



INFORMATION FOR AFFECTED PERSONS AND FAMILIES

Integrating Excellence
Transparency ▪ Accountability
Professionalism

 **INDEPENDENT**
Investigations Office of BC

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF CIVILIAN DIRECTOR

Being seriously harmed or losing a loved one in a police-involved incident is a difficult experience for families and communities. We recognize that you will need time to process what has happened and have developed this booklet of information to help support you during this difficult time.

The **Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia (IIO)** investigates all police-involved incidents which result in serious harm or death, regardless of whether there is any allegation of wrongdoing. The IIO does not investigate whether the affected person (the individual who has been seriously harmed or died) committed a criminal act. This booklet will provide information on how the IIO conducts a thorough investigation, potential outcomes, and resources which are available to you.

If you have any questions about the IIO, the status of the investigation, or available resources, the IIO's **Affected Persons Liaisons (APL)** are here to assist you and will be your main point of contact through to conclusion of the IIO investigation. Their contact information is located on the last page of this booklet.

On behalf of the IIO, I would like to express my condolences if you have lost a loved one during the incident prompting our investigation.

Yours truly,



Chief Civilian Director
Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia

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WHO WE ARE



The Independent Investigations Office (IIO) of British Columbia is a civilian-led police oversight agency mandated to conduct investigations into police-related incidents of death or serious harm to determine whether or not any officer may have committed an offence. The IIO has jurisdiction over all of BC's police agencies, including 12 municipal agencies, the RCMP, the South Coast BC Transportation Authority Police Service and the St'at'l'imx Tribal Police Service. The IIO's jurisdiction extends to officers appointed as municipal constables and includes on- and off-duty police officers, special provincial constables, and detention guards. The IIO's authority comes from the British Columbia [Police Act](#), which requires the police to notify the IIO of an incident that may fall within its jurisdiction.

The IIO will investigate when police and/or detention guard involvement in an incident results in death or serious harm. There does not need to be an allegation of wrongdoing for the IIO to conduct an investigation. The IIO gathers all evidence and reports back on the results. The IIO does this in as transparent a manner as practicable under the circumstances while respecting the integrity of the investigation and the privacy interests of those involved.



WHY IS THERE A POLICE AND AN IIO INVESTIGATION INTO THE SAME INCIDENT?

The IIO investigation focuses on the serious harm or death of the affected person and determines whether a police officer may have committed an offence during the course of an incident. A police investigation may still be undertaken if a crime is alleged to have occurred. For example, if the IIO's affected person is also accused of assault, they may be considered the suspect in a concurrent police investigation.

Importantly, where a matter of public interest is not referred to the **BC Prosecution Service (BCPS)** for consideration of charges, the **Chief Civilian Director (CCD)** will often release a public report outlining all of the relevant facts and reasons for the decision not to refer the matter to the BCPS. This allows the public to understand the basis for the decision.

The IIO is established under the Ministry of Attorney General and is led by a CCD who cannot ever have been a police officer. Although the IIO is part of the Ministry of Attorney General, all investigative decision making and the decision to issue a public report or refer a matter to the BCPS are completely independent of the Ministry.

APL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Independent Investigations Office (IIO) **Affected Persons Liaison (APL)** team provides support, information and referrals for **Affected Persons (APs)** and/or their families following a police-involved incident resulting in serious harm or death.

The APLs are full-time dedicated IIO employees who are the bridge between an AP and families and the IIO investigative team. An APL assists APs and their families in an incident by explaining the role of the IIO and the investigative process, interpreting legislation, discussing how the various investigative agencies work together, facilitating access to support services

in the community, and providing investigative updates through the life of the file.

When a death occurs, the APL may assist the investigative team in notifying the next of kin when required, and provides immediate crisis support to families in a police-involved fatality. They also provide community referrals for grief and loss.

The APL team strives to build connections for the AP and/or family with local community support services. This includes identifying local resources, bereavement programs, counselling and support groups across the province where available.

