

Planning for Release



Made by the ADVANCE Study



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority



BC MENTAL HEALTH
& SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES
Provincial Health Services Authority



This booklet was created through the “**Addressing COVID-19 Vaccine concerns Among people who are incarcerated**” (**ADVANCE**) Study.

The ADVANCE Study team co-developed educational resources (including this one) with and for PWAI. We asked **People Who Are Incarcerated (PWAI** for short) in BC provincial correctional centres what their concerns about COVID-19 vaccines are, what it’s been like being incarcerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they like to get information about things like COVID-19 and vaccines.

We want PWAI in provincial correctional centres in BC to have access to the information that they need to make informed decisions about COVID-19, and to stay as safe and healthy as possible while incarcerated. We hope this helps you think about what would work best for you and to make informed choices about your health and wellness.

Check out our other resources, listed below. You can ask for a copy from a Programs Officer or from Healthcare Staff:

- Making Informed Choices: A COVID-19 Activity and Info Book
- Making Informed Choices About COVID-19 Vaccines
- Wellness While in Custody
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Testing
- Planning for Release
- Overdose Prevention & Harm Reduction
- COVID-19 FAQ Posters
- COVID-19 Myth Busting Posters
- Real Talk Comic
- Needle Hate Comic
- Making Informed Choices: A COVID-19 Activity and Info Book (Reference Edition)

Planning for Release

"I would hope that I have the info around me to transition ok without any delays or problems."
-ADVANCE Study Participant



When you're getting ready for release from a correctional centre, you'll probably have mixed feelings – feelings of excitement, anxiety, and worry are common. This booklet shares info on what to expect in terms of COVID-19 and release from custody, along with checklists and resources to help you plan for release.

For information and support to prevent overdose after release, check out our *Overdose Prevention & Harm Reduction* booklet.

COVID-19 Release from Custody Procedures

In some situations, you might get tested for COVID-19 before release. For example, if there is an active outbreak on your unit at the time of discharge, you may get tested.



Regardless of whether you test positive for COVID-19 infection, **if you have COVID-19 symptoms** it is recommended to isolate and stay away from others until your fever is gone (without the use of medicines that reduce fever like Tylenol), AND you feel well enough to return to daily activities. You should avoid close contact with people at higher risk of severe illness or complications from COVID-19. If you cannot stay away from others while you have COVID-19

symptoms, should try to wear a mask indoors, cover your coughs or sneezes with your elbow, and clean your hands often.

If you don't have COVID-19 symptoms, you do not need to stay home or avoid others, regardless of test results.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms when you are released from custody, ask for a surgical face mask to wear. If you have COVID-19 symptoms, even if you haven't tested positive, if you are unsure or concerned, connect with your healthcare provider, call 8-1-1, or go to an Urgent and Primary Care Centre to be assessed.

COVID-19 Outside of Corrections

As of November (2022), most COVID-19 mandates have been lifted in BC. That means:

- There are no restrictions on travel or entry into BC
- There are no restrictions on gatherings or events
- You don't need to be vaccinated to go into public spaces like restaurants
- Masks are encouraged (but not required) on public transport (e.g. planes, busses)
- Stores and event organizers can choose to ask people to wear masks at their locations
- You have to wear a mask in healthcare settings (e.g. hospitals, vaccine clinics)
- Two vaccines and at least one booster are recommended
- You can still wear a mask if you want to

To get the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 mandates, ask a loved one or Corrections staff (e.g. Corrections Officer,

someone helping you with release planning) to check this website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/restrictions>

Release Planning Checklists

To help make release and your transition back to the community successful, it's a good idea to do some planning before then. People who have experienced incarceration share that planning before release can help make it less overwhelming when you go back to the community.

You can ask for support with release planning from a corrections caseworker, the Community Transitions Team, or a reintegration worker.

You might also choose to get help with release planning and support after release by connecting with other services in the community, such as Unlocking the Gates Services Society. Unlocking the Gates is run by people who have lived experience of being in prison (Peer Mentors), who can help you with lining up housing, dealing with warrants, or connecting to other services including harm reduction, addiction treatment, mental health care, or hepatitis C treatment.

Unlocking the Gates helped put together these checklists of things to think about when you're planning for release. You can use these checklists on your own, or you can connect with Unlocking the Gates to get extra help from them, like arranging transportation on the day you are released, or getting some extra clothes for when you're out. We also created a list of resources available in communities across BC and information about how to access or contact them, which you can use when you're going through these checklists.



