



Interior Health

IH Communications Issues Note

January 20, 2021

Topic

Substance use counselling service in SOK

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Contact Information	
Spokesperson(s):	Carl Meadows, Executive Director Clinical Operations SOK
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First version created on: December 16, 2020	



Interior Health

IH Communications Issues Note

May 25, 2021

Topic

Substance use counselling service in SOK - Pathways

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Prepared by:	Ashley Stewart, Communication Consultant
First version created on: December 16, 2020; revised April 27	

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE

Ministry: Mental Health & Addictions

Date: Aug. 17, 2021

Minister Responsible: Sheila Malcolmson

Pathways Addiction Resource Centre

BACKGROUND REGARDING THE ISSUE:

- Earlier this year, Interior Health decided not to renew three contracts with Pathways Addictions Resource Centre in Penticton opting to provide the services through the creation of a new substance use counselling team within Interior Health.
- This was the result of a review in the fall of 2020 when Interior Health consulted with several partners including, the South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice, Penticton Indian Band, local service organizations, and Interior Health clinicians.
- A key theme was that clients weren't being properly referred by Pathways to the appropriate MHSU services and therefore not getting adequate care.
- Among the concerns raised by the service partners and clinicians were:
 - Formal client intake at Pathways is limited to one afternoon per week (Tues. 1:00 – 2:30pm).
 - Pathways does not adhere to principles of trauma-informed practice.
 - Pathways exhibited poor cooperation and a lack of issue resolution.
 - Patients discharged without transitional safety plans in place.
 - Misinformation and discouraging practices such as Opioid Agonist Therapy.
 - Executive Director has disparaged Interior Health publicly.
- Feedback from rural partners indicated there were service gaps under the Pathways contracts.
- Direct engagement with Pathway's clients for the review was limited due to client confidentiality.
- Pathways insists it was never consulted or contacted about the change in direction by Interior Health.
- At a Penticton council meeting on Aug. 18, 2021, Pathways indicated it had invited Interior Health on many occasions to visit the facility and was turned down.
- At the meeting, Pathways also asked council for a letter of support for an RFP submission they plan to send to the federal government for funding to create a day-tox program in Penticton.
- Councillor James Miller asked council to send a letter to Interior Health requesting it restore \$500,000 in annual funding to Pathways a move supported by council.
- Miller pointed out in his request that Interior CEO Susan Brown and ED Carl Meadows make more than that in salary (\$347,547 and \$165,968 respectively).
- It is important to note that through Budget 2021 Interior Health will receive \$1,574,600 annually to provide detox services throughout the Okanagan including Penticton. This

is the same service Pathways is applying for.

KEY FACTS:

- Pathways had held contracts to provide substance use counselling services since 2002.
 - Adult counselling - \$309,000
 - Youth counselling - \$113,000
 - Group counselling - \$62,000
- The contracts funded 3.84 FTE clinicians, and 2.65 FTE administration positions.
- The average expected caseload is approximately 200 clients.
- Pathways has stated to media it supports 500 to 1000 clients at the point of the transition. These numbers may include the other services Pathways provides beyond the Interior Health contracts.
- The new Interior Health service includes 5 FTE clinicians with recruitment of a 6th for rural support.
- As of July 30, 2021, Interior Health has a caseload of 174 clients. By comparison, in June 2020 Pathways had 164.

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **People living with mental health and substance use challenges deserve fast, seamless access to quality care no matter where they live in BC.**
- **Mental health and addictions services are provided in communities across British Columbia through a combination of independent contractors and direct government services.**
 - **Pathways Addictions Resource Centre is an example of an independent contractor that has been funded by Interior Health.**
- **Interior Health chose not to renew its contract for counselling services with Pathways for the purpose of improving services in the area by integrating them into the broader health care system, including primary care.**

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- **No services are being reduced as a result of this decision and in fact, programming being offered will increase access to better, more consistent care – especially for people living in rural areas.**

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ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **While the Province sets the overall direction for MHSU services provincewide, each Health Authority is responsible for the provision of mental health and substance use services in their region. They have the autonomy to shift and evolve services to meet the growing and changing needs of the communities they serve.**
- **BC is building a system of mental health and addictions care that is rooted in trauma-informed practice as part of our shared work to eliminate stigma and deliver accessible, evidence-based care that meets everyone's needs in all parts of the province.**

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Communications Contact: Dan McIntosh Reviewer:
Program Area Contact:
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File Updated:

Minister's Office	Program Area	Deputy	MHA Communications