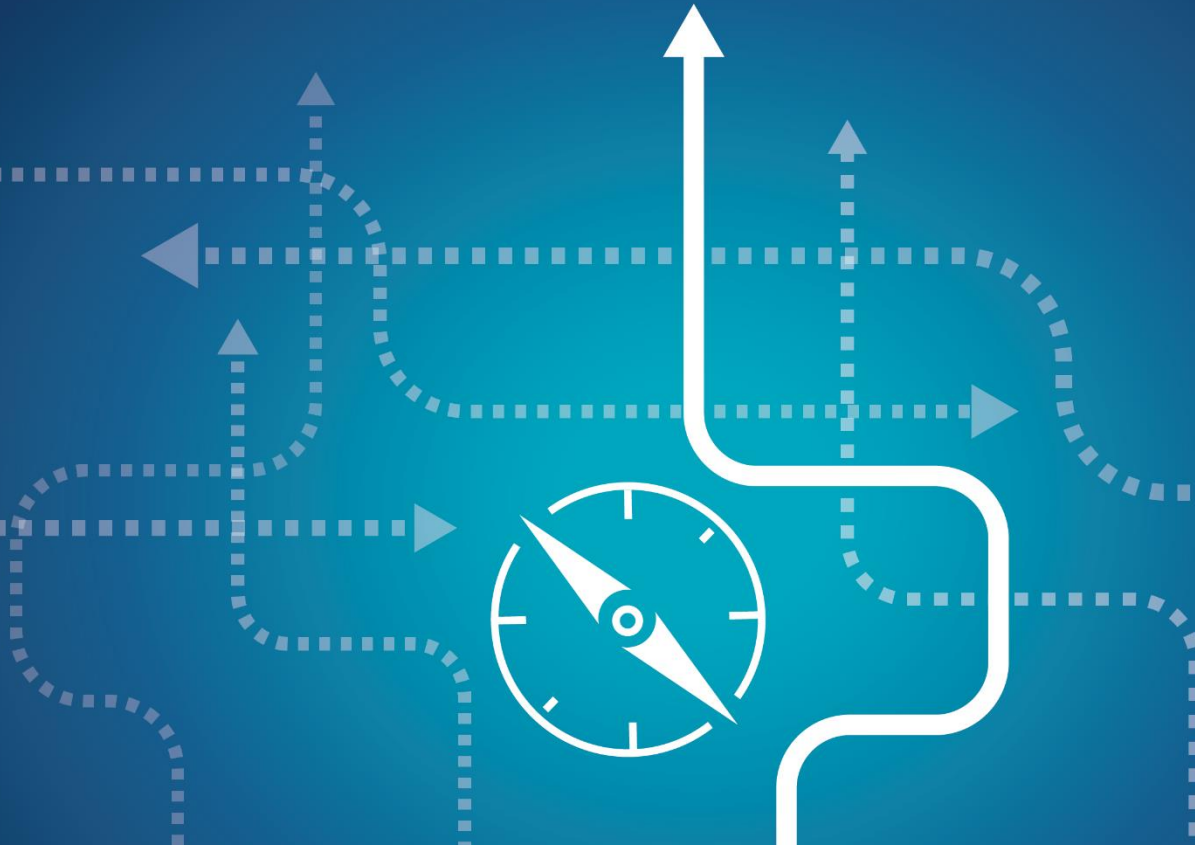


Ethics in the BC Public Service

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



Where ideas work

Table of Contents

Executive Message	3
Ethics in the BC Public Service	4
Ethics at Work.....	4
Integrity and Corporate Values at Work	4
Ethical Leadership in the BCPS	6
Governance Structure	6
Corporate Ethics Governance Council	6
Corporate Ethics Lead Role and Function.....	6
Ethics Management Framework.....	7
Building an Ethical Culture in the BCPS	8
Establishing the Foundation	8
Standards of Conduct for BCPS Employees	8
Annual Review of the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct.....	9
Work Environment Survey Results	9
Communications, Outreach and Training.....	11
Ethics Communications.....	11
Ethics Outreach	12
Ethics Training	12
Compliance Courses	13
Ethics Advisory Service	14
Inquiries and Trends	14
Public Interest Disclosure Act.....	16
PIDA Outreach and Engagement.....	16

Employee Engagement	16
Accessing Online Content	17
Public Interest Disclosure Act Annual Reporting	19
Agency Designated Officer Responsibilities	19
PIDA Disclosures	20
Disclosures from 2019 to 2020	21
Disclosures from 2020 to 2021	21
Anonymity and Protection from Reprisal	22
Understanding Serious Wrongdoing	22
BC Ombudsperson PIDA Disclosures, Findings and Recommendations	23
Ethics in the BCPS: Next Steps	24
Appendix A: Ethics and PIDA Resources and Links	25
Key references and resources related to ethics and PIDA in the BCPS	25
Legislation	25
Ethics Information and Advisory Service	25
PIDA Information and Resources	26
Independent Office Reports	26

Executive Message



This past year has posed many challenges for BC Public Service employees, both personally and professionally. We have seen huge shifts in priorities and in the way we live and work. Through all of this, BC Public Service employees have responded with an unfailing professionalism and integrity. This is in part due to the well-established ethical foundation provided by the Oath of Employment, Standards of Conduct and the BC Public Service Corporate Values. These guide employees to make the best possible decisions in a positive and respectful manner. This is integral in developing an ethical culture in the BC Public Service.

