

## COMOX VALLEY COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS

### GENERAL COALITION MEETING

APRIL 22, 2020

**Attendees:** Tory Cliffe (RCMP), Simone Marshall, James Taylor (Glacier View Lodge), Roger Kishi (Wachiay Friendship Centre), Bret Hobden (Salvation Army), Krista Smith (CV Family Services), Danielle Davis (CV Transition Society), Leanne Rathje (Ronna-Rae Leonard MLA), Ashley Hancock (AVI), Jesse Ketler (Village of Cumberland), Jamie Hoskins, Karen Berezon (Island Health), Lindsay McGinn (CVCHN), Julia Doknjas (Wachiay Friendship Centre), Sue Finneron (Dawn to Dawn), Heather Ney (CVTS), Colleen Holden (Salvation Army), Betty Tate (CVCHN), Amy C., Joyce Wilson (St. George's United Church), Sheena, C. Taylor, Kris Anderson (Better at Home), Julie Keumbehd (CV Health Network), Kristi Schwanicke (United Way), Kaelin Chambers (Village of Cumberland and CVRD EOC), Heidi Hartman (BC Housing), Deb Prain (CVTS), Claire Stockdill, Brooke Thoburn, Doug Hillian (City of Courtenay), Maureen Clarke (Division of Family Practice), Shari Dunnet (Community Action Team), Sharon Longhorn, Patti Sture (Indigenous Womens Sharing Society), Donna May (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Redcution), Grant Shilling (Dawn to Dawn), Sabina Acheson (Care-A-Van), Wendy (L'arche CV), Andrea Cupelli (CVCEH Coordinator).

**Facilitator:** Richard Clarke (Coalition to End Homelessness Leadership Team)

**Recorder:** Vicki Luckman (Coalition to End Homelessness Leadership Team)

#### 1. Coalition COVID-19 Response To-Date – Andrea Cupelli, Coalition Coordinator

- a. Andrea reviewed the role and responsibilities of the Coalition to End Homelessness, as well as the responsibilities of the Coalition Coordinator, with attention drawn to the responsibility of facilitation of activities of the Coalition towards homelessness, and not direct intervention responsibilities with clients.
- b. Andrea reviewed and highlighted activities of the Coalition's members and Leadership Team since March 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### 2. BC Housing Update - Heidi Hartman

- a. Heidi reports that 9 motel rooms have been secured by BC Housing in collaboration with Island Health for the Comox Valley. Beds are for individuals requiring a space to isolate because of a positive COVID test. CV Transition Society will be providing outreach support (24hours/7days a week) to individuals in those 9 units, including meals and other incidental supports. Support to individuals in these units will also be provided by Island Health. Heidi also reminded us that BC Housing remains committed to the extension of the Extreme Weather Beds, which may be used for isolation purposes, if needed.

Heidi responded to a question regarding the plan for housing individuals living in urban areas who require isolation because of positive test for COVID – “If it’s needed, we will serve it.” And reminder that referrals need to go through Island Health.

BC Housing will be responsive and flexible to each community’s identified needs. The outreach workers being hired through Transition Society for the 9 motel beds can be used to increase outreach service to encampments if the isolation units are not being used – the outreach worker’s responsibilities could be re-profiled. CV Transition Society confirmed there will be flexibility and a commitment that the 24/7 outreach workers will attend to the unsheltered and vulnerable population.

Brent Hobden(Salvation Army) confirmed 18 shelter beds are full. 20 extreme weather beds have been reduced to 12 to allow for physical distancing. 8 of those 12 beds are occupied. The Shelter has capacity for isolation rooms, but have yet to be used.

### **3. Island Health Update –Karen Brezon, Island Health**

Karen acknowledged and appreciated the positive relationships and partnerships that are achieving results serving the unsheltered, vulnerable population in our community.

- Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU) Services have created the COVID Outreach Team, which is available between 8:30-4:00 p.m., 7 days a week. This team has been active for approximately one week.
- MHSU has partnered with Public Health to provide on-site testing for the unsheltered and vulnerable population who are demonstrating signs and symptoms of COVID.
  - After initial assessment has been completed by first point of contact, the COVID Outreach Team (1 member of MHSU and 1 member of Public Health) will respond to assess individual in a private area. If determined that testing is needed, a swab will be done in a private area outside of agency.
  - Individual can then be housed in one of the 9 motel rooms until results are received.
    - If test results are negative, individual will be able to leave motel room.
    - If test results are positive, the individual will be expected to remain in the room for 10 days.
      - Supports will be provided by Mental Health, Physician or Nurse Practitioner, other outreach supports.
      - After 10 days, a formal discharge and warm handover/referral to agency services (as required).
  - Karen is participating in a working group to produce a healthcare document for outreach workers. The document will include information such as walk in clinic information, how to access a doctor, intensive health monitoring (includes monitoring by a nurse several times a day).

**ACTION: Karen will forward approved healthcare document to Andrea for distribution to community agencies.**

- Karen responded to questions, with the following information provided.
  - To date, the Island does not have outbreaks of unsheltered, vulnerable population testing positive to COVID.
  - Testing guidelines have opened up, but we are not testing everyone.
  - Testing sites are being underutilized on the Island.
  - At this time, there is no indication that after hours testing is needed, but if this changes, Public Health can adapt.
  - Karen reminded everyone of definition of “Isolation” – been tested and need to quarantine (do not leave premises).

**4. CVRD Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) Update – Kaelin Chambers**

EOC is a regional operation comprised of the four local governments, and is aligned with Emergency Measures BC (EMBC) and provincial emergency measures processes. COVID 19 response is new to EMBC, as it typically deals with events such as fire, flood. The EOC has relied on Andrea to update the EOC about the needs of the unhoused, vulnerable population. The EOC appreciates Andrea and her Coalition updates.

Kaelin acknowledged the work of the Coalition, Island Health and BC Housing, and sees it has a place in addressing emergent needs when capacity is stretched and additional resources are required. The EOC will monitor and support until needed.

Kaelin responded to question about “what is an emergency?” – We are figuring it out as well. EOC will be involved as capacity is stretched. Query made about any information available from the surveys completed by the municipalities for additional space – no results yet available.

**5. COVID 19 Coalition Coordinated Response Plan for Access to Assessment and Self-Isolation for Unsheltered People - Betty Tate and Heather Ney**

- a.) Betty reviewed actions of the Coalition Coordinated Response Plan which provides roles and responsibilities of ‘first point of contact’; procedures to follow to assist those experiencing symptoms of illness, including contacting MHSU COVID outreach team as well as Central Coordinating Agency – Transition Society for after-hours need for bed; services in place for those who may need to self-isolate if they have symptoms of illness
- b.) If a bed is needed in the evening for someone who is exhibiting symptoms of illness and is awaiting next day testing by MHSU, contact CV Transition Society after hours line to coordinate a bed (these beds are separate from the Island Health 9 beds).
- c.) Do not transport individuals experiencing COVID like symptoms in your personal vehicle. Ambassador Taxi has agreed to provide transportation and will be following cleaning protocols.

d.) Transition Society is in midst of hiring new outreach staff for COVID community response, food resources are in place.

**ACTION: Andrea to update this document based on new information presented at the meeting, including potential evening testing performed by Care-A-Van.**

**ACTION: Andrea will send out an updated COVID 19 Coalition Coordinated Response Plan document to all Coalition members.**

**6. COVID 19 Emergency Funding Update:**

The Coalition has received the following funding:

- City of Courtenay Grants in Aid – Food Bank, Lush Valley, CVTS
- CV Community Health Network - \$20,000
- CV Community Foundation - \$22,000
- CV Regional District -\$23,000

At this time, these funds (\$65,000) and used based on need i.e. rooms for self-isolation, or other needs that may arise.

**7. Other Coalition Business**

a.) **CVRD HSS Funds for Warming Centre** will provide continued financial support for staffing the Warming Centre. Thank you to the City of Courtenay for all other financial support to the Warming Centre.

b.) **Comox Year 4&5 funds for Habitat for Humanity** has been approved.

c.) **Hygiene Packs**

**ACTION: Please email Andrea if you have a need for hygiene packs.**

d.) **Coalition Virtual Meeting Frequency** – majority of meeting participants agreed to meet at our regularly scheduled time in May.

**NEXT MEETING: May 6<sup>th</sup>, 12:00 noon (Zoom meeting invitation will be forwarded by Andrea).**