

Network News

Provincial Mental Health & Substance Use Network

Welcome to the first issue of Network News!

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Who we are

The Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Network brings together a wide range of stakeholders including people with lived or living experience, families, health care professionals and representatives from other sectors.

The Network is evidence-informed and aims to co-create system improvements to better serve British Columbians with complex needs relating to mental health, substance use and other issues. We work together to identify issues, unmet needs and ideas, and to facilitate and accelerate knowledge translation and exchange (KTE). The Network is hosted by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, a part of the Provincial Health Services Authority.



THE PROVINCIAL MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE NETWORK is an evidence-informed way to better serve people with complex mental health and substance use issues, through collaboratively identifying issues and ideas, and creating system-level change in BC.

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Our team



Krista English, MBA, PhD, senior network lead, is passionate about working in partnership with people with lived/living experience (PWLLE) to learn from and amplify their unique perspective toward addressing their unmet needs. Krista uses her background as a network scientist to improve knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) pathways to best support the use of appropriate evidence within complex MHSU health systems. Krista has worked in various research, evaluation and policy areas of population and public health.



Anita David, BA, lived experience strategic advisor, experienced a series of near-death mental and physical health crises in a little over a year that ultimately changed the trajectory of her life. This inspired her to work in mental health and substance use research, including knowledge translation, program design, facilitation and community engagement with provincial, national and international projects. Through her personal and professional experiences, Anita has found passion and purpose.



Ashok Krishnamoorthy, MD, physician lead, is a psychiatrist with expertise in supporting clients with complex issues related to mental health and substance use. He has special interests in neuropsychiatric disorders, acquired brain injury and cognitive impairment. He brings additional complementary experience from his work with Vancouver Coastal Health, particularly through his involvement in the review of tertiary MHSU services, and community models for clients with tertiary level needs.



Deborah Ross, MSc, provincial director of strategic initiatives, BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services (BCMHSUS), brings 30 years of experience in MHSU research, evaluation, policy and planning. She has also led and partnered on numerous provincial system improvement efforts, standards and networks. She also brings lived experience as a family member and is deeply committed to ensuring our work is informed by the voice of lived/living experience and that it results in positive impacts for those involved.

Get in touch



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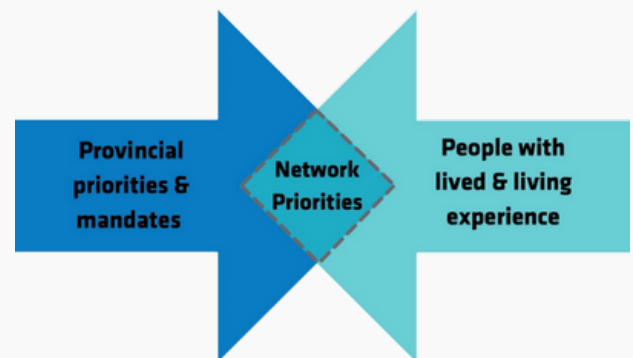
Provincial Mental Health & Substance Use Network

Our approach

Network activities are aimed at equitably improving the quality, consistency and accessibility of services across British Columbia for people with complex needs relating to their mental health, substance use and other issues.

Setting priorities

The Network has adapted the [James Lind Alliance](#) priority-setting process. Priorities for system improvements are established based on the issues/unmet needs identified by people with lived and living experience (PWLE) and their families as well as provincial priorities and mandates.



Needs assessment

The Network has been leading a needs assessment among diverse stakeholder groups to identify existing gaps in mental health and substance use (MHSU) care and the unmet needs of individuals with complex MHSU issues. Some current areas of focus include:

- Maintaining the momentum of the Office of the Auditor General response (see below) by focusing on the key actions identified to better support British Columbians with multiple and complex needs.
- Building capacity within the supported housing and health authority workforces working with clients with complex MHSU needs who live in supportive housing settings. This will be done by way of accessible, evidence-based learning resources and opportunities such as the [BCMHSUS concurrent disorders toolkit](#), provincial learning rounds (see below), a BC Mental Health and Substance Use Project ECHO (see below), and Therapeutic and Relational Security.

Engaging people with lived and living experience (PWLE)

Evidence indicates that supporting patient-/client-identified priorities leads to better outcomes. To help inform its priorities, the Network has established the Lived Experience Advisors and Partners (LEAP) team. The LEAP team, comprised of Anita David, strategic advisor, and five other PWLE, includes a spectrum of complementary perspectives. The team aims to identify the unmet needs and/or issues faced by people requiring access to specialized MHSU services/supports, participate in Network priority-setting and explore how to amplify the voices of PWLE for health care system improvement.