I am pleased to introduce this new report that explores ethics in the BC Public Service and speaks to some of the initiatives undertaken over the past three years. Some of these initiatives reflect our commitment to implementing ethics-related recommendations made by the BC Auditor General and the BC Ombudsperson in their respective 2017 reports (see Appendix A for links). But our actions go beyond those reports and demonstrate our shared dedication to encouraging employees to speak up and play an active role in shaping the culture of the BC Public Service. It is important to share this work with all employees, so you know what resources and supports are available to you and what work is being done across government.

In 2019, the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) came into effect, providing an opportunity to strengthen ethics with an additional mechanism for disclosure in cases of serious wrongdoing and protection against reprisals for those disclosing the information. Under the legislation, the BC Public Service is required to report annually. Rather than publish a separate report, we have decided to include this information in our report on ethics more broadly.

At the core, this ethics report serves to promote accountability and transparency, demonstrating the BC Public Service Corporate Values and integrity through our actions and our commitment to serving all British Columbians.

Lori Wanamaker

Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Public Service



Ethics in the BC Public Service

Ethics and integrity have always been important to the BC Public Service (BCPS), and they remain even more important to us today. They feature prominently in the 2020 Corporate Plan, and we continue to promote and share their importance in communications, outreach and training activities across the BCPS. But how do we define them in the BC Public Service?

Ethics at Work

Ethics is often defined as the moral principles that guide a person's behaviour or activity. Conversations of ethics raise topics such as equity, fairness, justice and values. These are subjective terms that can mean something different to each person. But in the BCPS context, we have guidance through the Oath of Employment, Standards of Conduct and Corporate Values to help define the ethics of the workplace.

Employees begin their journey with the BCPS by affirming or swearing the Oath of Employment and confirming that they have read the Standards of Conduct, setting the foundation for their ethical conduct in the BCPS by establishing they understand the expectations that guide our day-to-day work and interactions with each other and with citizens.

Integrity and Corporate Values at Work

In addition to the Oath of Employment and the Standards of Conduct, the BCPS has one overarching corporate value, **Integrity**, and six core corporate values: **Curiosity, Service, Passion, Teamwork, Accountability and Courage**.



These principles describe the qualities we value in our colleagues and our organization. They were chosen after consultation and discussion with employees across government.

Integrity is above all the other values as a quality that affirms the Standards of Conduct for the BC Public Service.

Integrity, curiosity, service, passion, teamwork, accountability and courage shape our culture and help to:

- Foster practices that build a positive work culture
- Establish a single-employer identity
- Define shared expectations
- Maintain consistency of management practices
- Improve organizational performance

Ethical Leadership in the BCPS



In 2017, the Office of the Auditor General of BC released their report into ethics management in the BCPS. Overall, it was found that there was a strong foundation and tradition of ethics in the workplace, but the report made eight recommendations to strengthen ethics in the BCPS. Significant work was undertaken to put a framework and structure in place to address the recommendations.

Governance Structure

In February 2018, the Deputy Ministers Council (DMC) agreed to assign the role of corporate ethics lead to the Deputy Minister for the BC Public Service Agency. It was also decided that overall leadership and direction for ethics would be led in partnership with two other central agency deputy ministers (Finance and Citizens' Services) to reflect the BCPS integrated ethics management framework.

Corporate Ethics Governance Council

The deputy ministers representing three central agencies comprise the Corporate Ethics Governance Council. The Council has an overarching mandate for ethics and compliance management in the BCPS. It is responsible for the coordination, management and oversight of the integrated ethics framework to ensure government is meeting its core human resources policy objective that "all public service employees will exhibit the highest standards of conduct."

Corporate Ethics Lead Role and Function

The Deputy Minister for the BC Public Service Agency is the Corporate Ethics Lead in the BCPS. The lead is a member of the Corporate Ethics Governance Council and is responsible for the duties and functions described in the above section. However, the lead also has additional, unique responsibilities and functions as the corporate ethics program team reports through the BC Public Service Agency.

The corporate ethics program team is responsible for the integrated ethics management framework in operations, including support for the Corporate Ethics Governance Council and ministry ethics advisors, outreach and communications, and monitoring, reporting and compliance.

Ethics Management Framework

To improve coordination and to better monitor, evaluate and report the results of our efforts to support ethical behaviour, the ethics management framework was published on MyHR in March 2017. The framework represents an integrated approach, highlighting the roles and ethics-related responsibilities of the Office of the Comptroller General, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Corporate Information and Records Management Office, Treasury Board, the BC Public Service Agency and ministries.

The purpose of central co-ordinated ethics management is to set expectations of ethical behaviour and actively communicate and reinforce that behaviour, including how to support employees in choosing the right path. At a minimum, all leaders in our organization require an awareness of this framework and, most importantly, who to ask for advice or refer employees to when questions arise.



