



THE FEDERATION
of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

Altogether better.

Life in BC Snapshot: 2017

Mental health & substance use

Things aren't getting better for the people of BC

Two years ago, The Federation of Community Social Services of BC scoured the news, research, and literature to take a snapshot of what life in BC was like. We wanted to understand how good things were for the people of our province. We also wanted to investigate important aspects of day-to-day life that get overlooked by a government focused on economic prosperity.

Things didn't look that great. And two years later, they are no better. We have updated these snapshots to prove that point and to help you talk about the state of our province and the things that need to change in order for the people of British Columbia to actually prosper and thrive.

News headlines about mental health in BC

- ⇒ Minding the gap in BC's mental health system - *Vancouver Courier*, 9/6/2016
- ⇒ BC needs 'systematic' approach to preventing suicide - *Globe & Mail*, 9/16/2016
- ⇒ Psychiatrist shortage prompts online mental health services - *CBC News*, 7/6/2016
- ⇒ Time to bolster Canada's under funded mental health system - *Globe & Mail*, 8/28/2016
- ⇒ What happens when mental health education isn't taught to kids - *Global News*, 11/13/2016
- ⇒ Improved police training could prevent deaths of people with mental illness - *CBC News*, 7/29/2016
- ⇒ Formerly troubled local goes clean with the help of Squamish services - *Squamish Chief*, 7/21/2016
- ⇒ Mental Health advocacy group in Vancouver's DTES to close doors forever due to funding loss - *Metro News*, 8/12/2016 (1)

Case study: Canadian veteran Sarah struggles to get support

“ Last year, Sarah returned to Canada after serving her second tour in Afghanistan. Like many other military veterans, she was diagnosed with PTSD upon returning home. Sarah is one of hundreds wait-listed for a treatment bed and is hesitant to try online counselling. Complicating things is the fact that Sarah is the only caregiver for her mother who suffers from a serious online gambling addiction. Even if Sarah makes it to the top of the wait list, she would be hesitant to leave her mother alone and unattended, and the nearest community support program for people with addictions is a 3-hour drive from their rural home. Getting support shouldn't be this hard.

714,000

The number of people in BC who have mental health and substance use needs.⁵



97%

Percentage of British Columbians that believe mental health conditions should receive the same (or higher) funding priority as physical health conditions.³

Why these issues matter

According to the CMHA, pressures on BC's mental health services mean that demand for services is outstripping the supply.¹ BC's Auditor General agrees and says that the Ministry of Health and BC health authorities are not doing enough to ensure that people with serious mental health problems and illnesses can access the care they need.⁵ One-off funding and online services are helpful but they aren't nearly enough. It's time for real change. Things need to start getting better for the people of BC.

Raising awareness about these issues

- The economic impact of mental health and substance use problems and illnesses is over \$50 billion per year in Canada.⁵
- Three out of four children diagnosed with a mental health condition in BC are not receiving the mental health services they need.⁶
- Only 7% of health authority budgets are spent on mental health and substance use services.⁵

Talking points about mental health in BC

"Mental health and substance use problems impact everyone [...] our family members, work colleagues and in many cases, ourselves."⁵

- Carol Bellringer, BC Auditor General

"Our government has a broad system of mental-health supports and services for children and youth and adults."²

- Terry Lake, BC Health Minister

"I think that mental health needs to be taken as seriously as other medical conditions."¹

- Dr. Michael Krausz, Research leadership chair at Providence Health

About The Federation

The **Federation of Community Social Services of BC** is a social justice umbrella organization. We work tirelessly to improve the social conditions in BC on behalf of our members: community social service organizations across the province. We believe that:

- ⇒ Healthy, happy, and supported communities make good economic sense.
- ⇒ For your family to succeed, all families must succeed.
- ⇒ Job creation alone is not the solution to our province's social problems.

Learn more at www.fcssbc.ca or email us at info@fcssbc.ca

75%

The increase in mental health and substance misuse visits at Vancouver hospitals since 2009.¹

84,000

The number of children and youth that suffer from mental-health issues in BC.²



1 in 2

The number of people who will have (or have had) a mental health condition by the age of 40.⁵

50-70%

The percentage of mental illnesses that develop before the age of 18.⁴

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

(2) *New funding supports child and youth mental health*. BC Government Press Release, May, 2016.

(3) *British Columbians Agree Mental Illness is One of Most Important Issues Facing BC*. IPSOS Press Release, June, 2016.

(4) *Confident Parents Thriving Kids: A year in review*. Canadian Mental Health Association. 2015.

(5) *Access to adult tertiary mental health and substance use services*. BC Auditor General, May 2016.

(6) CMHA BC Website. www.b4stage4.ca, Nov 2016.