



Forensic Psychiatric Hospital

ACTION PLAN

Safe, secure, patient-centred care

2018 – 2020

Introduction

Forensic Psychiatric Services is a program of the Provincial Health Services Authority's BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services. Our facilities consist of the 190-bed Forensic Psychiatric Hospital — the only one of its kind in the province — as well as a 41-bed community transition program and six regional clinics. We are responsible for the following:

- ⇒ Assessing and treating people who have been found not criminally responsible due to a mental disorder (NCRMD) or unfit to stand trial (UST) and helping them transition back into their communities.
- ⇒ Giving expert evidence and recommendations for people who are found NCRMD or UST to the BC Review Board. It is the board's responsibility to hold hearings, make and review decisions (formally known as dispositions), and protect the public while safeguarding patient rights and freedoms. More information about the [BC Review Board's mandate](#) is available on their website.
- ⇒ Providing provincial court-ordered assessment and treatment of people subject to bail, probation and conditional sentences.
- ⇒ Providing psychiatric and psychological pre-sentence assessment reports.
- ⇒ Assessing and treating adults with mental-health and substance-use disorders in provincial correctional centres who are admitted to the hospital.

At the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, which serves our highest-need patients, we care for some of the most challenging and seriously ill people in B.C. This presents a variety of challenges with specialized staff training, safety, security, clinical-service delivery and more.

To address these challenges and improve the effectiveness of hospital services, Lynn Pelletier, the vice-president of BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, commissioned an external review in the spring of 2018.

External Review

To complete the review, we assembled an international panel of experts to thoroughly assess the hospital's mandate and operations as well as relevant legislation. The team carefully examined best practices in forensic mental health, forensic programs in other jurisdictions, Forensic Psychiatric Services' organizational performance reports, clinical documentation, quality and safety plans, clinical charts and written submissions from stakeholders. They invited over 50 internal and external stakeholders to provide confidential input and were pleased to receive strong participation from physicians, managers, staff and others with diverse perspectives and responsibilities. The review team made recommendations on the following:

- ⇒ Organizational structure, decision making and accountability
- ⇒ Effectiveness of our clinical-program model, access and care transitions
- ⇒ Staff mix, scope of practice and the degree to which standards and guidelines are followed
- ⇒ Inter-disciplinary teamwork and communication
- ⇒ Processes and the documentation that we provide to the BC Review Board to enable them to fulfill their mandate
- ⇒ The degree to which orientation, training, facility design, equipment, policies and procedures ensure patient and staff safety and security
- ⇒ Patient experience

Their findings and subsequent recommendations form the basis of this action plan, which is the next step in our ongoing commitment to excellent forensic mental-health care in B.C.

Findings and recommendations

The review team commended BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services for the progress made in recent years in improving clinical services, safety and security at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital. They also identified a number of areas to improve, including the following:

Patient experience

Patient and family engagement has been identified as a high priority at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, and recent improvements have been made; however, the transition to patient-centred service design and delivery is still in the early stages. The reviewers recommended that we regularly seek patient and family input and involve them in program co-design and decision making. Once the plan is fully implemented, we expect patients' experience to improve.

Workforce

Forensic psychiatry is a subspecialty that requires Canadian physicians to complete a fellowship and a residency program. There is currently no equivalent training for nurses or other health-care professionals who work in forensic mental health in B.C. Staff are required to learn specialized skills on the job after graduating from a relevant educational program. Given that the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital is the only service of its kind in the province, the reviewers recommended establishing forensic mental-health core competencies for staff, increasing professional development and working with academic institutions to advance specialized training. They also recommended reassessing staff roles and functions across all programs, particularly the responsibilities and scope of clinical nurse leaders and psychologists.

Safety and security

Many of our patients are seriously ill and can be prone to aggressive behaviour. Ensuring a safe and secure environment for patients, staff and physicians is of paramount importance. The reviewers noted that we have made significant progress in this area by upgrading perimeter fencing, improving key management, installing CCTV cameras and duress systems, offering violence-prevention training to staff, and making procedural security changes. They also made a number of recommendations for improvement, including enhanced risk assessments, integrated safety training and physical/procedural security improvements.

Clinical programs

The reviewers found our clinical care to be evidence-informed and in keeping with best practices; however, there were selected practice domains that they recommended be strengthened. To inform clinical program improvements, they recommended benchmarking the Forensic Psychiatric Service against evidence-informed forensic psychiatric guidelines and standards in Canada and other jurisdictions, such as the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

Decision making and accountability

The reviewers found that there is room for improvement in the administrative and clinical decision-making mechanisms across the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital. They recommended further clarifying the assignments and responsibilities of the director-in-charge and strengthening clinical leadership structure. They also recommended that we continue to improve the evidence we provide to the BC Review Board.

