

Mental Health & Substance Use Update



Young Adult Unit at RJH

The new Young Adult Mental Health Unit is officially open to the public. In November 2023, Island Health began to reconfigure an existing mental health unit containing 16 beds to be a unit focused on care for young adults under age 26. It has now been formally announced by the Province of BC.

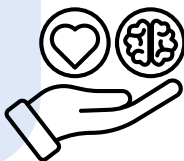
The new unit will provide an interdisciplinary team of staff, including nurses, psychiatrists, occupational and recreational therapists, social work, counsellors, peer support, and mental health workers, who will focus on further improving services for young adults on the South Island. The unit offers a variety of therapeutic programs to provide care and support for recovery goals, including cognitive behavioural therapy, dialectical behavioural therapy, relaxation movement, and more.

The core purpose of the reconfigured unit is to help young adults during an acute mental health episode, provide programming support and skill building, and engage with families during treatment to allow for patients to transition from their stay into community integration.

Positive feedback has been received from the community, including families, parents, and government officials. A patient partner and mother of a young woman who struggled with mental health challenges made an important statement:

"I became a patient caregiver partner with Island Health soon after we lost our girl, trying my best to help fill the gaps that Kelsey fell into. I am so grateful to witness the progress in patient care in Island Health. I know that Kelsey would be pleased that there is a young adult mental health unit now, a place supported by people who are committed to providing a safe and comfortable environment. A spot where young people like her can rest and heal. She would especially be thrilled about the therapy dogs!"¹

- Jill



Admission to the new Young Adult Health Unit is based on physician assessment and referral. Patients must be between the ages of 17-26 years and are experiencing their first and/or active episode of psychosis, mood disorder, or an exacerbation of either.

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Supporting MHSU Allyship Journey



Island Health has introduced a new Indigenous Learning Module, called **Seven Generations** (#32755) offered on Learning Hub!

The goal of this course is to improve health outcomes for present and future generations of all Indigenous people living within the Island Health service area. All Island Health staff members are encouraged to engage with this course to further their understanding of cultural safety & humility. [Click here to register.](#)



Cowichan Lodge Welcomes MHSU Pilot Program LPN Learners

This fall, Cowichan Lodge – a 51-bed Tertiary Mental Health facility set in Duncan – piloted two new initiatives focused on meeting the BC College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM) additional education requirement for Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) practice in Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU).

The first initiative, a continuing-competency self-assessment, provided an opportunity for experienced LPNs to reflect on and document the knowledge and skills they have gained while already working in MHSU. The core competencies that informed the self-assessment also served as the foundation for a provincial LPN additional education program piloted at Cowichan Lodge, the second of the two new initiatives.

The education pilot came as the result of provincial collaboration to enable LPNs new to MHSU to meet their regulatory requirements. Delivered in partnership with Douglas College, the additional education program aligns with Health Human Resource strategies to support career development and address staffing challenges in MHSU.

Island Health sponsored the pilot education opportunity by offering two seats in the program to LPNs who were new to MHSU practice. From amongst the hopeful applicants, Lesley Walker and Joanna Cooper were selected to participate in the program. Both learners successfully completed the program’s virtual and in-person learning portions and enthusiastically shared about their learning experiences.

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