Figure 1: BC Public Service Ethics Management Framework

Building an Ethical Culture in the BCPS



Making ethical decisions in organizations has seldom been simple. It has become even more challenging as society becomes increasingly complex. With more people needing to collaborate more quickly, multiple competing interests and ever-changing priorities, it can be daunting to make the right ethical decision.

The following section describes the activities underway to promote awareness, knowledge and discussions of ethics and compliance in the BCPS, empowering employees to handle ethical dilemmas they encounter in everyday work.

Establishing the Foundation

The foundations of ethics in the BCPS are defined and outlined in the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct. Employees are expected to swear or affirm that they have reviewed and agree to abide by these terms and conditions when they begin their career in the BCPS.

Public Service Oath of Employment

The Oath obligates employees to act with integrity, putting the interests of the public service above their own personal interests and avoiding all conflicts of interest. The Oath also requires employees to safeguard confidential information, serve the government impartially, honestly and ethically, and to honour and faithfully abide by the Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees.

Standards of Conduct for BCPS Employees

The Standards of Conduct establish expectations for all employees in the public service to support the core policy objective that “public service employees exhibit the highest standards of conduct.” The requirement to comply with the standards is a condition of employment and employees who fail to comply with the standards may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Under the Standards of Conduct, the Deputy Minister for the BC Public Service Agency is responsible for coordinating the development of awareness, training and communication programs in support of the Standards of Conduct and ethics related issues, and for providing advice to senior executives and others, including ethics advisors, regarding the application of the standards. The standards also establish the key

responsibilities of the deputy ministers, ethics advisors, managers and employees in relation to ensuring conduct and expectations are observed and upheld.¹

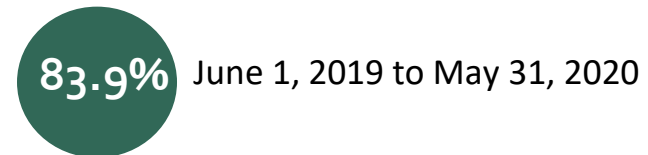
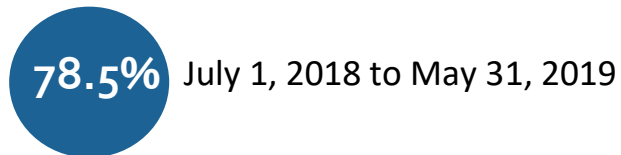
Between June 1, 2018 and March 31, 2021, 9,482 employees (new or rehired) swore or affirmed the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct.

New “Welcome to the BC Public Service” and Oath of Employment ceremonies are offered regularly to ensure all new public servants have a solid foundation in ethics and understand the expectations of employment of the BCPS.

Annual Review of the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct

Each year, BC Public Service employees are expected to complete the Annual Review of the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct. This is to ensure that employees are familiar with changes made to these policies and foster understanding of the expectations and responsibilities of all employees to create a respectful workplace and ethical culture. The compliance rates of the annual review for the first two years of the program are provided below. Work continues to develop awareness of the annual review and improve reporting capabilities for ministries.

Compliance Rates



Work Environment Survey Results

To determine the degree of success in building an ethical culture, BCPS leaders often look at the Work Environment Survey (WES). In 2015, four ethics-related questions were added to WES. These questions assess employees’ perceptions of ethics in the workplace and supervisory-level management. The questions and the summary of scores since 2015 are included below:

¹ There are some segments of the BCPS where employees have a unique Standards of Conduct (for example, BC Sherriff Service, BC Corrections, Liquor Distribution Branch) based on extraordinary duties and responsibilities related to their organizations. In these instances, these bodies have embedded the Standards of Conduct for BCPS Employees in their organization-specific codes of conduct and undertake activities to bring awareness of employment expectations and also complete their own annual review process.

Question: Employees in my work unit are clear on the ethical values expected in performing their work.



Question: If I am faced with an ethical question or concern, I know where to go for help to resolve the situation.



Question: The person I report to maintains high standards of honesty and integrity.



Question: The person I report to supports me and my coworkers in conducting our work in an ethical manner.



Individual work unit scores have also been analyzed. The results of this analysis help identify areas with wise practices that can be shared across the organization and identify work units that may benefit from outreach to learn more about ethics in the BCPS. Overall, these scores indicate that the majority of employees across the BCPS express satisfaction with ethical practices and leadership in their work units and supervisory-level management.

Communications, Outreach and Training

Beyond the annual review activity, the BCPS has emphasized communications, outreach and training as a way to build an ethical culture across the organization. There is a commitment in the 2020 Corporate Plan to develop new ethics-related resources for BCPS employees. By putting time and energy into establishing familiarity with ethics and encouraging employees to speak up when they have concerns, the goal is to prevent misconduct and wrongdoing from occurring.

Ethics Communications

To ensure that there are constant and consistent communications about ethics across the BCPS, there is an overarching communications strategy with communications plans in place for distinct events, such as the annual review, and new initiatives in the BCPS such as the Fraud Toolkit introduced by the Ministry of Finance. There have been numerous executive messages, articles and videos posted to @Work, the BCPS intranet, that speak to ethics in the BCPS. These have reached thousands of employees and sought to develop awareness on many topics, including the Standards of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Guidelines, Social Media Guidelines and Appropriate Use of Technology policy.

In addition to the content on the @Work website, there are extensive resources available publicly on the MyHR website. The purpose of creating and sharing resources online is to ensure information is readily available to all employees on ethics and PIDA when they need it.

Analytics from the MyHR site (see Figures 2 and 3) reveal that there are thousands of visits each month to ethics-related content.² The figures for Social Media Guidelines and the “Talking to Your Employees About Ethics” resource noted in the below table were published in late 2019.

² There are limitations of measuring website analytics. For example, these numbers may include multiple visits by the same user or include visits by non-public service employees. We have chosen to use the number of visits which indicate that the visitor stayed and clicked on content or links.

Figure 2: Number of Visits to Ethics and Standards of Conduct on MyHR Website in 2020 to 2021

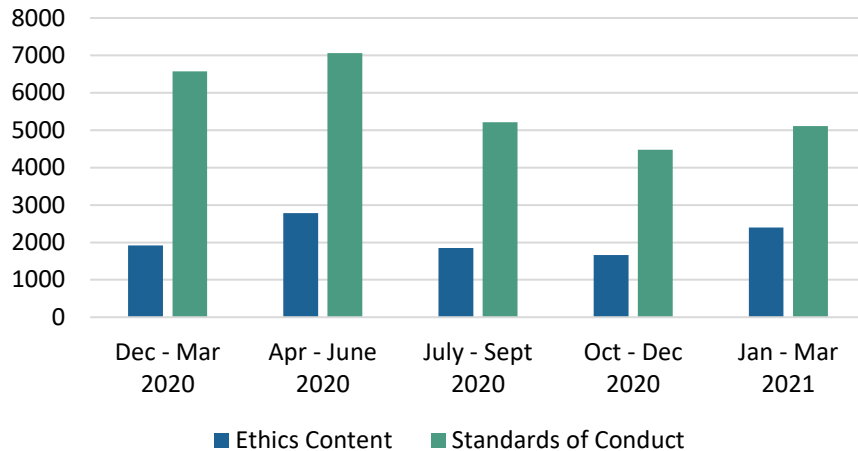


Figure 3: Breakdown of Visits for Ethics Content on MyHR Website



Ethics Outreach

In addition to the communications and corporate training available to BCPS employees, there are also outreach sessions held each year delivered by ethics advisors and the BC Public Service Agency. Outreach can take many forms, from email correspondence to workshops (virtual and in-person) and focus on any number of topics, including ethics in the BCPS, the Standards of Conduct, PIDA, conflict of interest, social media guidelines and respectful workplaces. Hundreds of sessions have been held since 2018 and are available upon request by contacting your ministry ethics advisor or the BC Public Service Agency (ethics@gov.bc.ca).

Ethics Training

In addition to the Annual Review of the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct, there are several required and optional ethics-related courses available corporately through the Learning Centre. These training opportunities are available to all employees through the Learning Catalogue and help increase awareness and knowledge of ethics in the BCPS. Data shows that BCPS employees are taking at least one course each year. This is a count of the number of unique employees enrolling in corporate learning:

Table 1: BCPS Employee Learning Rates by Fiscal Year

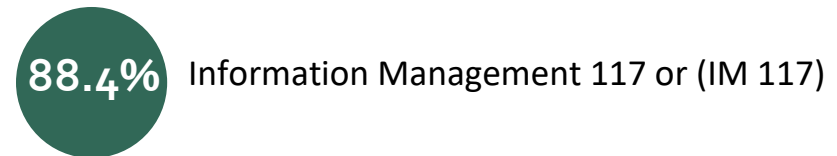
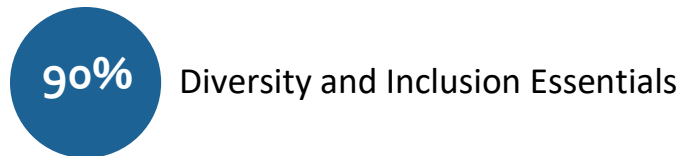
2018/19	2019/2020	2020/2021
17281	33056	32167

The number for 2018 to 2019 is significantly lower as this was the year that many of the compliance courses, including the Annual Review of the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct and Ethics for Everyone were in development.

Compliance Courses

In addition to the annual review, BCPS employees are expected to complete two courses that further describe the expectations in the workplace. One course builds on the expectations set out in the Standards of Conduct and the responsibility BCPS employees share in fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. The other course outlines our shared accountabilities and conduct when using information and technology at work. The compliance rates for BCPS employees are highlighted below. As with the annual review, work continues to develop awareness of the compliance courses and improve reporting capabilities for ministries.

Compliance Rates (as of March 31, 2021)



There have been efforts to embed content related to the Standards of Conduct, Oath of Employment, corporate values and the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) in corporate learning at all levels. There are also some programs that have specific units and resources focusing on ethics in the BCPS, and one course, Ethics for Everyone, that focuses on ethics in the BCPS developed and launched in 2019. As the work to transition more courses and programs to a virtual learning environment continues, so will the work to embed ethics-related content in learning.

As of March 31, 2021, approximately 10,000 BCPS employees had completed Ethics for Everyone.

