

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE UPDATE



Co-Response Unit Launch



The Island Health/Victoria Police Co-Response Unit (CRU) is officially launched! Following the success of the Island's first two CRUs in Nanaimo and Cowichan, this initiative pairs an Island Health MHSU health professional from IMCRT with a police officer. Together, they respond to police crisis calls involving individuals who appear to be suffering with MSHU challenges in the City of Victoria and Township of Esquimalt.

The unit is based at the Victoria Police Department Community Services Division and is dispatched by

Inside this issue: Emergency Communications of British Columbia (E-COMM). The CRU provides primary and secondary crisis response to police calls, including de-escalation, MHSU assessment, referrals to appropriate community services, and/or transportation to hospital. The service attends to individuals of

all ages and genders, and responds to both mental health and/or substance use crises. The launch of the CRU represents an important step towards engaging more effectively with the community. By responding to crises with the appropriate resources, people can experience safer interactions and be connected to the necessary MHSU care.

Decriminalization Update

On January 31, 2023, the [decriminalization of certain substances in BC](#) came into effect. This provincial and federal initiative aims to reduce stigma, increase access to care, and promote services. Decriminalization aligns with Island Health's [Harm Reduction – Substance Use Policy](#) to help improve patient experience, quality of care, and health outcomes by reducing barriers that prevent people who use drugs from seeking health support.

The [Introduction to Criminalization article](#) and [FAQ](#) have additional information on decriminalization as it relates to Island Health. Information about the legal aspects of decriminalization can be found on [Health Canada](#) and [BC Government](#) webpages.

Do you want to help reduce stigma and shift perceptions about substance use? Find resources on the [Harm Reduction Intranet](#) (Tip: these [Caring Conversation Cards](#) can help facilitate open discussion!). Questions? Contact Decriminalization@IslandHealth.ca.

Co-Response Unit

Decriminalization

Cognitive Remediation

MHSU Sprint Update

Planning Day

SCN - QCN: Accreditation

Provincial Cognitive Remediation Training Pilot

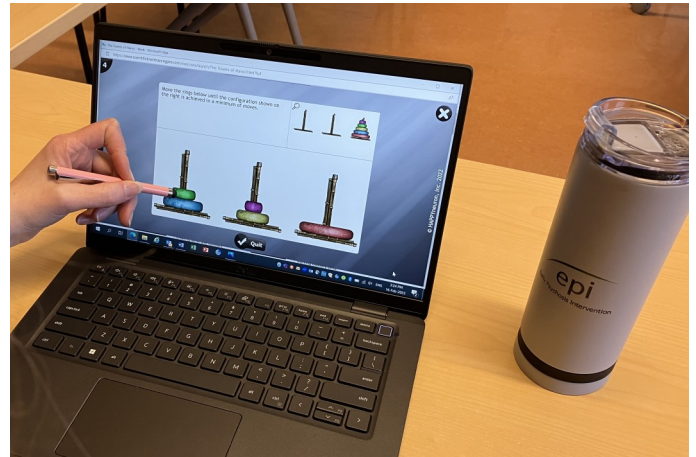
On January 26, 2023, the Victoria pilot site for the Provincial Cognitive Remediation Training (CRT) Initiative was successfully launched as part of a province-wide pilot project offering Action Based Cognitive Remediation (ABCR) to people with psychosis.

ABCR is a CRT program developed by Professor Christopher Bowie at Queens University. It combines CRT, elements of CBT, metacognitive training, and goal setting to support the transfer of CRT benefits to real life activities. CRT emphasizes the improvement of neurocognitive functions, such as information processing and attention.

Cognitive difficulties are a core feature of disorders such as schizophrenia and are responsible for most of the disability caused by the disorders. Cognition is a better predictor of functioning than positive symptoms, and unfortunately cognitive problems are independent of other symptoms and are not alleviated by antipsychotic medications. Only CR has been shown to adequately improve cognition and functioning.

— Dr. Mahesh Menon

ABCR uses computer drill and practice exercises coupled with real-life simulation activities and individualized goal setting to help individuals improve cognition and return to doing the things they value. Patients complete a total of 16 sessions over 16 weeks.



Morgan Booth (OT), Laura Tighe (OT), and Lauren Fox (OT coordinator) are running the Island Health pilot program. They are offering ABCR to people receiving care through the Victoria Early Psychosis Program; later this year, they will also offer the program to other adults at the Victoria Mental Health Centre who experience psychosis.

