
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

Leading-edge mental health supports coming for Comox Valley students

COURTENAY – Students in the Comox Valley School District will have a clearer, easier-to-understand path to mental health and substance use services.

A “one-care-plan” approach is a new service delivery model being introduced in their school district.

Integrated teams will work closely with school and team-based primary care and specialized services providers to offer wraparound care to children, youth and their families. This means individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges and their families will no longer need to retell their stories to different care providers or search on their own for the supports they need.

“For far too long, families have had to knock on door after door to get the help they need for their children,” said Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “These integrated child and youth teams will make it so much easier to connect young people to the help they need, where and when they need it.”

The Comox Valley school district was selected as the location for the second integrated child and youth team because of its strong relationships throughout the community supporting the mental health of students as well as the proactive measures already in place. These measures include: developing a district mental health plan, including mental health wellness as part of its strategic plan, training school teams in the mental health curriculum, teaching mental health literacy at the high school level, establishing a school-based wellness centre, and working closely with community partners on all initiatives that support vulnerable youth.

“It’s crucial we support wellness and mental health in schools, so kids can focus on reaching their full potential,” said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. As teams are put in place in more school districts throughout B.C., students and families will have more accessible, integrated mental health supports in their schools and in their communities.”

Additional integrated child and youth teams, which were introduced as part of the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions’ Roadmap for better mental health and addictions care, will be established in three more school districts over the next two years. The first team – in Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows – was announced in July of this year.

Integrated service delivery teams will be formed in the Comox Valley school district in December 2019. Implementation will follow, and new positions will be determined based on service delivery gaps identified in the area.

The Province will also be providing teachers and school counsellors with more resources to help them identify students who need supports earlier, before small problems become more serious.

The integrated service delivery model is an evidence-based approach that has resulted in:

- Positive growth and development of children and youth
- Reduced wait times for services for children, youth and families
- Increased school engagement and academic success

Implementing *A Pathway to Hope* is a shared priority with the BC Green Caucus and is part of the Confidence and Supply Agreement.

Quotes:

Katrine Conroy, Minister of Children and Family Development:

“Children who are struggling early on need care that is easy to access. I know the importance of this integration of our child and youth mental health teams with parents, educators and other professionals. It means that kids will get the supports they need early to build a solid foundation they can rely on throughout their lives.”

Ronna-Rae Leonard, Courtenay-Comox MLA:

“This is wonderful news for students, parents and educators in our district. We’ve seen a tremendous increase in enrolment over the past few years so added supports – especially in the areas of mental health and overall wellness for students - could not have come at a better time.”

Tom Demeo, Superintendent of Schools, Comox Valley School District:

“We are extremely fortunate to be part of this great initiative. Student mental health is one of our district’s strategic focuses and through this partnership, we will be able to work collaboratively with our community partners to provide our students with resources that will strengthen and improve their mental health.”

Quick Facts on Child and Youth Mental Health:

- In B.C., an estimated 84,000 children aged four to 17 years are experiencing mental health disorders at any given time. From 2009 to 2017, there was an 86% increase in hospitalizations in B.C. for mental health issues among youth under 25 years of age.
- Promoting wellness, preventing mental health and addictions challenges, and intervening early in life can reduce problems as people grow and develop. It’s estimated that 70% of mental health and substance use problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.

- In September 2019, the Province invested \$8.87 million over the next three years for a range of school-based initiatives, including professional development and grants, to help all 60 school districts and independent schools enhance existing mental wellness programs and to launch new programs for students, parents and educators.
- A focus on mental health and substance use are also found in every grade of the physical and health education (PHE) curriculum from kindergarten through grade 10 (the grades 11 & 12 curriculum will roll out in fall 2019 and are elective courses).
- The 2018 refreshed *expect respect and a safe education* strategy has been expanded to focus on building safe and caring school communities by empowering students, families, and educators with resources about complex issues facing students.
- The Province is increasing access to the number of Foundry youth centres from 11 to 19, so that young people in more communities can access these “one-stop shops” for health and wellness resources, services and supports. There are currently Foundry centres in Vancouver (Granville and the North Shore), Kelowna, Campbell River, Prince George, Abbotsford, Penticton and Victoria. An additional three centres are in development in Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows, Richmond and Terrace.

Learn more:

To read *A Pathway to Hope*, please visit:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BCMentalHealthRoadmap_2019.pdf

For information on School District #71: Comox Valley, please visit:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/>

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