



Victoria Youth Clinic Society

Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026

February 2023

Foundry Victoria Youth Clinic Society

200 – 546 Yates St

Victoria, BC V8W 1K8

Phone: (250) 383-3552 ext. 1

Email: frontdesk@foundryvictoria.ca

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Land Acknowledgement | 1 |
| Introduction | 2 |
| External Context | 3 |
| Demographic Overview | 3 |
| Government and Funding Context | 4 |
| Impact of the Pandemic | 4 |
| Internal Context | 6 |
| Strategic Framework | 8 |
| Vision | 8 |
| Mission | 8 |
| Guiding Principles | 8 |
| Strategic Direction | 9 |
| 1. Accessible and Effective Services | 9 |
| Goal 1.1: Engagement with under-served youth and families | 9 |
| Goal 1.2: Integrate youth and family voices into services | 9 |
| Goal 1.3: Increased capacity and effectiveness of services | 9 |
| Goal 1.4: Support and Advocacy for youth and families | 9 |
| 2. Community Partnerships | 10 |
| Goal 2.2: Effective and strategic partnerships | 10 |
| Goal 2.3: Meaningful Indigenous partnerships | 10 |
| 3. Organizational Capacity and Sustainability | 11 |
| Goal 3.1: Diversified and sustainable funding | 11 |
| Goal 3.2: Cohesive and effective team | 11 |
| Goal 3.3: Operational effectiveness | 11 |

Land Acknowledgement

Victoria Youth Clinic Society – Foundry Victoria is grateful to live, work, and gather on the lands of the Łəkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, specifically the stolen traditional territories of the T'Sou-ke, Scia'new (Beecher Bay), Xwsepsum (Esquimalt), Songhees, S̱ÁUTW (Tsawout), W̱JOŁŁP (Tsartlip), W̱SIKEM (Tseycum), BÓKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat).

We honour Métis, Inuit, First Nations, and all Indigenous peoples whose stewardship of Turtle Island has protected the earth, water, and sky, as well as the health and wellbeing practices that have sustained us, and we seek to be good ancestors in our work.

As an organization, we commit to reconciliation, decolonizing our health care practices, and Indigenous youth-led health solutions that support current and future generations.

Introduction

The Victoria Youth Clinic Society (VYCS) is a not-for-profit organization that provides integrated and comprehensive primary health care services, including mental health and substance use care for youth aged 12 to 24 years. The Clinic has a multi-disciplinary team of dedicated and skilled youth-focused professionals that includes doctors, nurses, counsellors, psychiatrists, outreach workers, youth support workers, a parent support worker, wellness navigator and administrative staff.

In 2017 the Victoria Youth Clinic Society became the lead agency for Foundry Victoria. Foundry is a province-wide initiative that is developing a network of centres across British Columbia to provide a one-stop-shop for young people to access mental health care, substance use services, primary care, social services and youth and family peer supports.

As the lead agency for Foundry Victoria, the VYCS holds the contract with Island Health and is tasked with ensuring that standard services are provided in Victoria as outlined in the provincial memorandum of understanding. The VYCS, in partnership with Foundry, is committed to working to increase access to services for young people by fostering cross-system and inter-sectoral collaboration to provide an integrated and comprehensive system of care that includes primary care, mental health, substance use, social services, and youth and family peer support and navigation.

Foundry Victoria/VYCS offers a range of wellness services for young people, including physical and mental health care, substance use supports, social services and peer support. Services include primary health care, sexual health, mental health support and counselling, substance use support and counselling, peer support, gender affirming care, income assistance support, harm reduction, outreach and navigation support.

External Context

Demographic Overview

BC's population is estimated to be 5,286,528 as of April 1, 2022, a population growth of 1.9% over the previous year. BC is the only western province where the number of people moving into the province from other parts of Canada exceeded those moving out. The province's inter-provincial population gain was 97,424 between the last census and 2021¹.

