

British Columbia

organizations and programs

There are five Regional Health Authorities (RHA) in British Columbia, in addition to the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA). Each RHA provides mental health and substance use programs and services in its geographical jurisdiction. Services are broad, including community, acute, and tertiary. The FNHA provides mental health and substance use services for Indigenous clients across the province.

There are also six forensic regional clinics throughout the province that are part of the PHSA and help connect individuals with local and community services, providing a variety of supports while they are transitioning. **Community Transition Teams** (an extension of the PHSA's Correctional Health Services) are a unique service in this area, with pilot teams at five correctional facilities. These teams provide supports for individuals transitioning into the community who need resources for opioid use and overdose prevention.



Another notable service is the **Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addiction** (bcmhsus.ca/our-services/provincial-integrated-mental-health-addiction-programs/burnaby-centre-for-mental-health-addiction).

This unique program is for people living with complex and severe mental illness and substance use needs who have experienced several returns to substance use or whose treatment needs are beyond what local community health resources or health authority can offer. The centre accepts people on probation as well as people using methadone or Suboxone.

Service navigation and crisis lines

The **British Columbia Mental Health and Substance Use Services** website provides information on a broad range of mental health and substance use services in the province.

Visit: bcmhsus.ca

The **Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service** is available 24/7.

Call: [1-800-663-1441](tel:1-800-663-1441) (toll-free)

1-800-SUICIDE is available in more than 140 languages for people in British Columbia who are experiencing thoughts of suicide.

Call: [1-800-SUICIDE](tel:1-800-SUICIDE) (1-800-784-2433) (toll-free)

The **Métis Crisis Line** provides immediate crisis intervention, including mental health support.

Call: [1-833-MÉTISBC](tel:1-833-MÉTISBC) (1-833-638-4722) (toll-free)

Other notable services

L.I.N.C. Society is a registered charity that uses a peer-based model to work with people affected by the criminal justice system. It offers a variety of programs, including supports specific to 2SLGBTQ+ populations.

Visit: lincsociety.bc.ca

On the island, **Cool Aid** provides wellness programs, primary health and dental care, as well as emergency shelters and affordable housing.

Visit: coolaid.org

La Boussole offers health and mental health-related services for francophone community members in Vancouver.

Visit: en.lbv.ca/que-faisons-nous

Lifeguard App is a smartphone app in use in British Columbia designed to prevent overdoses and death due to overdose.

Visit: lifeguarddh.com

Community Transition Teams

Agency/organization/provider name: Extension of Correctional Health Services (Provincial Health Services Authority)		Province/territory where located: British Columbia	
Geographic reach or focus of program: Provincial		Language of services: English	
Contact information: N/A		Specific services available for:* <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other (people who use drugs/opioids)	
Website: bcmhsus.ca/news/Pages/Community-transition-teams-aim-to-prevent-overdose-deaths-among-people-recently-released-from-a-correctional-facility.aspx			
Main address: N/A			
Single or multi-site: Multi			
Specific focus on criminal justice-involved populations: Yes		Referral required: Yes	
Costs associated: Not specified		Supporting evidence/evaluation available online: Yes	
Program description and objectives: This program provides transitional supports for individuals and prevents overdose.		Span of services and supports: Each team consists of a social worker and a person with lived experience of drug use, the correctional system, or both. Teams work with clients for approximately 30 days following their release to connect them with a community physician, help fill prescriptions, and access other recovery supports in the community.	



This information is based on program information available online. Not all organizations indicate specific populations, but may still offer programs or services tailored to particular population groups.

Additional notes:

These teams are a response to known risks and evidence: “Roughly two-thirds of British Columbians who died of an illegal drug overdose between January 1, 2016, and July 31, 2017, had recent contact with the criminal justice system, according to a death review panel report released by the British Columbia Coroners Service in 2018. Of those, 10%—or 333 people—died within their first month of release from a correctional facility.” For more information, see <http://www.bcmhsus.ca/news/Pages/Community-transition-teams-aim-to-prevent-overdose-deaths-among-people-recently-released-from-a-correctional-facility.aspx>.