Ethics Advisory Service

The BCPS uses multiple channels to communicate the expectations for conduct in the workplace and preventing misconduct from occurring. However, it is important for employees to have an alternative place to turn if they have questions or concerns about ethics issues.

In 2018, each ministry appointed an ethics advisor, in addition to a corporate ethics advice service (located at the BC Public Service Agency). Ethics advisors act as points of contact for ethics-related queries, assist with ministry-specific follow-ups for ethics-related matters where necessary and participate in outreach activities in their ministries. Upon appointment, ethics advisors attend an orientation session within 30 days, and have access to ongoing support and regular training to ensure they can fulfill the responsibilities of the role.

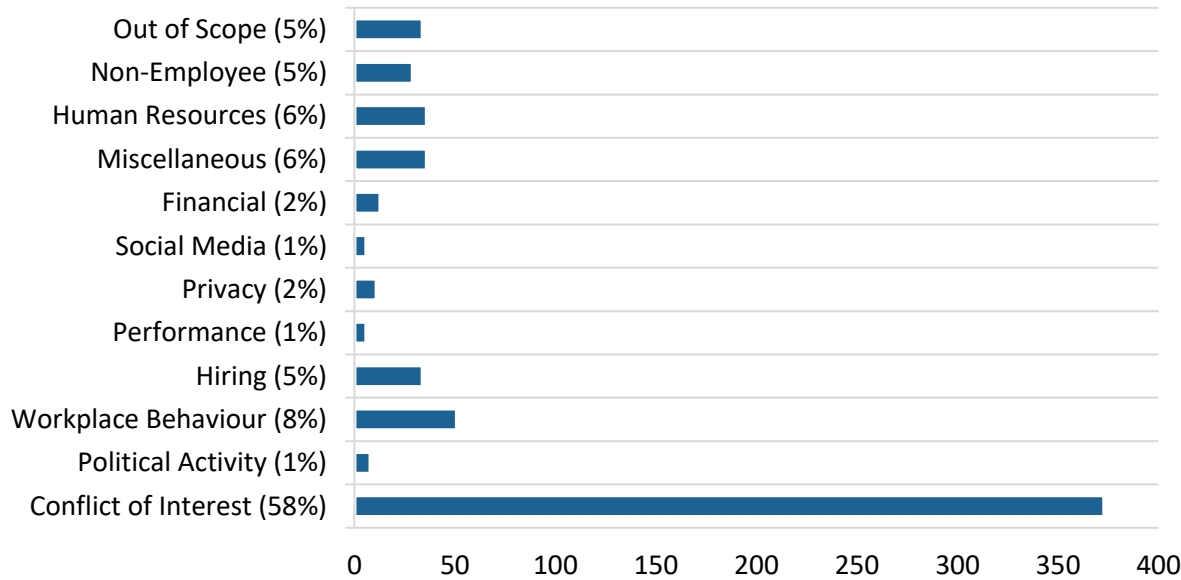
The role of the ethics advisor is assigned to a deputy minister, associate deputy minister, assistant deputy minister or executive lead position, reflecting their important role in setting the tone for behaviour and shaping the organizational culture. They are also decision-makers who can act on most issues brought to their attention. Ethics advisors provide advice only to employees appointed under the Public Service Act.

Any BCPS employee is encouraged to contact their ministry ethics advisor if they have a concern or question that they cannot take to their immediate supervisor, or if they wish to seek expert, impartial advice. Each ethics advisor has a unique email address that only they can access, to ensure inquiries are kept confidential. If you reach out, the ethics advisor will contact you to follow up on your request and will work with you to connect you with the appropriate resources or help resolve your issue or question.

Inquiries and Trends

Since their introduction in 2018, the ethics advisors have received hundreds of inquiries from BCPS employees. On average, the ethics advisory service (all ethics advisors and the corporate ethics advisor at the BC Public Service Agency) receive 210 inquiries annually. Based on the data, the inquiries received through the ethics advisory service falls into these categories.

Figure 4: Ethics Inquiries (2018 to 2021) by Category



As noted in Figure 4, inquiries about real, perceived and potential conflicts of interest are dominant. These include general inquiries about disclosing a conflict of interest and where to find the guidelines and disclosure form, as well as advice on specific situations and circumstances. Work is underway to clarify and improve the conflict of interest disclosure process, providing specific supports for supervisors and managers to help them navigate their role in the process.

Other categories of inquiries include workplace behaviour (concerns about conduct in the workplace), human resources (questions about human resource policies) and hiring (questions about hiring policies and practices). There are a number of miscellaneous requests, which include general questions about ethics, research inquiries and notes about the Annual Review of the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct. Inquiries are often received from non-employees, or individuals who work outside of the BCPS.

The BCPS recognizes the important role of ethics advisors in helping employees navigate policies and processes. Since the beginning, there has been dedicated support for the ethics advisory service and there is a commitment in the 2020 Corporate Plan to continue to build and enhance resources and support for ethics advisors in the future.

Public Interest Disclosure Act



Speaking up when things aren't right demonstrates our public service values. Employees and supervisors have obligations under the Standards of Conduct to report and investigate concerns of wrongdoing and inappropriate conduct. The ethics advisory service was created to ensure employees have another avenue to ask questions or raise concerns if they cannot approach their supervisor or next level of excluded management. PIDA provides another option for employees of the BC Public Service to choose to report serious wrongdoing. The Act came into effect for employees in the BC Public Service on December 1, 2019.