The role of the APL varies with each case and is tailored to meet the individual needs of an AP and/or their family members. Additional support may include but is not limited to:

- Immediate emotional support and practical assistance, such as referral to resources for temporary housing;
- Providing referrals to community service providers to address service needs of the AP or their family members (see Resources on [page 12](#));
- Providing support and referral services to community members who may have not been directly involved in the incident but were affected by the incident (e.g., civilian witnesses who may be emotionally impacted by what they observed);
- Connecting with an AP and/or family as needed to assist in their understanding of critical decisions, significant developments, and/or a case disposition (e.g., if the IIO will issue a public report or make a referral to the BCPS for consideration of charges); and
- Facilitating and liaising with community agencies and support networks to enable short-term, medium-term and long-term support plans and services to best support APs and/or families.

The IIO conducts investigations to a criminal standard into the action/inaction of an officer or detention guard



DOES THE IIO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO ANY MEMBER OF MY FAMILY THAT ASKS?

No. If you are an affected person, the IIO will provide updates only to you and anyone else you provide consent for us to update. If the affected person has died, only the next of kin will be provided with updates (usually the spouse or parent of the affected person), unless there is written consent for other persons to also receive updates.

WHY IS THE IIO ASKING ME FOR CONSENT TO ACCESS MEDICAL RECORDS?

Medical records are an important piece of evidence that the IIO investigation will require to understand the full extent of the injuries sustained to determine serious harm and evidence relevant to the IIO's investigation.

IIO INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS

that may have caused serious harm to, or the death of, a person.

REPORTING OF INCIDENT

When a police and/or detention guard-involved incident resulting in death or serious harm is reported, the IIO will start an investigation which will include gathering relevant evidence. Each investigation is different, and evidence may include police and witness interviews, Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) video, GPS data, police radio communications, cell block video, police car video, witness cellphone video, pathology reports, medical information, body-worn camera footage, toxicology reports, forensic exams, evidence collected

from the scene, digital forensic analysis, cell phone analysis, DNA and fingerprint analysis, execution of judicial (search warrant) applications, subject matter expert opinion, and more.

INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH

The IIO's "start from zero" investigative approach reflects our commitment to independently establish the facts by gathering all relevant facts and evidence about the incident without making any assumptions. The CCD will review the evidence and, applying relevant legal principles, will decide whether reasonable grounds exist to believe that a police officer or detention guard may have committed an offence.



WHERE DOES THE IIO INVESTIGATE?

The IIO has offices in Surrey, Nanaimo, and Kelowna. However, IIO investigators travel to any location in BC upon notification to conduct an investigation. The IIO has a dedicated team of forensic investigators who oversee or process scenes based on best practices and scene management protocols. They also direct and/or seize evidence relevant to the investigation.

HOW LONG DOES AN IIO INVESTIGATION TAKE?

There is no specific time frame that can be established for an investigation as the length of time depends on many factors including the size and location of the scene, availability of evidence, number of involved officers, number of witnesses, the need for and dependence on specialized reports, and the complexity of issues related to the incident.

WHO CONDUCTS THE IIO INTERVIEW, AND WHAT IS THE IIO'S APPROACH TO INTERVIEWS?

During the investigation, statements may be obtained from witnesses such as bystanders, paramedics, firefighters, affected persons and police officers. Officers and/or detention guards who may have caused death or serious harm have protections under the Canadian Charter of Rights but may provide a voluntary statement and/or notes if they wish.

The IIO does not expect every witness to have identical or a full recollection of the incident. To accurately capture an interviewee's statement, interviews are audio- and video-recorded. The best practice is to obtain statements as soon as possible. Timing of an interview is subject to individual availability and the circumstances specific to the investigation. Interviews are conducted by trained IIO investigators and held in a neutral location, when possible.

HOW ARE INVESTIGATIVE UPDATES PROVIDED?

The amount and type of information that can be shared during an investigation will depend on the specifics of each incident and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. All efforts will be made to provide timely information about the investigation to an affected person or their next-of-kin in the case of a death. The IIO will also return any personal property seized wherever possible at the earliest opportunity. This may not be until the investigation has concluded.