BC families have grown smaller, and although families have fewer children, they are staying home longer. As the BC population continues to age, the relative proportion of the senior population will increase. In 2020 it was estimated that 19% of BC residents were 65 years old or older and this is expected to increase to 25% by 2041. In comparison, the working-age population proportion is expected to decline over the same period. In 2020, those aged 20-64 were approximately 61% of the total population of BC; by 2041 this is projected to be 58%².

The Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) grew 8% between 2016 and 2021. The urban core of Victoria, the Saanich Peninsula, and the West Shore grew at different rates between 2016-2021, with Victoria's core seeing the slowest rate of growth, the Saanich Peninsula outpacing the core's growth rate for the first time in modern census history, and the West Shore representing the fastest growing sub-region by a significant margin while also adding more people than the core since the 2006-2011 census counts³.

Between 2019 and 2038 the Capital Regional District population is projected to increase by 20%, from 412,465 to 493,975. The growth rate is expected to be highest in the West Shore where the population will increase by over 300,000 people, the same as the combined population growth for Saanich and Victoria over the same period. Of all the Western Communities, Langford alone is expected to see its population grow by over 25,000 people, the largest gain in the district⁴.

Government and Funding Context

The following section outlines some of the significant changes and initiatives within the provincial government that may have an impact on the Victoria Youth Clinic. The most noteworthy is the provincial government's commitment to ensuring that youth in British Columbia and their families have access to mental health and substance use services and supports in their local communities. This is being done by the establishment of Foundry centres across the province. As with the case of the Victoria Foundry, the centres across the province offer multiple service in one location, including primary care,

¹ Times Colonist . <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/census-2021-langford-tops-region-for-growth-while-esquimalt-drops-slightly-to-mayors-surprise-5047487>.

² Ip, F., & Lavoie, S. (2019). PEOPLE 2020: BC Sub-Provincial Population Projections. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/people_population_projections_highlights.pdf.

³ Kozakowski, M. (2022, February 9). 2021 census reveals West Shore's surging growth as Victoria's core loses momentum. Citified.Ca. <https://victoria.citified.ca/news/2021-census-reveals-west-shores-surging-growth-as-victorias-core-loses-momentum/>.

⁴ Stats, B. (2019). Capital Regional District 2019-2038 Population, Dwelling Units and Employment Projection Report. April.

youth and family peer supports, walk-in counselling, mental health and substance use services, and social services.

The B.C provincial government also recently withdrew legislation requiring youth to undergo treatment (up to 7 days) after an overdose. The province has instead committed to developing a new strategy, one which includes First Nations groups. This change resulted from concerns about the potential negative impacts of the legislation (Bill 22) proposed in July 2020⁵ (Bains, 2022).

B.C is also committed to overhauling the Mental Health Act following rapid growth in involuntary admissions and concerns around human rights. Amendments to the legislation have been introduced to create an independent service to advise involuntarily detained people about their rights. An all-party legislative committee has also recommended a broad review of the Mental Health Act. Initial amendments have been considered as a first step in a broader modernization of the Mental Health Act (Wyton, 2022). The new independent rights-advice service is expected to be available in 2023⁶.

B.C is reforming its child and family services legislation, with the initial engagement phase completed in Fall 2022. The intention of the reforms includes: to improve services for all children and families, and to better support the rights of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous governments by changing the current legislative model to one promoting prevention supports and keeping children within their families, communities, cultures. The reforms are also meant to align the Children, Family, Community Service Act Reform (CFCSA) with federal acts respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children youth and families, and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)⁷.

B.C also introduced changes to the Employment Standards Act in 2019, bringing BC in line with international standards for children's employment. These are changes to employment standards to better protect young people, including raising the general working age in BC from 12 to 16, and defining jobs appropriate for those under 16 (those defined as "light work")⁸. These changes protecting young workers, came into effect on October 15, 2021.

Impact of the Pandemic on the Non-Profit Sector

In 2020 the Victoria Foundation, Vancouver Foundation and City of Vancouver surveyed non-profits from across the province to see how the COVID 19 pandemic was affecting their organizations. Their findings were published in two reports, the [No Immunity \(2020\)](#) report, and the follow-up [Unraveling \(2021\)](#) report.