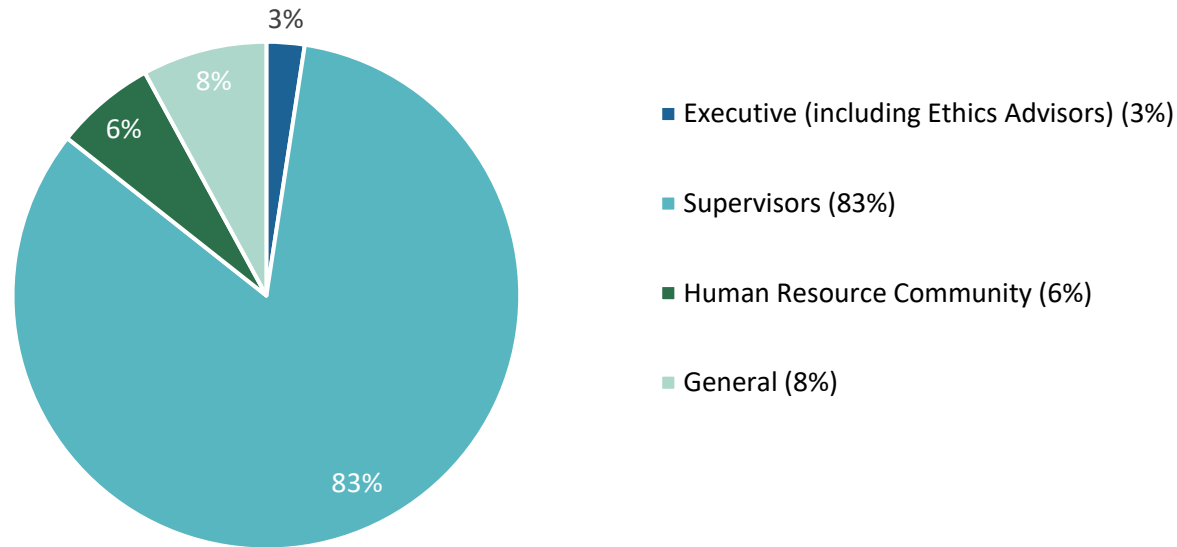
PIDA Outreach and Engagement

PIDA is part of the BC Public Service's overall ethics program, as it enhances accountability and transparency, enabling current and past employees to bring forward concerns about serious wrongdoing with legislated protection from reprisal.

Employee Engagement

Engagement activities and sessions have been held with employees, including executive members, supervisors and the human resources community to help increase the awareness about the overall ethics framework of the BC Public Service, of which PIDA is an integral part. By March 31, 2020, approximately 5,500 employees in the BC Public Service had attended an engagement or information session on ethics and PIDA. The audiences and breakdown of attendance at these sessions is presented in Figure 2. Supervisors were the key audience for information and engagement sessions as not only do they have special roles under the legislation, but these individuals are also the most likely to receive questions from employees.

Figure 5: Initial Engagement Activities by Employee Group³



Due to the pandemic and resulting changes in work locations and technologies, resources in 2020 and early 2021 were directed at updating online content and resources, as well as developing new corporate training that can be accessed virtually. More outreach and engagement sessions are planned for 2021 and 2022.