If there is any information that can be disclosed or shared, then the APL or an investigator will provide that information from the investigative team to the AP or family. Any questions from the affected person or family/next-of-kin can also be provided to the APL, who will pass the question on to the investigative team. If a question cannot be answered at a given point in time, the APL will keep a record of questions to be answered at the conclusion of the investigation or when the information can be shared.

APs/families will be provided regular updates** on the progress and stage of the investigation such as:

- Evidence collection stage
- Assessment/analytical stage
- Pending file review
- File conclusion

***All updates provided are confidential in nature until the final outcome of the investigation is released.*

The IIO, usually through the APL, will make every attempt to inform the affected person or family/next-of-kin of the outcome of the investigation prior to any information being made public by the IIO.

If you have a question or concern, please contact your APL. If you do not know who your APL is, please call our main office number at (604) 586-5668 or send an email to the IIO at info@iiobc.ca.



WHAT IS A FILE REVIEW?

A file review is a review by the CCD and senior staff of all information and evidence gathered during the investigation. The CCD may determine that further investigative steps are needed before a final decision is made or decide to conclude the investigation by determining whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that an offence may have been committed.



INVESTIGATIVE OUTCOMES

During an investigation, the CCD is provided regular updates by the investigative team through briefings, file reviews and other update meetings.

At the conclusion of an investigation, the CCD will review all the information and evidence. Based on the evidence and the applicable law, the CCD will make one of the following decisions:

- A. Refer the investigation findings to the BCPS** – The CCD concludes there are reasonable grounds to believe that an officer or detention guard may have committed an offence and refers the matter for consideration of charges.
- B. Conclude the investigation and issue a public report** – The CCD concludes there are no reasonable grounds to believe that an officer or detention guard may have committed an offence, and will issue a public report detailing the evidence, decision-making rationale, and legal principles applied in making the decision. The involved parties are not named in these reports.
- C. Conclude the investigation and issue a media release** – The CCD concludes there are no reasonable grounds to believe that an officer or detention guard may have committed an offence, and a media release is issued to provide a brief description of the rationale for the decision.
- D. Conclude the investigation without issuing a public report** – The CCD concludes there are no reasonable grounds to believe that an officer or detention guard may have committed an offence, but it is not in the public interest to issue a public report or media release.

In order to approve the charges, the BCPS must be satisfied that there is a substantial likelihood of conviction based on the evidence gathered by the IIO, and that prosecution is required in the public interest. This decision is made independently of the IIO.

Other external investigations may continue after the IIO investigation has concluded, such as a BC Coroners

Service investigation into the cause of death or police investigations into whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that an offence may have been committed.

In addition to the IIO, there are two other independent agencies responsible for police oversight. The **Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC)** is a civilian, independent office that oversees and monitors complaints and investigations involving municipal police in BC. The **Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP (CRCC)** is an independent agency that ensures that public complaints made about the conduct of RCMP members are examined fairly and impartially. An investigation by either the OPCC or CRCC



IF THE CCD REFERS THE CASE TO THE BCPS, WILL CHARGES BE LAID?

The BCPS is responsible for all charge approval decisions in BC.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE INVESTIGATION IS NOT REFERRED FOR CONSIDERATION OF CHARGES?

If the CCD determines there are no reasonable grounds to believe that an officer or detention guard may have committed an offence, the investigation will be concluded by issuing a public report, a media release, or without further public comment from the IIO if other factors outweigh the public interest.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OPCC AND CRCC?

You can refer to their websites <https://opcc.bc.ca/> and <https://www.crcc-csetp.gc.ca/> respectively.

MEDIA



is independent from the IIO's investigation and based on their legislated mandates.

Media outlets may contact you regarding the incident and request your comment. You are not obligated to speak to the media, even if they ask.

If you do choose to speak to the media, we recommend you be prepared as they may ask unexpected and potentially challenging questions regarding the incident or other personal information. You should also be aware that information always has the potential to be misunderstood and may not be reported as you intended. Once something is published, unless it is factually incorrect it is difficult to change the public record. Note that investigative updates provided to you by the APL or investigator are confidential until the IIO investigation has been concluded or the information has been made public by the IIO, and should not be shared with media representatives. Confidential information shared with the media, and read by potential witnesses, could negatively impact the IIO's investigation.