Key findings included that:

- COVID-19 has impacted all nonprofits no matter their size, subsector, or location.
- COVID-19 will continue to negatively impact both the non-profit sector and communities over the long term if tactical financial bridging support isn't provided.

⁵ Bains, C. (2022, April 29). B.C. scraps controversial plan to involuntarily treat youth who overdose. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bc-involuntary-youth-treatment-overdose-1.6436522>

⁶ New Service Helps Clarify Rights under Mental Health Act, 2022 BC Gov News. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022AG0026-000657>.

⁷ Children, Family and Community Service Act Reform, 2022 Government of British Columbia. <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/children-family-and-community-service-act-reform-2/>

⁸ New rules protecting young workers in effect Oct. 15. (2021, October 14). BC Gov News . <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021LBR0031-001972>.

- Organizations face an increased demand for services, but a decreased ability to deliver them.
- Organizations face a decrease in funding sources and in particular a decrease in unrestricted funding sources.

The report also found that organizations and their staff were able to find ways to support each other and work strategically despite public health constraints and ever-evolving safety measures. Additionally, the pandemic required organizations to ‘find new ways to communicate and collaborate forging connections that may otherwise not have occurred’, as well as fostering new links between organizations in the sector, promoting greater collaboration including data and best-practice sharing, and coordinating service delivery⁹.

While service delivery organizations have had varied experiences during the pandemic, and as such they face different roads to post-pandemic recovery, what we do know is that the impacts of the pandemic continue to drive significant changes within organizations, systems and the community at large. What the post pandemic recovery will look like is unclear, but we do know that it will be a different service and funding landscape than it was before COVID 19 happened.

⁹ City of Vancouver (2020). *Vancouver’s Non-Profit Sector Current State Analysis Social Policy and Projects Research and Data Team*.

Internal Context

The pandemic created a need for increased virtual services for most service delivery organizations, including Victoria Youth Clinic Society. This shift to expanded virtual services resulted in increased access for some youth, in particular those clients who had struggles getting to the clinic for various reasons (transportation, time, location, mental health challenges, etc). The shift to on-line services also allowed the clinic to see more clients, at a time when it is faced with significant physical space shortages.

At the same time, the shift to on-line support drastically reduced access for youth and their families who required in-person care and support, as well as those clients who participated in group services or relied on walk-in supports. This was further exacerbated by the overall decrease in social programming across the region, further resulting in isolation and negatively affecting youth mental health.

In term of staff, the pandemic resulted in high levels of burnout, as staff worked to address client needs in an ever-changing public health context. The shift to working from home blurred an already difficult work/life balance for staff at the Clinic. Working from home also resulted in staff being isolated from their colleagues which reduced their ability to provide care as an integrated team. All these factors resulted in less cohesion for the staff team and increased anxiety for both their clients and their own health and safety.

At the same time, the Clinic continues to undergo rapid growth, moving from a grassroots youth-serving organization to a critical player in the youth health and well-being sector. In particular, as part of the provincial network of Foundry services, the Clinic has become a key provider for youth mental health services.

The on-going challenge for the VYCS is to balance the commitment to the Clinic's founding principles – that of being low-barrier, youth oriented, and focused on serving those youth who struggle the most with accessing health services, while meeting the growing demand for mental health services and meeting Foundry mandated service parameters.

What follows is an outline of the strengths, challenges and opportunities of VYCS as identified by staff, youth, families and the Board. To continue to be successful, VYCS will need to continue to build on these strengths, explore ways to address the challenges the organization faces, and take advantage of identified opportunities.

| Strengths | Challenges | Opportunities |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Our People Staff are professional, passionate, caring, creative and flexible. They go above and beyond to make young people feel safe and cared for. They are committed to the vision, mission and values of the Clinic and to effectively serving youth in the community. The staff are supported by a professional and engaged board, made up of committed and compassionate individuals.</p> | <p>Impact of the Pandemic The pandemic has impacted internal operations and team dynamics. Moving from in-person individual and group supports to virtual care has been challenging for some clients and has led to an increased demand on staff time and responsiveness. Managing the constantly shifting landscape and impact on youth has significantly contributed to staff burnout and turnover.</p> | <p>Staff Support and Retention Supporting staff and addressing staff burnout will be critical to rebuilding staff cohesion and team functioning. This work will include focusing on staff retention practices, rebuilding the integrated care model, and ensuring staff have the opportunity for engagement with their colleagues and the time and supports to address high levels of professional burnout.</p> |
| <p>Our Services and Approach Services are based on a holistic understanding of health and well-being, that requires diverse care providers to communicate and collaborate effectively. Services are low-barrier, trauma informed, with a focus on building rapport and trust. Staff understand systemic barriers and the need to be innovative and flexible in responding to client needs.</p> | <p>Complex Needs of Clients The opioid epidemic and overdose crisis continue to be the leading cause of death for young people across BC. This along with the increasing demand for complex mental health supports has put tremendous strain on Clinic services and staff. The lack of practitioner availability, especially for urgent mental health and substance use issues results in the Clinic trying to manage complex and acute mental health and substance use issues.</p> | <p>Increased Service Accessibility In order to increase accessibility, the Clinic will need to focus on increasing access for marginalized and vulnerable youth. This will include building an effective decolonization strategy to ensure access for Indigenous youth, as well as expanded counselling, mental health and substance use services along with increased outreach and peer support.</p> |
| <p>Partnership and Collaboration VYCS is committed to building strong partnerships both internally and with the broader community. Partners include community-based services providers, government systems and funders. Effective partnerships and collaborations have resulted in enhanced on-site services and increased access to offsite services.</p> | <p>Healthy System Capacity The shortage of health care professionals and other specialized professionals is being felt across the health and non-profit systems. There is a severe shortage of family doctors, and limited psychiatric and mental health support, making it increasingly difficult to build partnerships to get diagnostic and specialized support for the Clinic's clients.</p> | <p>Strategic Partnerships VYCS needs to review existing partnerships to ensure fit and relevance and expand partners to include other critical supports for youth, such as housing. As well as exploring partnerships to address critical service gaps such as youth substance use treatment. VYCS cannot do this work alone, but with strategic partnerships it is possible to address critical gaps in services.</p> |
| <p>Reputation The VYCS has worked hard to build a solid reputation in the community, with youth, their families, partners, and the broader community. Being part of the provincial Foundry network has also increased credibility and visibility in the community and across the province.</p> | <p>Roles and Responsibilities Increasing community needs and demands have resulted in the rapid growth of the Clinic, which has led to a critical shortage of clinic space. This, along with staff turnover, has resulted in over all service delivery challenges, and less clarity around roles and responsibilities and referral pathways both inside and outside of the clinic.</p> | <p>Organizational Sustainability Creatively addressing the Clinic's space challenges and building a plan for long-term funding sustainability is a critical next step for VYCS. This will include ensuring that the Clinic has effective partnerships with other services and that the space ultimately can support current clients and partnerships as well as possible future growth.</p> |