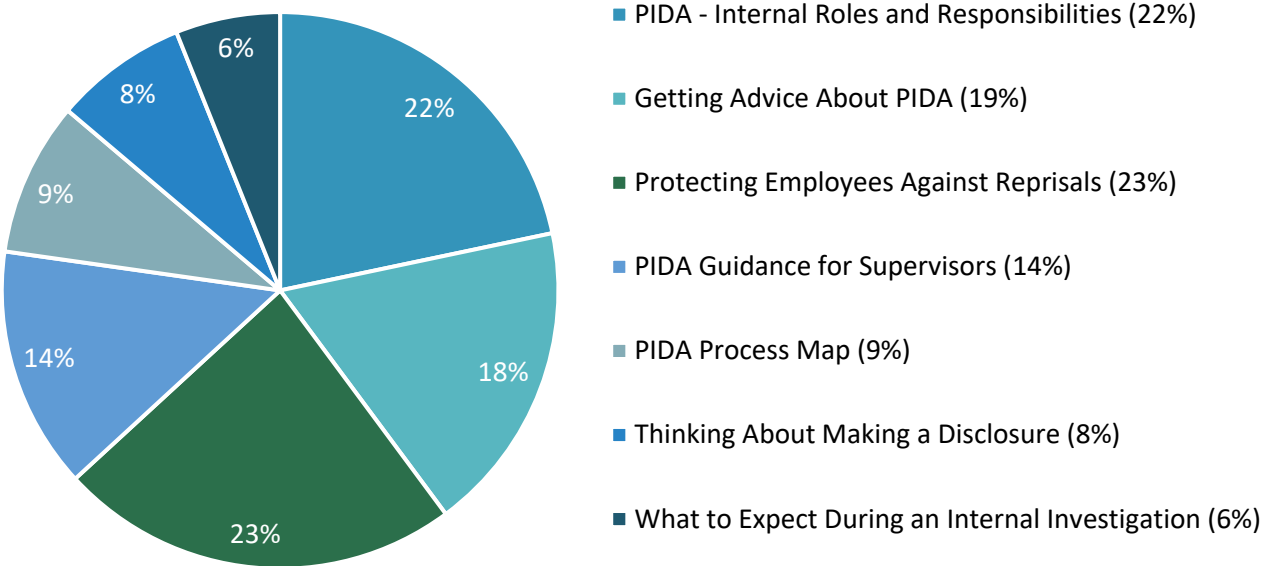
Accessing Online Content

Extensive information and resources were created and made available online (see Appendix A for links) for all current and former employees. The web analytics reveals that the landing page for PIDA averages 250 views and 200 visits monthly.⁴

³ These categories include BC Public Service employees as well as political staff, or those appointed under s.15 of the Public Service Act. Invitations for information sessions were shared broadly.

⁴ There are limitations of measuring website analytics. For example, these numbers may include multiple visits by the same user or include visits by non-public service employees. We have chosen to use the number of visits which indicate that the visitor stayed and clicked on content or links.

Figure 6: PIDA Awareness-Building Quarterly Access Data from MyHR website



The analytics for individual pages further reveal that employees are accessing this information to learn more, as evident in Figure 6 (above). Additionally, all current BCPS employees receive information on PIDA through the Annual Review of the Oath of Employment and Standards of Conduct and must answer a question about PIDA as part of the annual review to demonstrate basic understanding and awareness of the legislation.

Public Interest Disclosure Act Annual Reporting



Section 38 of PIDA articulates the annual reporting requirements related to public interest disclosures in the BC Public Service. This report does not contain any information that could lead to the identification of individuals who have made a disclosure or participated in a PIDA investigation. No personal information is disclosed as part of any public reports issued about PIDA.

Agency Designated Officer Responsibilities

Under PIDA, the BC Public Service introduced a centralized model for managing and investigating disclosures. This model ensures that there is a consistent process in place for employees to report serious wrongdoing. The investigations into disclosures of wrongdoing are led by the agency designated officer, a new role created with the implementation of PIDA. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Employee Relations at the BC Public Service Agency has been designated as the agency designated officer for the BC Public Service. The designated officer for political staff (as defined in the Standards of Conduct for Political Staff) is the Chief of Staff, Office of the Premier.

The agency designated officer has received numerous inquiries since the implementation of PIDA on December 1, 2019. These inquiries have ranged from general requests for more information about PIDA and how it works to specific inquiries about how to make a disclosure. Further work will be undertaken in the upcoming year to increase awareness about PIDA and share information across the BC Public Service.

PIDA Disclosures

The following sections provides details related to the disclosures received by the agency designated officer from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

Table 2: Number of Disclosures Received April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

Ministry	Disclosures Received	Ministry	Disclosures Received
Advanced Education, Skills & Training	0	Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation	0
Agriculture, Food & Fisheries	0	Intergovernmental Affairs	0
Attorney General	3	Jobs, Economic Recovery & Innovation	0
Children & Family Development	1	Labour	0
Citizens Services	0	Mental Health & Addictions	0
Education	0	Municipal Affairs	0
Energy, Mines & Low Carbon Innovation	0	Office of the Premier	0
Environment & Climate Change Strategy	0	Public Safety & Solicitor General ⁵	1
Finance ⁶	2	Social Development & Poverty Reduction	0
Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development	0	Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport	0
Health	0	Transportation & Infrastructure	2
		TOTAL	9

⁵ The data for the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General includes disclosures from Emergency Management BC that reports through the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

⁶ The data for the Ministry of Finance includes disclosures from the following organizations that report through the Minister of Finance: BC Public Service Agency, Crown Agencies Secretariat, Government Communications and Public Engagement, Liquor Distribution Branch and Public Sector Employees' Council.

Disclosures from 2019 to 2020

As of March 31, 2020, five disclosures had been received by the agency designated officer for the BC Public Service. The following table depicts the status or outcome of the disclosures.

Table 3: Summary of Disclosures 2019 to 2020

Disclosures Received	Initial Assessment Completed	Investigations Initiated	Investigations Concluded
5	4 ⁷	0	0

Disclosures from 2020 to 2021

For the period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, 11 disclosures were received by the agency designated officer. Two of the disclosures were out of scope as they were received from current or former employees of organizations not currently covered by PIDA. Of the remaining nine disclosures, the following table depicts the status or outcome.

Table 4: Summary of Disclosures 2020 to 2021

Disclosures Received	Initial Assessment Completed	Investigations Initiated	Investigations Concluded
9	4	0	0

The designated officer for political staff received no disclosures during this period.

There have been recurring questions related to anonymity and what issues meet the test of serious wrongdoing as defined by PIDA. Further information and resources will be developed for employees in 2021 and 2022 to strengthen employees understanding of protections related to anonymous disclosures and serious wrongdoing.

⁷Due to the complexity of one of the disclosures, the initial assessment has not yet been completed.

Anonymity and Protection from Reprisal

Feedback indicates some lack of clarity by individuals about confidentiality versus anonymity when making a PIDA disclosure. That can be addressed through the development of further information and resources.

