



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Mental health system could do more to ensure people can access specialized services

VICTORIA - Auditor General of British Columbia Carol Bellringer issued her latest audit today:
Access to Adult Tertiary Mental Health and Substance Use Services.

Bellringer's team looked at how B.C.'s health system manages access to the highest level of mental health and substance use services. They found pockets of good practice, but more is needed to ensure that highly vulnerable patients – for example, someone suffering from an acute mental illness with a long history of hospitalization and substance use issues – can access the services they need.

“More information is needed,” says Bellringer. “The Ministry of Health and health authorities need to know where the bottlenecks are, how long the waitlists are, and whether or not programs are effective and meet patient needs now and in the future.”

Mental health and substance use services were once housed at Riverview Hospital. Services have slowly transferred to the health authorities. This audit is about the current system and the planning for future services.

Currently, some people may not be well-served. This includes people with serious mental health and/or substance use problems, plus acquired brain injury, developmental disabilities, and/or a history of extreme violence or current aggressive behaviour. These gaps in service are compounded by the lack of available resources for patients ready for discharge, such as appropriate housing, and pressures on other parts of the medical system, such as emergency rooms.

Barriers to access and discharge need to be analyzed and coordinated. Bellringer recommends leadership from the Ministry of Health to keep the momentum going, set province-wide direction, and enhance collaboration with the health authorities for more consistency across the province.

“We're not recommending a one-size-fits-all approach, but there needs to be some consistency,” says Bellringer. “Different approaches and philosophies of care are necessary because patient needs vary across the province. There should be fair and equitable access for everyone.”



OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

Teleconference Date: Tuesday, May 17, 2016

Time: 11:30 a.m. (Pacific Time)

Dial-in Information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the USA: 1 877 353-9184

Participant Pass Code: 44848#

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