If a media outlet contacts you and you do not want to speak to them, you can direct them to call the IIO media line at **(778) 988-1041** for comment. You are within your rights to ask them to stop contacting you.

The IIO often publishes a media release shortly after an incident occurs and may also issue updates or concluding releases. In the event of a media release, all efforts will be made to contact the affected person or

their family in advance. Generally, IIO media releases do not contain personal information, such as the affected person's name, age, etc. Instead, they provide the date, time, and a brief description of the incident as it was reported to the IIO. If the IIO is seeking witnesses, a very basic description of the affected person may be included in the media release, such as describing what the individual was wearing.

In very rare circumstances, the IIO may request your consent to release the name of the affected person. This is most often done only if it is believed there are witnesses critical to the completion of a thorough investigation and there is no other way to reach those individuals. The IIO will advise in advance if this step is necessary.



DOES THE IIO PROVIDE PUBLIC UPDATES ABOUT INVESTIGATIONS IN PROGRESS?

The IIO may make public statements about the investigation process or progress if such a statement is aimed at securing additional evidence, preserving the integrity of the investigation, or is needed to ensure public confidence in police oversight.

MANAGING GRIEF AND TRAUMA

Incidents that result in serious harm or death can have serious emotional and psychological impacts on affected persons, their families, witnesses and communities. Grief does not apply only to the loss of a loved one but can also be experienced by those who have suffered serious injuries which may result in the loss of mobility, disfigurement or other consequences. Everyone manages grief differently, and there is no one set of reactions that are normal. Some of the common symptoms and stages of grief will be discussed in this section.

The IIO's Affected Persons Program provides:

- Emotional support;
- Validation of the range of feelings you may experience;
- Referrals to services available in your community;
- Additional information regarding what you may experience during the grieving process;
- Practical information and tips; and
- Province-wide resources.

BC Bereavement Helpline (604) 738-9950 or

Toll Free: 1-877-779-2223

Available Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm

“The BC Bereavement Helpline assists the bereaved and their caregivers in coping and managing grief. When you call us, your call will be answered by a caring, compassionate volunteer who is familiar with over 300 grief support groups and organizations in the province”
www.bcbh.ca

SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS:

- Shortness of breath
- Tightness in throat, chest
- Stomach discomfort
- Numbness
- Intense fatigue and lack of energy
- Headaches
- Sighing
- Loss of Weight
- Dizziness
- Loud heartbeat
- Sense of emptiness and heaviness
- Loss of sexual desire or hyper-sexuality
- Sleep, appetite disturbances
- Increase in common illnesses i.e., colds, flu
- Same physical symptoms that were those of the deceased

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES:

- Restlessness, inability to sit still
- Inability to intake and maintain organization
- Withdrawal from friends, social situations and activities
- Withdrawal from work
- Absentmindedness, forgetfulness
- Inability to concentrate
- Excessive activity to keep from thinking

