

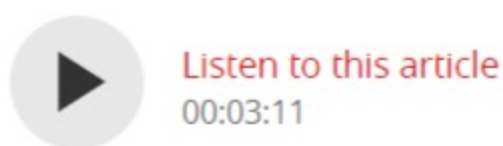
CMHA and Vancouver Coastal Health unveil new mental health initiative

Recovery College YVR is a new community learning center that addresses the gaps some patients experience moving from one mental health support system to another

Jordan Copp
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Andrew MacFarlane from Vancouver Coastal Health (left), Squamish Nation member and former elected councillor K'ana (Deborah Baker), Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Jennifer Whiteside (second from right) and Julia Kaisla, executive director of CMHA North and West Vancouver branch (right), announce the creation of Recovery College YVR, a new community learning center with a focus on addressing gaps in mental health treatment. | Charlotte Gilmour



For many, the first step can be the steepest.

The Canadian Mental Health Association North and West Vancouver branch has partnered with Vancouver Coastal Health to create Recovery College YVR, a new community learning center with a focus on addressing the transitional gaps some patients experience moving from one support system to another.

Julia Kaisla, executive director of CMHA North and West Vancouver, said one of the main values of the CMHA is always striving to encourage help-seeking behavior.

According to Kaisla, "About 20 per cent of Canadians with mild to moderate mental health or substance use problems can't access appropriate resources and support.

"Sometimes they're told they're not sick enough to access help yet. That first stage is where we really see Recovery College having a place," she said. "So, as people are striving to find the right resources for them, whether that be counseling or psychiatric services, they can access support groups within Recovery College."

Recovery College YVR, supported by a \$421,000 investment from the B.C. Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, will offer free courses to support mental health and substance abuse which will be available online and in-person.

Kaisla said the other focus of the college will be helping patients transition out of different levels of care and move towards greater independence with others who have similar experiences.

MJ Moore is a trained peer support worker who has been a volunteer co-ordinator with the CMHA for the last six years. With previous experience working with Vancouver Coastal Health, she now works at the Kelty Dennehy Mental Health Resource Centre which she describes as "a mini Recovery College."

Like many in her field, Moore said she was inspired in part by the care she received when in need.

"I was in the hospital at Lions Gate, and I met this amazing psych nurse and because of that, I enrolled at BCIT to become a psychiatric nurse," said Moore. "The motivation for me was to take something that was like the worst thing that had ever happened to me in my life and turn it into a positive."

According to Kaisla, co-operation between organizations and dedicated volunteers are essential elements in addressing gaps in support care systems.

"What I'm proud of is that this is a partnership between a Community Mental Health Organization, CMHA and Vancouver Coastal Health and that we've been able to come together and share values and a purpose to build this together," said Kaisla. "And I really am so proud of the team that came together to build this. There's a lot of people with lived experience who are bringing their expertise to the table."

For more information go to the [Recovery College YVR website](#). To learn more about the Kelty Dennehy Mental Health Resource Centre, visit [their website](#).

For additional Mental Health resources, visit [the Vancouver Coastal Health website](#).

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