



HSA to join task force on mental health and addictions

February 27, 2014

HSA REPORT, MARCH 2014

In response to escalating police involvement in what has been called a mental health crisis, the Vancouver Police department recently produced a report which points to a steady increase in mental health related police incidents and proposed an action plan aimed at moving away from a crisis response model to a more community based, stakeholder driven model.

The VPD report has recommended adding 300 long-term and secure mental health treatment beds, increasing staffing at BC Housing sites supporting tenants with psychiatric issues, increasing staffing and resources for Assertive Community Treatment and Assertive Outreach Teams and establishing an urgent care crisis centre.

In response to the VPD report, the BC Ministry of Health has recommended a series of actions in a document entitled, "Improving Health Services For Individuals with Severe Addiction and Mental Illness". Many of the recommendations contained in the Ministry document overlap with the VPD proposals.

In late October, the Mayor of Vancouver announced the establishment of a Task Force on Mental Health and Addictions to follow up on the VPD recommendations. According to Vancouver Mayor, Gregor Robertson, "Vancouver is in a crisis situation of people with untreated, severe mental illness who urgently need care and support. The City can only do so much to address the growing gap in our health and social safety net. We need ongoing support and partnerships with senior levels of government and community stakeholders."

The HSA has accepted an invitation from the City of Vancouver to participate in the Mayor's Task Force and is in the process of planning a public forum to provide an opportunity for input on mental health issues from HSA members and the public.

More details about the HSA's Mental Health Forum will be available in the coming weeks.

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