

## New provincial service to protect rights for patients treated under the Mental Health Act

In February 2024, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Attorney General launched a new provincial service to help individuals treated under the Mental Health Act (MHA) access independent rights advisors.

The Independent Rights Advice Service (IRAS), operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association, offers free support to individuals who have been newly admitted involuntarily for psychiatric treatment, transferred to a new designated facility, or had their involuntary status renewed. Patients can also request to meet with a rights advisor at any time during their treatment.

When clinical staff review Form 13 (Notification to Involuntary Patient of Rights) with a patient, they will ask if the patient would like to meet with an independent rights advisor. If the patient agrees, staff will help them complete the meeting request form to the Island Health's MHA Process Support Team that coordinates the meeting.

Independent rights advisors are not legal advocates and do not have access to the patient's medical records or MHA forms. Their role is to provide information about the MHA, answer the patient's questions, and offer guidance on filing complaints, requesting a Form 7 (Review Panel Hearing), submitting a Form 11 (Second Medical Opinion), or finding legal representation.

### IRAS Implementation Phases:

- **Phase 1:** The initial phase of IRAS implementation in Island Health is complete. IRAS is now available in all inpatient psychiatric units and in units that support involuntary patients at designated facilities and observation units across the island.

- **Phase 2:** The next phase will extend IRAS access to medical and surgical units, as well as emergency departments at designated facilities.

- **Phase 3:** The final phase will make IRAS available to involuntary patients on extended leave in the community.

Updates on the implementation process will be shared through Island Health's organizational newsletter, *The Weekly*. For any questions or comments, contact the MHA Resource Team at [MHASupport@islandhealth.ca](mailto:MHASupport@islandhealth.ca).



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Independent Rights Advice Service (IRAS). At the top, there is a purple banner with a warning icon and the text: "Initial service launch limited to 51 mental health facilities. View more about [participating facilities and roll out plan](#)." Below this is a green header with the IRAS logo and navigation links: "About Rights Advice", "How to Access", and "Resources". A yellow bar contains an "Exit Site" link. The main content area features the heading "Learn about your rights under the Mental Health Act in BC" and a list of three bullet points: "Rights Advisors are independent from the British Columbia health care system.", "They offer support without judgement.", and "They will not share any information with your treatment team or your support network, without consent." A yellow button at the bottom left says "Learn More about Rights Advisors". On the right, there is a circular image of two stylized human figures in a forest setting.

For more information on the provincial Independent Rights Advice Service, visit: [Home - Independent Rights Advice Service \(irasbc.ca\)](https://www.irasbc.ca)