



NEWS RELEASE

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PHSA did not consistently provide access to mental health, substance use services for Indigenous people in B.C. correctional centres

VICTORIA – Indigenous men and women needing mental health and substance use services while in B.C. correctional centres were not consistently provided access to supports from the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), according to an audit by the Office of the Auditor General.

The PHSA – responsible for health care in corrections since 2017 – could not confirm whether Indigenous clients entering corrections were provided necessary mental health and substance use services, assessed appropriately, or if discharge care plans were in place for their release.

“The social, economic and health impacts of colonialism and discrimination are evident in correctional centres, where Indigenous people are over-represented by a wide margin,” says Auditor General Michael Pickup. “This audit shows that the PHSA must do more with its unique opportunity to help Indigenous people in correctional centres access mental health care and substance use treatments, and connect them to services after their release.”

In 2020/21, BC Corrections held approximately 1,500 individuals in custody on an average day, with about 500 identifying as Indigenous people.

The audit looked at a sample of 92 Indigenous client files from 2019 to 2021. It found gaps in the PHSA’s monitoring and oversight, mostly due to the limited capacity of its client health information system and a lack of client file reviews by the PHSA.

The audit found PHSA staff completed health screening on time for most Indigenous clients, but did not consistently complete comprehensive assessments, detailed care plans, or ensure clients were provided with services.

Less than half the Indigenous client files in our sample had a complete care plan for mental health and/or substance use services. About 80 per cent of the clients received some services (whether they had a plan or not), but roughly 20 per cent received no services.

The audit also found the PHSA was not doing enough to prepare Indigenous clients for release because clients were not connected with necessary health services and community resources. Just seven per cent of clients in the file sample had a discharge plan. Over half received some sort of discharge planning, but without a complete plan clients may not have been referred to the supports needed.

The audit report, [*Mental Health and Substance Use Services for Indigenous People in B.C. Correctional Centres*](#), includes four recommendations for the PHSA to improve its reporting and oversight of mental health and substance use services in correctional centres to ensure Indigenous clients have access to needed services.



Office of the
Auditor General
of British Columbia

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[Mental Health and Substance Use Services for Indigenous People in B.C. Correctional Centres](#)
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Photo files

High-resolution images of Auditor General Michael Pickup are available:
<https://www.oag.bc.ca/media>

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