The experienced, capable and wise LEAP team brings a wealth of lived experience as individuals and family members across a broad range of services and systems, including mental health, substance use and criminal justice. Working in partnership with LEAP team members, and others, reflects the Network's commitment to advancing innovation through collective problem solving.

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The Network in action

Identifying unmet needs – Response to the Office of the Auditor General

In 2016, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) released a [report](#) containing a number of recommendations to improve British Columbians' access to tertiary mental health and substance use services.

In the context of the provincial response to the OAG recommendations, the Network team gathered and analyzed data, summarized relevant literature and developed a number of key actions to better support people with multiple and complex needs. These are the very people who the OAG identified as experiencing particular challenges in accessing services to meet their needs. This work was done on behalf of the Provincial Health Services Authority and the Ministry of Health, in partnership with other health authorities and stakeholders.

Based on regional health authority data, 38% of clients in tertiary mental health and substance use programs were designated as clinically ready for discharge to an alternate level of care. However, based on data collected in the fall of 2021, no program was available that would appropriately meet their needs.



Diverse perspectives help identify key challenges

The Network team has gathered input from stakeholders involved in the OAG response process. This included the Implementation Steering Committee (ISC), comprised of health authority, government and other stakeholders, as well as PWLLE, including but not limited to the LEAP team. During discussions with these stakeholders, perspectives were provided across two high-level themes: housing and workforce capacity.

Housing

Under the housing theme, both the ISC and the PWLLE emphasized the need for a wide variety of housing options. While security was a priority for both groups, the perception of the meaning of "secure" differed between the groups. The ISC viewed it from the perspective of staff and client safety, especially if a client's behaviour might pose a risk of harm to self or others, whereas the PWLLE spoke to it in terms of their own feelings of psychological and physical safety. This is just one example of differing yet complementary perspectives.

Workforce capacity

The workforce capacity theme for ISC revealed challenges in recruiting, training and retaining staff with appropriate skills and competencies to meet the cognitive and behavioural needs of people with complex needs relating to their mental health, substance use and other issues. The PWLLE provided specific topic areas for staff training to better support clients with specific issues, such as brain injury or trauma-informed care. The PWLLE strongly emphasized the importance of empathy and compassion as well as the unique and critical role peers have in client care, touching on the importance of how—rather than just what—services and supports are provided.

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Latest news

Network receives funding award from Health Canada

Health Canada's Substance Use and Addiction Program (SUAP) has [awarded](#) 18 months of funding to further develop the Network structures and processes. Additionally, the funding will be used to develop and launch a Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Project ECHO to strengthen workforce capacity to better support people with serious issues related to mental health, substance use and other situations. Approximately half of the funding will be used to support the infrastructure of the Network and the other half will support Project ECHO.

Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is an innovative hub and spoke model for continuing professional development that uses videoconferencing technology.



The evidence-based model has been applied across a variety of settings and locations to build capacity among health care and other professionals working to address the needs of people experiencing chronic and complex health conditions. The ECHO model offers professionals the opportunity to participate in a learning series with a cohort of their peers to discuss real cases, share common realities, practice what they have learned in a safe environment and be positively reinforced and supported through their learning.

The SUAP funding will also support the development of a rigorous evaluation of the Network and Project ECHO, including activities, knowledge products and impacts. Evaluation of findings will be used to inform improvements and future direction of the Network.

Enhanced care housing projects

The Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA)—with support from the Ministries of Health, Attorney General, and Housing—has been mandated to develop enhanced care housing projects in B.C. As part of the [Provincial Homelessness Strategy](#), enhanced care housing is a suite of services and supports aimed at ensuring people with significant mental health issues, substance use and other complexities attain safe and stable housing as a foundation to thrive.

A framework has been developed to guide health, housing and social services sectors to develop and implement enhanced care housing programs for people who are often under-served.

In addition to new and expanded enhanced care housing programs to better serve residents, funding has also been provided to strengthen the workforces in these settings.



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Events

BCMHSUS Concurrent Disorders Conference

On March 10, 2022, BCMHSUS hosted its second annual Concurrent Disorders Conference on "Access, Quality & Capacity". This conference was created to advance knowledge and build capacity among mental health and substance use professionals who provide care for people with complex concurrent disorders.



The Network team presented "Catalyzing system transformation to better support people with complex needs: The Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Network" to over 190 attendees. The presentation recordings can be accessed [here](#). Thought Exchange is an online tool that was used to anonymously capture insights around the kinds of issues the Network can help to address for people with multiple and complex needs.

Provincial mental health and substance use learning rounds

BCMHSUS provides provincial mental health and substance use learning rounds. The Network's ongoing needs assessment has generated topics of relevance to ensure the learning rounds meet the needs of the growing audience.