How to contact Unlocking the Gates:

Monday to Friday 9AM-4PM, call: 1-604-518-3261

Afterhours Monday to Friday 4pm-10pm

Saturday and Sunday 9am-8pm, call:

1-778-938-2584

Before Release Checklist

- Put in a request to see the reintegration worker to help with release planning. Speak to your unit rep or a Corrections Officer if you need help putting in the request.
- Contact Unlocking The Gates (UTG) to find out how they can help with release planning & support after release.
- Have a folder or envelope where you can keep all your release paperwork and documents, such as records of when/where medical appointments are, contact information for your Peer Mentor or case worker, etc.
- If you don't have a government issued photo ID (e.g. BC ID), start the process of getting new ID.
 - Request any documents you'll need to get a new ID ASAP (e.g. copy of your birth certificate).
- Notify relevant people about your release, such as:
 - A friend or family member
 - A service provider or outreach worker
 - A Peer Mentor from Unlocking The Gates
- Make sure you have clothing to wear when you're released. If you don't have any, Unlocking The Gates may be able to bring you some.
- Set up transportation for your release (e.g. friend or family member to pick you up, ride from UTG, etc.)
- Set up somewhere to stay when you return to the community. Options:
 - Stay with a family member or friend

- Go to a Drug Treatment Centre or Recovery Home
- Other private accommodation/motel/hotel/etc.
- A shelter
- Get familiar with any parole, probation orders, or other conditions of release that you have.
- Make sure you have the contact info for your Parole Officer, Probation, or Bail Supervisor.
- Make sure medical care is set up for you in the community.
 - Talk to healthcare about which pharmacy your prescriptions will be sent to.
 - Ask for blister packs of medication for your release. You can get up to a 14 day supply of meds at release.
 - If you require a monthly injection, find out where you go to get it when you're released.
 - Make sure any follow-up appointments you need are booked for you. Make sure you have some way to keep track of your appointments (e.g. notebook, appointment cards). Examples of appointments you may need booked:
 - Primary care provider (doctor or nurse practitioner)
 - Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) prescription renewal or maintenance (OAT or methadone clinic or doctor)
 - Hepatitis C treatment assessment or start
 - Psychiatrist for review of psychiatric meds
- If you haven't already, consider getting vaccinated for COVID-19, or getting a booster shot if you're eligible.

In the First 72 Hours After Release

- Get a new government issued photo ID (if needed).
 - You will be issued a facesheet by Corrections at release. You will need the facesheet and a copy of your birth certificate to apply for a BCID. You need a BCID or other government issued ID to open a bank account, so this is very important.
- Cash your cheque that the correctional centre gave you.
- Go to a store or supermarket (Walmart, etc.) to get:
 - Some basic hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.).
 - A small suitcase, backpack, or gym bag.
 - If it is winter time, find a warm coat and possibly a warm hat and gloves.
 - Some basic groceries.
- If you don't have a cell phone, look into an inexpensive pre-paid phone. You can find these at stores like Walmart or BestBuy. Once you get one, add in any important contacts to the address book right away.
- If you're on probation or bail be sure to report to your Probation or Bail Supervisor within 24hrs upon release.
- If you're on parole, be sure to report to your Parole Officer within the first 48hrs after release.
- If you have any other release conditions or probation orders, be aware of those and follow them.
- Go to the pharmacy to pick up any medication refills you need.
- Make an appointment or go to your scheduled appointment with a health care provider to get new prescriptions for any important medications that you will need to take long term.

In the First 2 Weeks After Release

- Determine if there is any other ID you need and make a plan to get new copies of these. Some other documents you might need are:
 - Birth Certificate
 - BCID
 - BC services card
 - Proof of Citizenship or Passport
 - Status Card
 - Driver's Licence
- Open up a bank account if you don't have one.
- Find out if you are eligible for income assistance or disability support payments and apply for these. You can do this by going to a local income assistance office, by calling 1-866-866-0800, or online at myselfserve.gov.bc.ca. If you have a Community Outreach Worker or Peer Mentor, they may be able to assist with this.
- Create an email address if you don't have one. You can set up a free email account at outlook.com or gmail.com. Public libraries have free computers where you can access the internet and emails etc.
- Continue to check in with your Parole Officer, Probation or Bail Supervisor regularly. They will tell you how often you are required to report.
- If you are able to work, begin the process of searching for a job.
- Check if you have court costs, fines, or other fees that you have been charged and make a plan for going to the courthouse to address these.

- ❑ Check in with your Peer-Mentor, or other supports such as a Community Outreach Worker, to see if they can assist you with any of the above tasks.
- ❑ If you didn't get vaccinated for COVID-19 while you were incarcerated, consider getting vaccinated in the community. If it's been more than 6 months since your last shot, you may be eligible for a booster. See page __ for info about getting vaccinated in the community.

Resources and Services to Support Re-Integration

We couldn't provide detailed info for every resource that exists, so think of this as a starting point while you're planning for your release from custody. If you see one (or even a few!) you're interested in, ask the person supporting your release planning to connect you with them or help you to look up more info about them. Many of the resources have multiple locations. For resources and services near the Correctional Centre you are currently in, ask a Programs Officer or Correctional Health Services staff to help you look them up.

Healthcare Services

HealthLink BC



Phone: 8-1-1

Web: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/>

Call 8-1-1 to speak to a health services navigator, who can help you find health information and services; or connect you directly with a registered nurse, a registered dietitian, a qualified exercise professional, or a pharmacist.