Patient access and flow

Evidence from a recent evaluation shows that the model of care introduced in 2015 has improved the focus on specialized care and engaged nurses more effectively in treatment and planning; however, it has also had some unintended consequences on communication and care transitions. The complexity of the changes that were made to structure, policy, process and clinical specialization resulted in some areas remaining less developed than others. To address this, the review team recommended conducting a patient-needs assessment across the hospital, mapping the patient journey to identify areas for improvement, and implementing selected modifications to unit-based programming and the assignment of patients.

Addressing the Recommendations

Goals

We have accepted the reviewers' recommendations and developed this action plan to guide the implementation of improvements. All action items are designed to meet three goals:

- A. Improve patient, staff and public safety
- B. Improve clinical-service delivery and patient-centred care
- C. Strengthen leadership, inter-disciplinary teamwork and professional development

Approach

All action items will involve assessing our current state to identify gaps and opportunities and determine how we can better align with international, evidence-informed best practices. In each case, we will identify and prioritize specific actions, implement them systematically, evaluate the outcomes, and define next steps for improvement.

Timing

This action plan will continue to be implemented over the course of 18 months with reporting at regular intervals. We plan to complete all action items by April 2020.

Guiding Principles

We serve some of B.C.'s most challenging and seriously ill patients, who live with severe mental-health and substance-use issues and are involved with the criminal justice system. We are committed to providing our patients with the highest standard of care and will use the following principles to guide everything we do, including the action items in this plan:

- ⇒ Our patients will receive respectful, high-quality treatment, rehabilitation and care in a safe and secure environment, and will be engaged in the decisions that affect them.
- ⇒ Staff and physician safety is paramount. Everyone should be free from aggression in the workplace.
- ⇒ Our clinicians and support staff work in a higher-risk environment than most health-care providers. We will provide the specialized training they need to effectively balance patient care with safety and security.
- ⇒ The best solution to the potential for aggression is prevention, which we endeavour to achieve through developing safe, trauma-informed and evidence-based therapeutic relationships with patients.
- ⇒ Sustainable improvement requires active physician and staff participation that is supported by strong clinical, operational and medical leadership.
- ⇒ All service improvements will be informed by evidence, and monitored and evaluated to assess outcomes on a regular and ongoing basis.

Action Items

A. Improve patient, staff and public safety

① Invest in therapeutic and relational security training

Staff and physicians will receive comprehensive training in therapeutic and relational security, a clinical, health-care-oriented approach to safety that focuses on prevention. Designed for forensic settings, it teaches health-care professionals to be acutely aware of their surroundings and build a deep rapport with and understanding of patients so they can anticipate and de-escalate as many aggressive incidents as possible.

② Improve integrated safety and security training

Staff will be trained in the Provincial Violence Prevention Curriculum and code-white protocols, including mock-response scenarios. This integrated training will allow staff to anticipate, manage and respond quickly to violent incidents and respond to emergencies in a safe and effective manner.

③ Hire specialized clinical-security staff

To accomplish actions A1 and A2, we will hire a team of clinical specialists to focus on improving staff safety and security by providing training and coaching in therapeutic and relational security, code-white response, violence prevention, and implementing safe wards across the hospital. They will be experts in risk assessment and management, clinical education, emergency response and patient-incident management.

④ Update and increase awareness of safety and security procedures

We will review and update all hospital safety and security procedures and ensure staff and physicians are aware of them through orientation, training and clinical meetings. We will also build in mechanisms to ensure that there is compliance with the procedures.

⑤ Improve reporting systems

We will develop an integrated approach to reporting in the Patient Safety Learning System and the Workplace Health Indicator Tracking and Evaluation (WHITE™) system. We will also continuously track and implement improvements in safety in collaboration with staff and physicians.

⑥ Increase the expertise and presence of forensic security officers

We will increase the forensic security officer presence across the hospital to facilitate quick response times. While we implement other safety improvements, two officers will be dedicated 24/7 to the hospital's high-security units. We will also enhance and increase officer training to ensure they have the expertise necessary to work in a forensic environment. We will also review their roles and responsibilities and update them so they can better support clinical staff. Finally, working with our union partners, we will seek to reinstate special-constable status for officers to give them more flexibility to respond to a range of incidents.

