
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2023PSSG0062-001202
July 24, 2023

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

New programs, police standards support sexual assault survivors

VANCOUVER – Stable funding for sexual assault programs, as well as the establishment of new policing standards for responding to sexual assaults, will respect and support the diverse needs of survivors and ensure more effective investigations.

Sexual assaults predominately affect women, girls and gender-diverse people. Indigenous and other racialized women and girls, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, sex workers, people with disabilities, and individuals experiencing poverty or homelessness are most at risk of being targeted with violence. Many survivors are hesitant to report sexual assault due to a distrust of the criminal justice system and the fear that they will not be believed.

To support the recovery of survivors, the Province is providing stable, annual funding for 68 new sexual assault programs that will deliver co-ordinated, community-based services throughout British Columbia. The ministry will add more new programs and supports this year, including five regional sexual assault centres that will provide dedicated co-located spaces to deliver wraparound services for survivors of sexual assault.

“Sexualized violence is deeply traumatic and has devastating effects on survivors, families and communities,” said Kelli Paddon, Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity. “Too many people face gender-based violence in communities across B.C., with women, girls, and gender-diverse people being disproportionately affected. Stable, reliable funding to support dedicated sexual assault programs, as well as these new police standards build on other life-saving work to support survivors across the province, including counselling, outreach and crisis support, and victim-service programs.”

The sexual assault programs and the new policing standards will be guided by victim-centred, trauma-informed, inclusive and culturally safe approaches. The services are a key component of B.C.’s action plan to address gender-based violence, which is being developed in partnership with Indigenous organizations, an advisory committee, experts and advocates. The new standards also align with the plan.

Under the new policing standards, police officers will work in collaboration with victim-services workers to consider the survivor’s unique needs when they first report the sexual assault.

There will be supervisory oversight during investigations to make sure they are responsive, trauma-informed and impartial, as well as a review of closed cases to improve training and future investigations. The new standards promote police co-ordination with local health services and other community-based supports, and will apply to all police officers in B.C.

“All survivors deserve fair and empathetic treatment after they have experienced the trauma of sexual assault,” said Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. “New

policing standards and investments in sexual assault programs will empower survivors to decide how they want their case to proceed, shield them from further harm and connect them with services for a pathway to healing. Our government is building a safer, healthier and more just province for all of us by promoting high-quality and unbiased policing and providing stable funding for crucial services that support survivors.”

The funding for sexual assault services programs begins in July 2023. The new policing standards will take effect in 2024 to allow time for police and police boards to implement the requirements.

Quick Facts:

- Provincial standards set requirements for all British Columbia’s police agencies and police boards to promote best practices, accountability and consistency.
- Policing standards to promote unbiased policing, which were approved in 2021, advance equitable policing throughout the province by requiring policies and procedures, training, audit activity and community engagement.
- The Province has provided \$20 million for the multi-year Emergency Sexual Assault Services grant program to support the delivery of emergency sexual assault services throughout B.C. from March 2020 until March 2023.
- The Province now provides over \$54 million annually in stable funding for services and programs to support victims of crime, including more than 470 victim-service, violence-against-women and sexual assault programs operating in communities throughout BC.
 - This includes \$10 million annually, beginning in April 2023, to support the delivery of sexual assault programs that are victim-centred, trauma-informed, and co-ordinated, depending on client needs.

Learn More:

For more information about supports for people facing gender-based violence and B.C.’s Gender Based Violence Action Plan, see: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/gender-equity/ending-gender-based-violence>

To read about B.C. police standards, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/policing-in-bc/policing-standards>

A backgrounder follows.

Contact:

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Media Relations
250 213-3602

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect

BACKGROUND

For Immediate Release
2023PSSG0062-001202
July 24, 2023

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Sexual assault services receiving stable funding

The following outlines the number of service providers and the amount of total funding received by region.

There are 56 service providers in British Columbia receiving funding with some delivering services in more than one region.

The total amount of funding throughout the Province is \$6,663,408.

- The Fraser region will receive \$1,349,962 between 11 service providers.
- The Northern region will receive \$651,488 between seven service providers.
- The Northwest region will receive \$475,000 between four service providers.
- The Okanagan-Kootenays region will receive \$1,103,885 between 10 service providers.
- The Thompson Cariboo Shuswap region will receive \$729,998 between seven service providers.
- The Vancouver Coastal Region will receive \$976,569 between eight service providers.
- The Vancouver Island Region will receive \$1,376,506 between 11 service providers.

Contact:

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Media Relations
250 213-3602

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect