

VCH Transgender Health Information Program: An Update

September 18, 2013

This document provides an update on the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) Transgender Health Information Program. As we continue with our work improving the program, stay tuned for opportunities to get involved as we will be moving forward with some community engagement plans later this Fall. For more information, please feel free to visit our website or contact us at Transhealth@vch.ca or by calling 604-734.1514 or toll-free: 1-866.999.1514

What is the Transgender Health Information Program?:

- Vancouver Coastal Health provides more than one kind of service for trans and gender non-conforming people. These include:
 - **Transgender Health Information Program**
 - **Trans Care Clinics**

Trans Health Information Program (THIP)

- A provincial program that operates from the Three Bridges Community Health Centre.
- Offers some community support groups such as the Trans Youth Drop-in and Taking Care of Business.
- The THIP's main function is to provide information to gender non-conforming/transgender people and others on navigating the medical system and community supports/services.
- The THIP does not provide any direct, clinical services (such as clinical counselling, nursing or access to doctors).
- Please see our website for more info on this and other services: <http://transhealth.vch.ca/>

Trans Care Clinics (Primary Care)

- Gender affirming clinical services (doctors, nurses, counsellors) for transgender and gender nonconforming folks can be accessed at one of three Community Health Centres:
 - Raven Song Community Health Centre
 - Three Bridges Community Health Centre
 - Pender Community Health Centre
- Some service restrictions may apply for adults (25+) residing outside of the Vancouver Coastal Health Region or catchment area.
- Youth under 25 are eligible for services regardless of where they live.
- Please see our website or the map attached to see the boundaries of the Vancouver Coastal Health Region. http://www.vch.ca/about_us/

Some Recent History:

- In 2012, VCH undertook a review of the Transgender Health program (THIP) to ensure it was meeting our clients' needs and following best practices in providing service.
- The review was followed up with community consultation, surveys and stakeholder feedback that enabled VCH to refine the program's scope, direction and identity.

VCH Transgender Health Information Program: An Update

- Our surveys, the review and other feedback gathered indicated that there is a great deal of confusion about what the THIP does and about what other services are available in the province.
- The review resulted in many recommendations and ideas for improving our services and information available to the community.
- As a result of this work, VCH will be offering new programming in 2013-14.

Some Upcoming Changes:

- To more accurately reflect what the program does, THIP will now be known as the Transgender Health Information Program (THIP).
- The program will continue and improvements will be introduced shortly to ensure it is robust and serving clients in the best way possible.
- VCH is committed to maintaining and improving our Transgender Health Information Program. We believe the new programming beginning this fall in the THIP will demonstrate our on-going commitment.

What Will Change?

- The former THIP employed a single coordinator with contracted community support workers. This program model worked well for many years, but our recent review showed us that we could help more people by making adjustments to staffing levels and by enhancing some of the long-standing programs.
- To support these changes, VCH has reconfigured the staffing model and has hired Community Health Liasons for the program.
- These new roles will be focused on the following strategic goals:
 - Capacity building efforts with care providers around the province,
 - Partnering with other agencies and programs to provide education to service providers and others,
 - Continuing to help through groups and one-to-one service with system navigation and support for those seeking access to gender-affirming care,
 - Expanding opportunities for youth and families,
 - Creating more avenues for those with lived experience of gender transition/gender non-conformity to share their wisdom and skills with others.
- A new Peer Programs Coordinator and a Prevention Services Coordinator will be linked with the program to support the team and to focus on ongoing community engagement, partnerships and volunteer opportunities.
- Increased collaboration with other program areas will allow the limited program resources to be better utilized.
- Other program improvements coming in 2013-14 include a new THIP website (Spring 2014), and a new family support network project to be piloted in Fall 2013 with the THIP's Trans Youth Drop In.
- A shift in the staffing model will also allow us to build new, strategic, working partnerships with allied agencies and service providers in order to advance improvements in care for trans and gender-diverse people in BC.
- Thursday's long-standing group session will remain on hold while new THIP programming

VCH Transgender Health Information Program: An Update

rolls out. We will be having an open house to reintroduce this and other groups to the community by late Fall.

- Information captured from community surveys collected in the winter of 2013 and participant input will help to inform the shaping of new group programming.

Acknowledgements:

- VCH would like to take the opportunity at this time to thank all former staff members and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to the THP, now THIP. VCH would not be able to build on such a solid foundation of success if it wasn't for your collective efforts over many years.

We want to involve you:

- While program changes roll-out over the coming months, VCH would appreciate your feedback regarding future direction, particularly around possible group and educational offerings that we may be able to provide directly or partner to provide. Please contact us at Transhealth@vch.ca or by calling 604 734-1514 or toll-free: 1-866.999.1514

A map of the Vancouver Coastal Health Region can be found below:

