategies; and,
- Create a clear way for people to access this service and understand the support it can provide.

Strengthen Indigenous approaches across all VCH Urgent Mental Health services

The VCH Indigenous Health team will leverage its existing leadership team, Elders in Residence program, Indigenous nurse educators, Indigenous patient navigators and Indigenous cultural practitioners to develop a comprehensive and seamless referral network to culturally-specific programs and services. The approach will focus on navigation, mentorship and advocacy on behalf of the clients, and timely access to culturally appropriate and informed care. VCH will work with our extensive network of partners to help clients access primary care and land-based healing opportunities. We will continue to involve Local Host Nations and Elders will continue to be involved in all planning and service provision.

In the second phase (2024+), additional upstream resources will be added to support those at high risk of crisis, including:

- High priority mental health outreach;
- Intensive case management teams; and,
- Community integration.

Additional details regarding the Framework are outlined in VCH's formal proposal to the CoV.

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