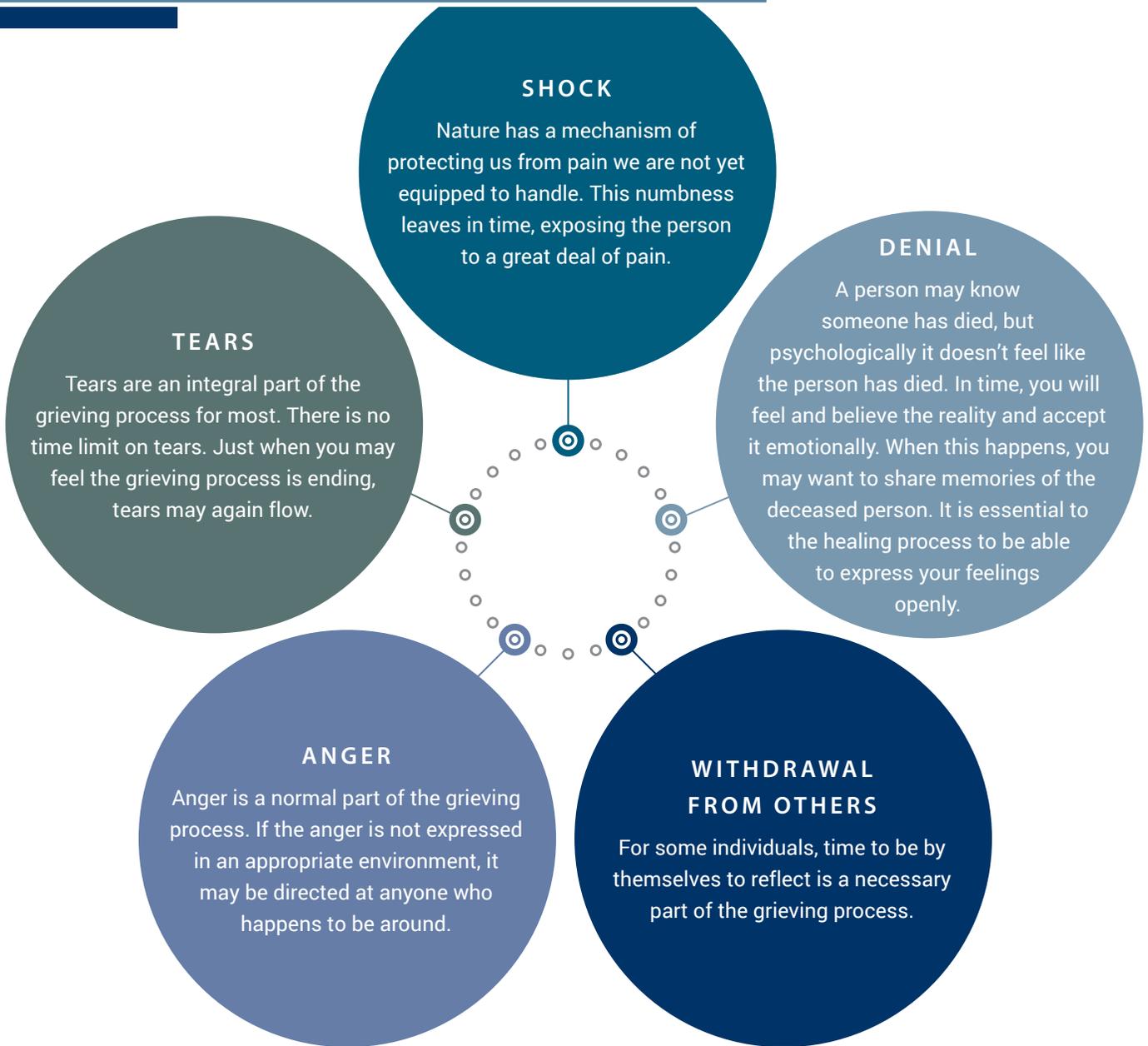
PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS:

- Preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased
- Dreaming of the deceased
- Auditory or visual hallucinations
- Having a sense of deceased's presence

Any of these symptoms may accompany feelings of shock, anger, disbelief, confusion, depression and loneliness. The intensity, number and duration of the symptoms will vary with the individual.

Adapted from material by the Victoria Hospice Bereavement Program

THE STAGES OF GRIEF



People often assume that grief should be over in only a fraction of the time it actually takes. In fact, bereavement does not follow a decreasing linear pattern but has many ups and downs, twists and turns.

It is not uncommon for the intensity of the grief to fluctuate over a period of time, lasting from several months to several years. It is important to note that even the person who is grieving may not show it

twenty-four hours a day. Yet time is a therapeutic factor in the grief process, in that it enables the mourner to put things into perspective, to adapt to the necessary changes and to understand their own feelings.