Under PIDA, current and former employees of the BCPS may submit disclosures anonymously. However, a disclosure only qualifies as being submitted anonymously if there is no name or identifying information included in the disclosure. Where a disclosure includes the individual's name or other identifying information this does not qualify as anonymous when the agency designated officer assesses the disclosure.

Great care is taken to protect confidentiality, including about information that could reveal the identity of the discloser, however, disclosers (who are identifiable) are not able to request anonymity.

The agency designated officer also assesses risk of reprisal that a discloser could face and takes action to protect individuals. At any time in the process, if an employee feels that they have been subject to reprisal due to seeking advice, making a disclosure or making a complaint of reprisal, they should contact the BC Ombudsperson (who has sole responsibility for investigating claims of reprisal).

Understanding Serious Wrongdoing

Observations made during the review of inquiries and disclosures also suggest that more clarity can be provided to employees about what constitutes "serious wrongdoing" under the Act.

PIDA provides a framework for employees to report specific kinds of serious wrongdoing. Here are the kinds of wrongdoing that are defined under section 7 of the Act:

- A serious act or omission that, if proven, would constitute an offence under an enactment of B.C., or Canada
- An act or omission that creates substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons, or to the environment, other than a danger that is inherent in the performance of an employee's duties or functions
- A serious misuse of public funds or public assets
- Gross or systemic mismanagement
- Knowingly directing or counselling a person to commit wrongdoing as described above

Public interest disclosures must be about a matter of public interest and serious wrongdoing in or relating to a ministry, office or government body. Since it has been experienced that certain employees have made disclosures under PIDA that did not meet these definitions, there is an opportunity to develop further information and tools to foster increased understanding of the types of serious wrongdoing under PIDA.

BC Ombudsperson PIDA Disclosures, Findings and Recommendations



As per section 38 of PIDA, there is a legislated requirement that ministries or designated officers annually report on the number of disclosures made to the BC Ombudsperson if the ministry or designated officer has been made aware of the disclosures or any Ombudsperson led investigations under PIDA. This report must include a description of any wrongdoings that are found, recommendations made by the Ombudsperson, and any corrective actions taken to address the wrongdoing or recommendations.

In the first four months of implementation (December 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020), the BC Ombudsperson notified the agency designated officer that they had received 22 disclosures, completed 11 initial assessments and initiated one investigation under PIDA. The initial assessment of the remaining 11 disclosures was carried over into the next reporting period.

In the reporting period for April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the BC Ombudsperson notified the agency designated officer that they initiated eight investigations under PIDA. The BC Ombudsperson has discontinued two investigations and concluded one investigation which did not result in a finding of wrongdoing. In the course of one investigation, the BC Ombudsperson identified the need to update a policy and made a recommendation to the ministry to do so.

Ethics in the BCPS: Next Steps



This report provides all BCPS employees with an initial snapshot of ethics in the workplace. However, the work is ongoing. The following outlines some of the key work to be undertaken in the next year:

- Consultation on and development of new ethics-specific resources for employees, supervisors and executive
- Enhanced support for ethics advisors to support them in fulfilling their roles
- Development of new online content and an electronic disclosure form for employees and supervisors to help navigate the conflict of interest process outlined in the Conflict of Interest Guidelines
- Creation of new resources and supports specific to PIDA to support employees and promote understanding
- Ongoing delivery of ethics-related outreach and engagement to support ministries
- Implementation of new resources and tool to assist in the identification and assessment of ethics risk across ministries

It is also important to note that this report focuses predominantly on the prevention of misconduct and inappropriate behaviour. Future reports will expand over time on the policies and processes in place across the BCPS that help to monitor and respond to ethical issues, and build a strong, ethical culture across the organization.

Appendix A: Ethics and PIDA Resources and Links



Key references and resources related to ethics and PIDA in the BCPS.

Legislation

[Public Interest Disclosure Act](#)

Ethics Information and Advisory Service

[Oath of Employment Regulation](#)

[Ethics and Standards of Conduct](#)

[Talking to Your Employees About Ethics & the Standards of Conduct - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Who to Talk to About BC Public Service Employee Ethics - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Ethics & Standards of Conduct for Political Staff - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Standards of Conduct for BC Public Service Employees - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Standards of Conduct for Political Staff](#)

[Corporate Values](#)

[Where Ideas Work 2020 Corporate Plan](#)

[Conflict of Interest Guidelines](#)

[Social Media Guidelines](#)

[Policies, Procedures and Guidelines](#)

PIDA Information and Resources

[Making a Public Interest Disclosure - Province of British Columbia](#)

[HR Policy 24 - Public Interest Disclosure](#)

[PIDA FAQs for Employees and Supervisors](#)

[PIDA Procedures for BC Government Ministries](#)

[PIDA Procedures for Political Staff](#)

[Public Interest Disclosure Act Guidance for Ministry Supervisors - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Office of the Ombudsperson | Public Interest Disclosure - Office of the Ombudsperson](#)

Independent Office Reports

[An Audit of BC Public Service Ethics Management](#)

[Misfire The 2012 Ministry of Health Employment Terminations and Related Matters](#)