To access the program, participants must be incarcerated in one of the five pilot site facilities.

L.I.N.C. Society

Agency/organization/provider name: L.I.N.C. Society	Province/territory where located: British Columbia	
Geographic reach or focus of program: Not specified	Language of services: English	
Contact information: Phone: 604-820-1015 Toll-free: 1-877-424-4242 (BC only) Email: See website for email details	Specific services available for:* <input checked="" type="radio"/> 2SLGBTQ+	Website: lincsociety.bc.ca
Main address: 33270 14 th Avenue, Mission, BC V2V 4Z7		
Single or multi-site: Not specified		
Specific focus on criminal justice-involved populations: Yes		Referral required: No
Costs associated: No	Supporting evidence/evaluation available online: None found	
Program description and objectives: L.I.N.C. is committed to the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Every person within society has a fundamental right to be safe and secure. ■ Everyone is part of the community reintegration process where all people have an inherent value and dignity. ■ The positive contribution of every person can have a meaningful impact on the spirit of justice, and on the sense of well-being, within the community. ■ Hope for the future lies in the potential of every individual to change, and in the willingness of others to support and encourage that change. 	Span of services and supports: Among other community-based services, L.I.N.C. also provides the following services to people in correctional settings and on conditional release: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ weekly support groups (active, but suspended due to COVID-19) ■ toll-free support line (active) ■ tailored support for people exiting the correctional system (active) ■ outreach for people leaving correctional settings with high risk and little support (active) ■ support for 2SLGBTQ+ identifying persons in correctional settings or on conditional release (active) 	

Additional notes:

N/A



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Phoenix Society treatment programs

Agency/organization/provider name: Phoenix Society		Province/territory where located: British Columbia	
Geographic reach or focus of program: Provincial		Language of services: English	
Contact information: Phone: 604-583-7166 Email: admin@phoenixsociety.com Website: phoenixsociety.com Main address: 13686 94A Avenue, Surrey, BC V3V 1N1 Single or multi-site: Multi		Specific services available for:* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="radio"/> First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis <input checked="" type="radio"/> Women 	
Specific focus on criminal justice-involved populations: No		Referral required: Yes	
Costs associated: Not specified		Supporting evidence/evaluation available online: Yes	
Program description and objectives: Phoenix Society's goal is to address the root causes of issues that lead to addiction, declining mental health, homelessness, crime, and unemployment. Its facilities are carefully designed to be inclusive community spaces for residents. The Society is dedicated to social innovation and community initiatives that help participants exit the cycle of addiction and homelessness.		Span of services and supports: Integrated treatments provide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ early-recovery residential addiction services ■ employment and educational assistance ■ longer-term post-treatment transitional housing ■ home-ownership opportunities. Among other supports and programs, relevant services include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ community-based residential facilities ■ dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) ■ prevention of return to substance use ■ existential wellness group ■ authentic living ■ mindfulness workshops. <p>A women's program provides an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to supporting participants and their individualized treatment goals. The program supports women who need residential treatment for serious substance use, specifically drug and alcohol addiction, or have concurrent mental health and substance use needs.</p> <p>Phoenix Society also offers a unique partnership with two Elders, Old Hands and Alannah Atley (Wise Woman). It established the Raven Healing Grounds on its property in a beautiful natural setting under towering trees. The Elders and residents have built two traditional sweat lodges (one for men, one for women), located on the traditional territory of the Semiahmoo and Musqueam.</p>	




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Additional notes:

The website notes that the women's program is evidence-based. This program is included in the inventory because stakeholders from the British Columbia forensic system noted that the PHSA has access to eight treatment beds at Phoenix Society in Surrey. These beds are classified as low-barrier, so individuals from corrections or clinics can get into them quickly without the usual wait times associated with transitioning from corrections.