Since 2021, Island Health has offered ABCR through both the Mental Wellness Day Program and the contracted GROW service at Island Community Mental Health in Victoria, as well as at Cowichan Lodge in Duncan; this new program provides a critical expansion of this important service. The pilot program will run until March 31, 2024 and will provide training, establish programming, and create a province-wide community of practice. So far, client reception has been very positive:

Lately I've been feeling tired, but I'm so glad I came to this group because I learned something and had fun! It motivates me."

It feels good to figure it out and be successful at something. I didn't give up and I figured it out!"

MHSU Sprint Progress



It's hard to believe we are only a little over a month away from the end of the Sprint initiative. We've made solid progress towards our goals in each of the work streams, thanks to our Operational Leads, Corporate Partners, and the Sprint Team. We are proud to highlight here some of the milestones achieved to date and look forward to sharing our final progress at the end of March.

Increasing Access for MHSU Community Services	⇒ Victoria Co-Response Team: This initiative pairs a specially trained police officer with a nurse experienced in psychiatry and mental health care. • See the full Weekly article here ⇒ Substance Use Treatment: 25 new contracted SU treatment beds are now available at Edgewood in Nanaimo and at Cedars in Cobble Hill, and 6 new beds are available at Coastal Sage Healing House for people who identify as women and non-binary. • Further information about these programs and the referral package can be found on the MHSU Substance Use Treatment Centres intranet page. ⇒ Crisis Services: The Comox Valley Hospital Crisis Response team has a new Crisis Response nurse, an addition that will allow for expanded crisis response hours.
Accelerating the Response to the Toxic Drug Crisis	⇒ Decriminalization: Island Health has printed resource cards and created the Mental Health and Substance Use Service Link, a central access telephone number to help people navigate services. Island Health is amending policies and creating a Clinical Procedure to outline guidance for providing care to people who use substances. Strengthening Opioid Agonist Response (SOAR): SOAR pilots have launched at 5 physician clinics across the Island. These Physician Quality Improvement projects include initiatives such as providing text-based reminders for follow up care, improving relations with a local pharmacist, and creating a more welcoming waiting area.
Improving Access to Intensive Supports for Child, Youth and Families	⇒ Child Youth Mental Health (CYMH): New working groups are focusing on: • The development of a Child Unit Hybrid Model at Ledger • Improving systemic access and flow between VGH and Ledger • Creating a day program for youth connected with tertiary mental health services
Indigenous Led Priorities	⇒ Substance Use Treatment: 10 new SU treatment beds provided by an Indigenous-led organization will be available in Port Alberni at the Kackaamin Family Development Centre beginning in April 2023. ⇒ Alcohol Focused Beds: 5 alcohol focused, Indigenous-led treatment beds are in development and are expected to be available in late spring or early summer.

Visit the [Intranet page](#) in the coming weeks for more details on each work stream and initiative. If you have questions or comments, please reach out to Jacqueline MacKinnon, Director – Special Project, MHSU Sprint (Jacqueline.mackinnon@islandhealth.ca)

MSHU Planning Day Coming Soon!



MHSU's in-person planning day is coming up on April 14th, and we're starting to feel the excitement! The aim of the day is to refresh the department's priorities and strategic plan for 2023/2024 by discussing the big strategic drivers from the Ministry and Island Health; this includes Specialized Community Service Programs, the new Provincial Substance Use Framework, and Island Health's Clinical Governance Improvement Initiative (CGII). Participants will identify ways to bring these ideas to life, helping to ensure that we all understand how to best work towards our collective goal of providing excellent care.

STRATEGIC CLINICAL NETWORK — QUALITY CLINICAL NETWORK

Accreditation 2022: Reflections

With the recent release of the final 2022 Accreditation Report, the excitement generated during November's Accreditation survey preparation and the ensuing survey week activities is transitioning to a collective congratulations for a job well done and the sharing of the lessons learned. Most of these takeaways apply widely, with some being specific to those involved in welcoming the surveyors back on-site in 2023.

Lessons Learned for Future Accreditation Surveys

- Confirm applicable sets of Standards (more than one may apply)
- Establish a working group as early as possible
- Access Island Health Self-Assessment Tools ([Island Health Accreditation Intranet page](#))
- Review previous accreditation cycle summary
- Embed accreditation conversations and standards review within standard daily operations
- Maintain an inventory of evidence of quality improvement activities (PPTs, Workflows, Documents)
- Prepare for a tight turnaround between survey site announcement and site survey date (i.e. anticipate compressed final preparations)



Regardless of whether your unique setting has recently completed accreditation or is preparing for the upcoming 2023 accreditation cycle, consider how to embed the accreditation standards into daily operations to foster being [survey-ready any time of the year](#).