Recent presentations include:

- Lesli Peddie, the director of operations for the Calgary SCOPE Society, presented March 24 on a successful community secure treatment model that has been created in partnership with individuals who pose life threatening risk to self and others.
- Andrea Carter and Stacey Bourque, both with the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA), presented May 26 on the development and implementation of an Indigenous-led enhanced care housing model and related workforce capacity development for housing providers from across the province. The presentation is available [here](#).

Upcoming topics include:

- Sept. 8: Transitions from corrections to community, stigma and other barriers to access
- Sept. 22: Engaging people with lived and living experience as partners
- Oct. 13: Truth, resilience and reconciliation
- Oct. 27: Cognitive assessments of people with complex and concurrent psychiatric disorders
- Nov. 10: Therapeutic programming in corrections
- Nov. 24: Learning health systems

Registration will be forthcoming.

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Events (continued)

Fall launch of Project ECHO

ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is a knowledge-sharing network led by teams of experts who use a videoconference-driven practice model to empower local health professionals. The Provincial Mental Health & Substance Use Network is planning to launch an ECHO project in the fall of 2022.

ECHO topics are identified from the needs assessment. One stream will address workforce capacity issues related to, and in support of, enhanced care housing while another will address broader system-level issues aimed at addressing the unmet needs of people with complex needs relating to their mental health, substance use and other issues.

More information on the fall launch will be forthcoming. Questions? Please email network_bcmhsus@phsa.ca.

ECHO outcomes

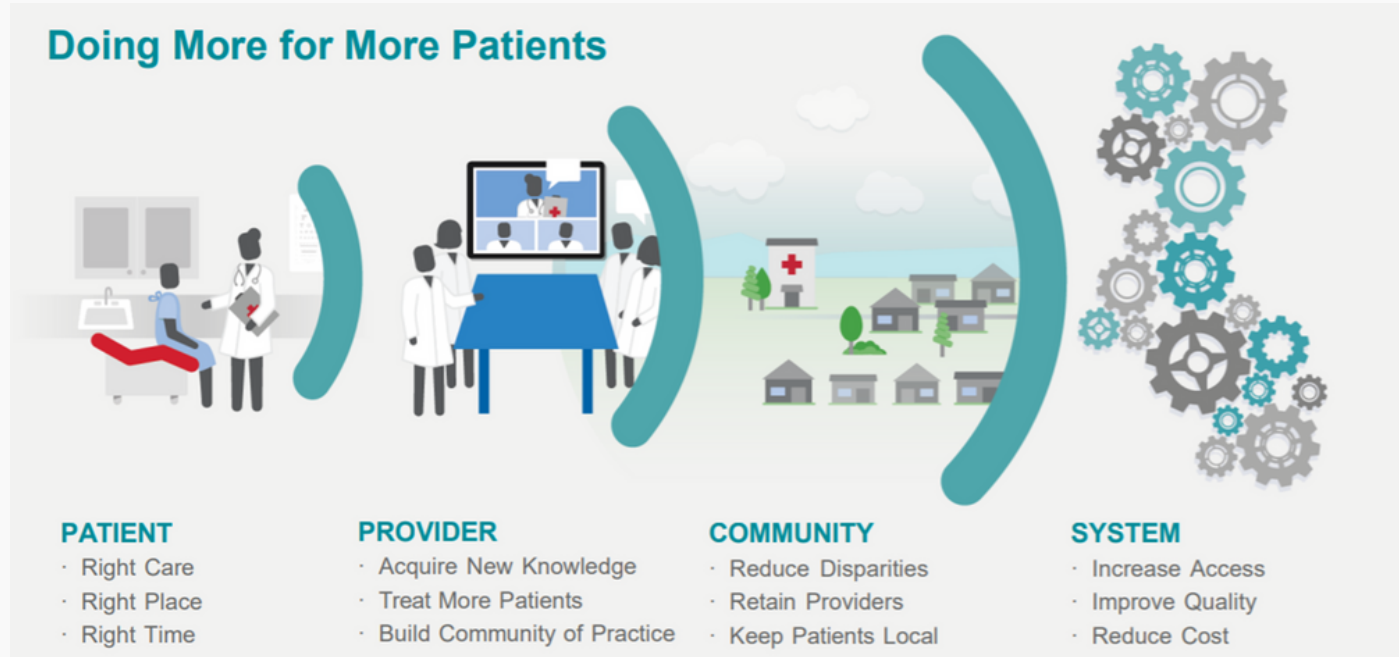


Image source: The University of New Mexico Project ECHO

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