

Safe, Accessible, Affordable

A vision for mental healthcare in BC

Overview:

The BC Greens are committed to ensuring that every BC resident has access to comprehensive mental health care. We are announcing a series of measures aimed at expanding access to mental health professionals, fully regulating psychotherapy, integrating mental health into emergency services, and reforming the *Mental Health Act*.

Current Conditions:

Mental health services in British Columbia are currently under-resourced, with many residents facing barriers to accessing the care they need. The lack of regulation in the psychotherapy profession poses risks to patients, and the existing 911 system is not equipped to handle mental health crises effectively.

The *Mental Health Act* is outdated and does not reflect the current understanding of mental health care, leaving many vulnerable individuals without adequate protection or support

What the BC Greens will do:

1. Mental health support covered by MSP

Getting help for mental health shouldn't be a luxury. Every BC resident will have six visits per year with a mental health professional - like a psychologist, counsellor, or therapist - covered by the Medical Services Plan (MSP).

2. Adding mental health to 911

In a crisis, the last thing anyone needs is confusion about who to call. We will add mental health as a fourth option when calling 911. Whether it's fire, police,

ambulance, or mental health - help will be there when you need it, with professionals who understand what you're going through.

Community-led crisis response teams have been shown to be highly effective at responding to crises related to mental health and substance use. We will work with the Canadian Mental Health Association to expand Peer Assisted Care Teams (PACT) to other communities in BC.

3. Full regulation of psychotherapy

Right now, anyone in BC can call themselves a counsellor or therapist, even without proper training. We will fully regulate psychotherapy in the province.

4. Updating the *Mental Health Act* and creating a mental health advocate

The laws around mental health care in BC are outdated and don't reflect what we know today about mental health. We will launch an all-party review to modernize the *Mental Health Act*, making sure it truly serves the people, and create an Independent Office of the Mental Health Advocate so that if something goes wrong in care, there's someone on the patient's side.

How much will it cost?

- Providing six mental health visits per resident under MSP, along with the costs for regulation and advocacy, would cost \$100 million a year. If 2-3% of people use the service, and each of them attends all six sessions at \$200 per session, this funding would cover 83,000 people receiving six sessions each.
- Doubling crisis line funding from \$2.5 million to \$5 million.
- Investing \$500,000 to establish consistent protocols between 911, emergency responders, and mobile crisis teams.

Q&A

Q: Why is the regulation of psychotherapy important?

A: The regulation of psychotherapy is essential in ensuring that all practitioners meet a high standard of care. It protects patients by requiring professionals to adhere to ethical guidelines and ensures there is recourse if harm occurs. It also brings respect and legitimacy to the profession, ultimately leading to better outcomes for those seeking mental health support.

Q: How will integrating mental health into 911 calls improve crisis response?

A: By making mental health a fourth option in 911 calls, we ensure that individuals in crisis receive the most appropriate response. Instead of defaulting to police, callers will be directed to mental health professionals who are trained to handle such situations, reducing unnecessary harm and fatalities.

Q: What impact will coverage of mental health services under MSP have on the public?

A: Covering mental health services under MSP will encourage early intervention, allowing people to address mental health issues before they escalate. This will lead to better health outcomes, reduce the need for more intensive treatments, and ultimately ease the burden on our healthcare system.

Q: What changes are expected from the review of the *Mental Health Act*?

A: The review will modernize the *Mental Health Act* to reflect contemporary understandings of mental health care. It will ensure that the legislation supports respectful, dignified, and evidence-based care, and it will address the needs and rights of those receiving mental health services in BC.

Sources/Resources:

- Mental health for all: Building a comprehensive system of care ([CMHA BC policy and advocacy roadmap 2024](#))
- Timeline of mental health law and legal services in BC ([Health Justice - timeline](#))
- Fast facts on the BC *Mental Health Act* ([Health Justice - fast facts](#))
- Involuntary treatment: Criminalization by another name ([Pivot Legal Society](#))

- 2022 Investigative Update: Committed to change ([BC Ombudsperson](#))
- Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Insuring Psychological Services as Part of Medicare for Depression in Canada ([Psychiatry Online](#))
- Transforming policing and community safety in British Columbia ([Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act](#))
- Peer Assisted Care Teams - FAQ ([CMHA](#))

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