Prince George Activator Society


Agency/organization/provider name: Prince George Activator Society	Province/territory where located: British Columbia	
Geographic reach or focus of program: Local/municipal	Language of services: English	
Contact information: Phone: 250-563-5019 Email: activatorsoffice@shaw.ca	Specific services available for:* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis ● Immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural, and/or racialized communities ● Other (program supports men) 	 <p>This information is based on program information available online. Not all organizations indicate specific populations, but may still offer programs or services tailored to particular population groups.</p>
Website: activatorsociety.org		
Main address: 770 2 nd Avenue, Prince George, BC V2L 3A3		
Single or multi-site: Multi		
Specific focus on criminal justice-involved populations: Yes	Referral required: Yes	
Costs associated: Not specified	Supporting evidence/evaluation available online: None found	
Program description and objectives: <p>This program's mission is to help men on conditional release achieve and maintain a balanced lifestyle while working toward social and financial independence. Through various activities, the program aims to address barriers to and support residents in achieving viable employment, education, and a safe housing environment. It also provides tools and opportunities to explore an emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy lifestyle. The program offers opportunities for all residents to learn and practice Indigenous spirituality.</p>	Span of services and supports: <p>The program operates two community residential facilities (CRFs): Activator CRF in Prince George and 'Aghelh Nebun CRF. Among other services and supports, each offers one-on-one counselling services as well as the Trauma, Addiction, and Relationship Program (TARP), a flexible weekly program of group sessions that offer support and guidance while also presenting opportunities for deeper self-exploration. TARP provides tools to support residents in their transitions from incarceration to community living and successful reintegrations back into society. Program topics include addiction and recovery, trans-theoretical model of change, self-care, anger, violence and aggression, addiction and self-worth, and impacts of trauma and abuse.</p>	

Additional notes:

Admission is determined by a screening committee including Prince George Activator Society staff, parole officers, an RCMP representative, and the Citizens' Advisory Council. Acceptance is based on a risk/need assessment and the person's level of effort in addressing their correctional plan. The program accepts day parole, statutory release with residency, LTSO with residency, and work release clients.

Unlocking the Gates Services Society peer health mentoring program

Agency/organization/provider name: Unlocking the Gates Services Society (funded by First Nations Health Authority)	Province/territory where located: British Columbia	
Geographic reach or focus of program: Provincial	Language of services: English	
Contact information: Phone: 604-518-3261 (intake) 778-938-2584 (after hours) Email: unlockingthegates@gmail.com Website: unlockingthegates.org Main address: 104 West Office, 22832 Lougheed Hwy, Maple Ridge, BC, Canada Single or multi-site: Multi	Specific services available for:* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="radio"/> First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis <input checked="" type="radio"/> Women <input checked="" type="radio"/> 2SLGBTQ+ <input checked="" type="radio"/> Immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural, and/or racialized communities <input checked="" type="radio"/> Age 55+ 	
Specific focus on criminal justice-involved populations: Yes	Referral required: No	
Costs associated: No	Supporting evidence/evaluation available online: Yes	
Program description and objectives: This program supports individuals who are leaving correctional facilities in British Columbia and transitioning into the community. Unlocking the Gates' peer health mentoring program works with community agencies inside prisons to connect with individuals during pre-release planning and to offer peer support and engagement during the days immediately following their release. This support and outreach helps transitioning people access the health and social services they need to increase their chances of a successful integration. The peer health mentoring program is grounded in participatory processes and restorative and social justice principles. It enhances individuals' integration efforts through supportive relationships and by encouraging community dialogue, collaboration, and capacity building.	Span of services and supports: The program is accessible seven days a week to people who are incarcerated and does not exclude anyone. Staff were all once incarcerated themselves and now work to provide support to help people connect with the health and community resources they need. Examples of program support include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ meeting people at the prison gates ■ accompanying people to welfare offices or substance use meetings ■ helping people acquire safe housing, clothing, family doctors, and more. 	