Strategic Framework

- Vision** To improve the physical and mental well-being of youth.
- Mission** To provide comprehensive, integrated primary healthcare services including mental health and addiction care, in a youth friendly, non-judgmental, and safe environment.
- Guiding Principles** The following guide our work together and inform the services we provide to youth and their families:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Peer Informed</i> | We strive to ensure that everything we do is informed by the youth we serve and their families. |
| <i>Youth & Family Centred¹⁰</i> | Our services are youth and family-centred, collaborative and empowering to both. |
| <i>Dignity & Diversity</i> | We are committed to the dignity and diversity of youth. |
| <i>Respect & Acceptance</i> | We respect and work to enhance the health of youth in our community. We strive to create a safe space where youth and their families can feel understood and included. |
| <i>Accessible</i> | We work to ensure that our services are barrier free for all youth who wish to access our services. |
| <i>Holistic Care</i> | We work to ensure that there are comprehensive and consistent services and supports. |
| <i>Harm Reduction</i> | We are committed to keeping people safe and minimizing death, disease and injury from high-risk behaviour. |
| <i>Health Promotion</i> | We are also committed to taking action on the social determinants of health as a way to support people to take control over and improve their health. |
| <i>Trust</i> | We are committed to building trusting relationships with the youth we serve. |
| <i>Social Justice & Advocacy</i> | We are committed to the principles of social justice and working to address inequalities. |
| <i>Resiliency</i> | We are committed to building positive connections, reducing exclusion, and promoting resilience. |
| <i>Evidence Based & Trauma Informed</i> | We work to provide effective services that are evidence based and trauma informed. |
| <i>Respect for Culture</i> | We understand the importance of culturally inclusive services and the need to honour and integrate other cultures into our work. This is especially true for the Indigenous communities we work with. |

¹⁰ We define family in its broadest sense, as people who form a kinship bond through shared values, beliefs and traditions. Also, people who share common experiences and activities and who provide unconditional and non-judgmental support.

Strategic Direction

Accessible and Effective Services

Goal 1: Engagement with marginalized, vulnerable and under-served youth and their families.

Strategy 1: Increase outreach to targeted locations, communities, and organizations that currently support marginalized, vulnerable and under-served youth.

Strategy 2: Work with the Youth Action Committee to explore ways to better engage Indigenous and under-served youth.

Goal 2: Integration of youth and family voices into the development and delivery of services.

Strategy 1: Increase Indigenous youth and family involvement in the VYCS/Foundry.

Strategy 2: Work with youth and families to explore ways to increase accessibility and provide low barrier supports onsite.

Goal 3: Increased capacity and effectiveness of services to meet the needs of youth and their families.

Strategy 1: Explore ways to increase access to psychiatric supports.

Strategy 2: Consider what additional services would help to meet the evolving needs of youth and their families.

Strategy 3: Explore providing life skills programming on-site.

Goal 4: Support and advocacy for youth and their families

Strategy 1: Explore ways to support clients as they age out of the youth system and into the adult health system.

Strategy 2: Advocate for clients to improve access to health system supports and services.

Community Partnerships

Goal 1: Effective and strategic partnerships that support the work of VYCS/Foundry and provide a continuum of care for youth and address service gaps.

Strategy 1: Conduct an audit of existing partnerships to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Strategy 2: Determine key priority areas for partnerships in relationship to organizational goals and objectives.

Strategy 3: Engage with the partners to explore ways to support youth in schools.

Goal 2: Meaningful relationships and formal partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations.

Strategy 1: Explore the possibility of integrating Indigenous service providers into the VYCS/Foundry services.

Strategy 2: Build strategic relationships with Indigenous communities and service providers to better support Indigenous youth.

Organizational Capacity & Sustainability

Goal 1: Diversified and sustainable funding.

Strategy 1: Secure funding in order to support existing services as well as expansion of VYCS/Foundry services.

Strategy 2: Continue to build and expand internal fundraising capacity.

Goal 2: A cohesive and effective team.

Strategy 1: Build a human resource strategy that includes ways of effectively supporting current staff as well as attracting skilled diverse professionals to the Clinic.

Strategy 2: Review and enhance the leadership structure to effectively support a multi-disciplinary team and coordinated service delivery.

Goal 3: Operational effectiveness

Strategy 1: Secure accessible space that will provide long-term controlled costs and sustainability for the Clinic.

Strategy 2: Ensure that all organizational policies and procedures are updated, comprehensive, and aligned with provincial and Foundry Central guidelines.

Strategy 3: Work with the Board to ensure effective governance and engagement.

Strategy 4: Develop a comprehensive decolonization strategy that will create accessible structures and increase the Clinic's ability to support Indigenous staff, youth and families.

Strategy 5: Develop an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy to build internal capacity and structures to better support diversity.