⑦ **Reduce environmental risks**

We will conduct comprehensive risk assessments in all clinical areas and premises, identify areas for improvement, and implement urgent remedial action. We will also submit capital improvements through the PHSA approval process and develop a business case for future expansion.

⑧ **Facilitate improved facility maintenance**

We will work with Shared Services BC to improve the ability of hospital leaders to manage facility maintenance and renovations that will improve patient care, safety and security. We will also evaluate long-term options to improve facility operations and develop a business case to advance the preferred option.



B. Improve clinical-service delivery and patient-centred care

① **Align service delivery with patient needs**

We will evaluate our model of care and clinical-service delivery plan to ensure they meet our patients' needs. This will include identifying strengths and areas for improvement in our existing care model, updating it as required, and developing a new, evidence-informed clinical-service-delivery plan. It will also include identifying our team roles and functions.

② **Conduct a patient-needs assessment**

We will conduct a patient-needs assessment in each area of the hospital to identify necessary program and staffing changes. To inform our assessment process, we will review practices in other jurisdictions and implement a consistent approach.

③ **Expand trauma-informed practice**

We will build on existing work to expand trauma-informed practice throughout the hospital based on the Provincial Health Services Authority's Mental Health and Substance Use Trauma-Informed Practice Plan.

④ **Expand and strengthen the roles of psychologists and clinical counsellors**

We will review the scope and role of psychologists and clinical counsellors at the hospital and implement changes to ensure that they are working in accordance with clinical guidelines and evidence-informed practice. We will develop an interdisciplinary team integration plan and ensure that staff are working to their full scope of practice. We will also develop strategies to address workforce and recruitment challenges.

⑤ **Improve BC Review Board submissions**

We will evaluate the BC Review Board's needs and expectations and identify areas for improvement. This will include determining the roles and responsibilities of the psychiatrist and the clinical team, and streamlining our processes.

⑥ **Increase assessments outside the hospital**

We will identify opportunities to conduct forensic psychiatric assessments, such as fitness to stand trial, outside of the hospital to improve patient outcomes and ensure the best use of existing resources.

⑦ **Improve patient flow and communication**

We will identify and engage key stakeholder groups, including patients, families, physicians, staff and researchers in mapping our current and future state and identifying improvements to align with clinical guidelines, standards, patient needs and best practices in forensic mental health.

⑧ **Develop and implement provincial forensic mental-health guidelines and standards**

After reviewing clinical guidelines and standards in other jurisdictions, we will identify and adapt/adopt the best standards for our settings and prioritize their application at the hospital.

⑨ **Improve clinical documentation and Implement electronic health records**

We will improve our clinical documentation standards and protocols. We will also develop an information management road map and ensure that Clinical and Systems Transformation (CST) is implemented in a timely manner.

C. Strengthen leadership, interdisciplinary teamwork and professional development

① Clarify the roles and responsibilities of hospital leaders

We will review the roles of operational and medical leaders across the hospital and implement improvements to clarify responsibilities and accountabilities. This will include the role of the director-in-charge of the hospital under the Criminal Code of Canada and the director of the facility under the BC Mental Health Act.

② Strengthen clinical leadership and supervision

We will conduct an assessment of unit-based clinical leadership roles and functions and identify areas for improvement. We will also take clinical nurse leaders off the nursing rotation so that they can dedicate their time to leadership, supervision, practice improvements and ongoing training and development of staff. In addition, an evening and weekend nursing shift manager position will be created to increase supervision and clinical support 24/7, and the manager on-call system will be improved.

③ Improve committee effectiveness

We will review the current committee structure and functioning, and identify and implement improvements.

④ Improve physician and staff engagement

In light of the PHSA Work Life Pulse Survey results, we will develop a strategy to improve our engagement of physicians and staff.

⑤ Generate core competencies in forensic mental health

We will identify professional standards and core competencies required in the forensic hospital environment, assess our current workforce, identify learning requirements, and implement improvements.

⑥ Invest in professional development

We will develop and implement comprehensive forensic mental-health continuing-education and training programs, and work with educational institutions to develop a speciality training curriculum.



Accountability

We have created this action plan because we recognize that in order to protect our staff and provide our patients with the best care possible, changes are necessary. Implementation of this plan is the shared responsibility of leadership, staff and physicians at the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital.

A team of our senior leaders will provide support and accountability. We are committed to working with patients, families, staff, physicians and partners to improve patient care, clinical decision making and staff safety. We are also dedicated to positioning Forensic Psychiatric Services as a national leader in providing forensic mental-health services to the patients who need them.

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