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Additional notes:

There are no exclusion criteria. Evidence for the program can be found in the following empirical article: [Supporting women leaving prison through peer health mentoring: A participatory health research study.](#)

Propose a new resource to be included in this inventory

This inventory represents mental health and substance use services and supports identified during a relatively short period of time (September 2020 to February 2021). One notable gap is a lack of programs and services specific to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. As such, this inventory is by no means an exhaustive list of services and supports. The MHCC may update this inventory as other resources are identified that address gaps.

Please submit a program, service or resource that is not included in this first edition of the inventory. All submissions will be reviewed for inclusion in the next edition of the inventory.

[Click here to propose a program to be included in the inventory.](#)

The inventory includes:

- community-based mental health and substance use services and supports specific to people who are transitioning away from the criminal justice system.

The inventory does not include:

- mental health and substance use programs embedded in correctional institutions or therapeutic residences run by the Correctional Service of Canada (but some programs are included that are available only to people who are or have been recently incarcerated)
- mental health and wellness courts
- drug treatment courts
- forensic mental health hospital settings (those designed primarily for people found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder or unfit to stand trial).



Appendix: Glossary of terms

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an international self-support network for individuals seeking a sobriety approach to alcohol-related problems.

Assertive community treatment (ACT) is a model of care designed to improve community-based care for people living with a serious mental illness or associated complexities such as difficulty with following treatment.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a highly structured and time-limited form of psychotherapy focused on addressing challenging thoughts and behaviours.

Concurrent disorders refers to co-occurring problems or illnesses, particularly co-occurring mental health and substance use concerns.

Continuity of care refers to the quality of health and social service care that individuals receive over time.

Critical time intervention (CTI) is an intervention model designed to help individuals through critical transitional periods such as the transition to the community from correctional settings, shelters, and hospitals.

Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) is a form of psychotherapy focused on building healthier ways to manage stress, mood, and relationships.

Discharge or **release planning** refers to the process of preparing individuals for their release from incarceration and community re-entry.

Diversion refers to processes and opportunities for redirecting people away from the criminal justice system.

The **federal correctional system** in Canada oversees people who have been convicted of criminal offences and sentenced to two years or more. The Correctional Service of Canada manages federal correctional institutions and supervises persons under conditional release in the community.

Forensic assertive community treatment (FACT) is a type of specialty mental health program for individuals living with one or more serious mental illnesses who are involved in the forensic care system.

The **forensic care system** provides service to individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system while experiencing one or more serious mental illnesses. Typically in Canada, this system provides mental health care for persons who have been found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder and those deemed unfit to stand trial.

A **halfway house** is a type of setting designed for people who have been involved in the criminal justice system to assist with their community re-entry.

Harm reduction comprises an array of policies, services, and practices that aim to reduce the negative health and social impacts associated with substance use, drug policy, and drug laws.

Health equity is the principle that all people should have equal access to opportunities to achieve their highest health potential, independent of differences in social, economic, and demographic status.

Mental health court is a type of criminal law court for people with lived and living experience of mental illness or mental health concerns.

Naloxone is a medication used to counter the effects of opioid overdose.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) is an international support network for people seeking recovery from use of drugs other than alcohol.

The **provincial/territorial correctional systems** in Canada are responsible for managing people who are on remand, are convicted and sentenced to less than two years, or are in immigration detention.

Rapid-access addiction medicine (RAAM) clinics offer quick access to care for people living with substance use concerns.

Recidivism refers to the tendency for people who have been previously involved with the criminal justice system to be re-exposed to the criminal justice system.

Reintegration refers to the transition away from criminal justice settings such as correctional facilities and back to the community.

Transitional and supportive housing includes temporary types of accommodation designed to help people move away from homelessness or precarious housing to permanent housing. Supportive housing includes affordable community housing combined with dedicated support from mental health and/or substance use program staff.

Trauma-informed practice and policies recognize the complexities of personal, family, and community experiences of trauma. They incorporate what is needed to prevent re-traumatization including acknowledgement of the contributing cultural and systemic forces and power dynamics such as colonialization, social exclusion of diverse people, and systemic racism. These policies facilitate journeys of mental health recovery through compassionate care, consumer choice, flexibility, and opportunities for self-mastery and resilience-building.