Are there stages people go through in order to accomplish this? Yes, but as we know each person's grief will be individual. The normal sequence of grief can be described as follows:

PHASE OF SHOCK AND DISBELIEF

- The mourner is stunned, and often to protect themselves against the stress uses denial and/or numbness. “This couldn’t have happened,” “I don’t believe it,” “It’s only a bad dream” are the words one often hears.

PHASE OF YEARNING AND SEARCHING

- The mourner shows signs of wanting to find, recover and unite with the deceased person. As this is futile, one may often see anger, anxiety, tearfulness and a strong desire to keep the visual memory of the deceased alive.

PHASE OF DISORGANIZATION AND DESPAIR

- The mourner gives up the search for the deceased and feels depressed and has little inclination to look at the future to see any purpose in life. This is the beginning of redefining themselves and their situation.

PHASE OF REORGANIZATION

- The mourner gives up their attachment to the deceased loved one and begins to establish new ties. There is a gradual return of interests and desires. They adapt to a new role, learn new skills, make new attachments and learn to live with their loss.

TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT GRIEF

1. Global effect of loss: the death of someone close to you can be life-transforming and effect all aspects of yourself and your life. Grief is a process between how things were and how they will be.
2. Grief is a natural process: the feelings you have at the death of someone you love is a consequence of living and loving. It is a normal part of life and a natural response to loss.
3. There are individual differences in grieving. This relates to your personality, past history of loss and your relationship with the deceased. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.
4. Children may have difficulties and may not talk about their feelings and thoughts. Simple information about death and grief is helpful to give so they are not frightened about what they do not know.
5. Social connections and support are important. Some people may not know how to provide support; some relationships may be altered. Other bereaved individuals may be able to assist.
6. Intense feelings not usual to yourself may occur. Your emotions, mind and reactions may seem unreliable. This may feel crazy, but it is natural. Fatigue, forgetfulness and irritability may result.
7. You may feel fluctuations in your feelings and responses at different times and phases of the grieving process. There may be unpredictable ups and downs, good and bad days.
8. Pay attention to selfcare; be gentle and kind to yourself. Try to keep up normal routine for health and social contact. Accept support from friends, family; consider counseling if needed.
9. Allow yourself time to grieve. There is no timetable; it takes as long as it takes. The loss will continue during your life. You will have times when you will think about and miss the deceased.
10. Grief can be spiritual as it brings a change in your life. You may experience healing and growth. Every person’s experience is different. There will likely be unexpected turns and insights.

Adapted from material by the Victoria Hospice Bereavement Program

RESOURCES

BC-WIDE

- **9-1-1** if you are in an emergency.
- **1-800-SUICIDE** (1-800-784-2433) if you are considering suicide or are concerned about someone who may be.
- **310Mental Health Support** at 310-6789 (no area code needed) for emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health.
- **Alcohol & Drug Information and Referral Service** at 1-800-663-1441 (toll-free in B.C.) or 604-660-9382 (in the Lower Mainland) to find resources and support.
- **Healthlink BC** at 8-1-1 for information regarding health referrals and resources.
- **Kelty Mental Health** at 1-800-665-1822, a provincial resource centre that provides mental health and substance use information and resources.
- **BC211** at 2-1-1 for information and referrals on a wide variety of issues including substance misuse, temporary shelter, and grief.
- **Wellness Together Canada** at 1-866-585-0445 to be connected to a counsellor at no cost.
- **Kid's Help Phone** at 1-800-668-6868 for children to speak to a professional counsellor, 24 hours a day.
- **FoundryBC** at foundrybc.ca for support for youth and young adults up to age 24.
- **S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Mandarin and Cantonese Helplines** for Mandarin and Cantonese speakers. Cantonese Line: 604-270-8233; Mandarin Line: 604-270-8222.
- **The KUU-US Crisis Line Society** provides a First Nations and Indigenous specific crisis line available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free from anywhere in British Columbia.
- **KUU-US Crisis Line** can be reached toll-free at 1-800-588-8717. Alternatively, individuals can call direct into the **Youth Line** at 250-723-2040 or the **Adult Line** at 250-723-4050.
- **First Nations Health Authority** at 1-877-477-0775 for counselling services from a qualified mental health provider, including psychologists, clinical counsellors and social workers for self-identified Indigenous peoples.
- **Support Network for Indigenous Women & Women of Colour (SNIWWOC)** at www.sniwwoc.ca/mental-health for low income counselling for Indigenous and racialized women.
- **The Men's Centre** at 250-716-1551 for support for men's mental health, and low-cost counselling for men navigating the criminal justice system.
- **Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner** at 1-877-909-8707 for complaints against a member of a municipal police force. You can also file a complaint online at opcc.bc.ca
- **Civilian Review and Complaints Commission** at www.crcc-ccetp.gc.ca/en/make-complaint-form to file a complaint against a member of the RCMP.



LOWER MAINLAND

- **Crisis Centre of BC** at 604-872-3311 for immediate crisis support 24 hours a day.
Vancouver's Access and Assessment Centre at 604-675-3700 for a walk-in mental health clinic. For residents of the City of Vancouver only.
Chimo Crisis Line at 604-279-7070 for immediate crisis support 24 hours a day.
- **Fraser Health Crisis Line** at 604-951-8855 for immediate crisis support 24 hours a day.

ISLAND

- **24-Hour Vancouver Island Crisis Line** at 1-888-494-3888 for people in emotional distress and connection to emergency mental health services when needed, and to reach Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES), Crisis Response Teams and Community Response Teams.
- **Crisis Text Support** at 250-800-3806 for support via text. Available from 1800-2200 seven days a week.

NORTH

- **Crisis Prevention, Intervention, and Information Centre for Northern BC** at 1-888-562-1214 for immediate crisis support 24 hours a day. This phone number will also connect you to a more extensive network of support including mental health teams and substance use services.

INTERIOR

- **Interior Crisis Line Network** at 1-888-353-2273 for immediate crisis support 24 hours a day.

GRIEF RESOURCES

BC BEREAVEMENT HELPLINE

BC-Wide 1-877-779-2223

bcbh.ca

Services: free and confidential service that connects the public to grief support services within the province of BC.

CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE

BC-Wide

virtualhospice.ca

Services: Offers grief support and can provide information on local hospices in BC.

BC211

BC-Wide 2-1-1

Services: Provides information about a range of programs and services, such as mental health and addictions support, counselling, and other services near you.

BURNABY HOSPICE SOCIETY

Burnaby 604-430-4103 www.burnabyhospice.org

Services: One to one support; professional grief counselling and group support programs.

CROSSROADS HOSPICE SOCIETY

Tri-Cities & New West 604-945-0606 (Head Office)

crossroadshospice.org

Services: Individual support and group programs for adults and adolescents.

RICHMOND HOSPICE SOCIETY

Richmond 604-279-7140

Service: Individual support and group programs.

RIDGE MEADOWS HOSPICE SOCIETY

Maple Ridge 604-463-7722

Services: Offers one to one and group support programs.

LOWER MAINLAND GRIEF RECOVERY SOCIETY

Lower Mainland 604-643-9637

Services: Offers support programs for adults – educational and support components. Available at differing times in the following communities: North Shore, Richmond, Kerrisdale, Vancouver.

ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL

Vancouver 604-682-2344 (ex.62355)

Services: Grieving Well – grief support and education series.

LIVING THROUGH LOSS COUNSELLING

Vancouver 604-873-5013

Services: Open weekly drop-in support group facilitated by a professional counsellor, one on one counselling and occasional closed support groups.

SURREY TRAUMA RELATED SUPPORTS

BC TRAUMA CARE

Surrey 604-879-3224

Services: Trauma-focused clinical counselors.

VALLEY VIEW HOMICIDE-RELATED SUPPORTS

Surrey 604-816-2144

Services: Support group for family/survivors of homicide victims; one-on-one support.

MOVING FORWARD FAMILY SERVICES

– SUPPORTS FOR TRAUMA/GRIEF

Surrey 778-321-3054

Services: Counselling available in Punjabi, Mandarin, Bengali, Hindi, Spanish, Farsi, Korean, Cantonese and Urdu.