BC COVID-19 Get Vaccinated System



Phone: 1-833-838-2323

Web: <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/>

To get vaccinated against COVID-19 in BC, you must register with the Get Vaccinated system. After you register, you will receive a text, email or phone call when it's your turn to book a vaccine appointment

Virtual Doctor of the Day, First Nations Health Authority



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Phone: 1-855-344-3800

Web: www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/virtual-doctor-of-the-day/how-it-works

Call to book an appointment with the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day in your region. All First Nations people who live in BC are eligible for this service free of charge– and so are their family members, even if those family members are not Indigenous. There are no age limits.

Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca



Ministry of
Mental Health
and Addictions

Web: <https://www.wellbeing.gov.bc.ca/>

wellbeing

Wellbeing.gov.bc.ca, managed by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, is your pathway to finding the right information and services to meet your needs for mental health and substance use supports across B.C.

TransCareBC



TRANS CARE BC
Provincial Health
Services Authority

Phone: 1-866-999-1514 or 1-604-675-3647

Web: <http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/care-support/access-care/navigate-care>

The TransCareBC health navigation team helps connect transgender people in BC to gender-affirming health and wellness supports. The team includes health navigators, nurses, peers, and admin support staff, with access to a general practitioner for consultation as needed.

Help 4 Hep BC



Phone: 1-888-411-7578

Web: <https://help4hepbc.ca/>

A free and confidential peer-to-peer helpline for anyone who is affected by hepatitis C virus or hepatitis B virus - whether you have hepatitis C or hepatitis B, have been cured, or are a family member or friend- Help4Hep can answer your questions.

SmartSex Resource



Web: <https://smartsexresource.com/get-tested/clinic-finder>

Go to the website above to find clinics across BC that offer testing for HIV, hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) like chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis.

GetCheckedOnline



A SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE BC CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL

Web: <https://getcheckedonline.com/Pages/default.aspx>

GetCheckedOnline is a confidential online sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing service offered through participating Lab Locations in Vancouver, Maple Ridge, Victoria, Duncan, Kamloops, Kimberley and Nelson. Testing is free, you do not need to show ID, and you don't need to have a BC Care Card.

Hepatitis Clinics Map



BC Centre for Disease Control

Web: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health>

</bc-hepatitis-clinics>

Go to the website above to find clinics across BC that offer testing and treatment for hepatitis B virus and hepatitis C virus.

Oak Tree Clinic

BC WOMEN'S
HOSPITAL+
HEALTH CENTRE



Phone: 1- 604-875-2212

Web: <http://www.bcwomens.ca/our-services/specialized-service/oak-tree-clinic>

The Oak Tree Clinic serves the entire province, and provides specialized, interprofessional care for women and families with HIV/AIDs, hepatitis C virus, hepatitis B virus, sexually transmitted infections, reproductive infectious disease, and congenital infectious disease.

CoolAid Clinic (Dr. Chris Faser & Dr. Matthew Moher)



Phone: 1-250-385-1466

Web: <https://coolaid.org/how-we-help/health-services/>

The Cool Aid Community Health Centre serves the South Vancouver Island region. They have expertise in hepatitis C virus (HCV), PrEP to prevent HIV, opioid agonist therapy, HIV management, and support groups for chronic conditions such as pain management and HCV.

ASK Wellness Society



Phone: 1-250-214-5948

Web: <https://askwellness.ca/kamloops-homes/>

ASK Wellness Society provides a range of outreach support services designed to assist members in the Kamloops area who are facing homelessness, mental health, and/or substance misuse across the interior BC region. Have HIV and hep C support workers who can assist with test, treatment, and other support as needed.

AVI Health Services



AVI.org
where harm reduction works

Phone: 1-250-384-2366

Web: <http://avi.org/>

This clinic provides services for people living with HIV, HCV (hepatitis C virus), people who use drugs, trans folks, gay men, bisexual men, queer men and men who have sex with men are available across Vancouver Island.

Northern HIV/HCV Specialized Support Team (SST)



northern health
the northern way of caring

Phone: 1-888-645-6495

Web: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-information/hiv-and-hepatitis-c/specialized-support-team>

The HIV and Hepatitis C Specialized Support Team (SST) supports people and families of those diagnosed with HIV or HCV in the northern BC region. Support is provided in person, or by telehealth, including videolink, telephone, text, fax, or email. You can refer yourself to the specialized support team, or you can be referred by a doctor or support worker.

Positive Health Services



fraserhealth
Better health. Best in health care.

Phone: 1-604-582-4581

Web: <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/Service-Directory/Service-At->

[Location/D/8/positive-health-services---jim-pattison-outpatient-care-and-surgery-centre#.YwuBb_jMI2w](#)

Positive Health Services serves the entire Fraser Valley region. The clinic is located in the Jim Pattison Outpatient Care and Surgery Centre in Surrey, where they provide comprehensive interdisciplinary care to people living with HIV and/or Hepatitis C and can assist with medication management and other support as required.

Services for people in or released from corrections

West Coast Prison Justice Society



WEST COAST
PRISON JUSTICE SOCIETY

Phone: 1-866-577-5245
(federal) or 1-604-636-0464

(provincial)

Web: <https://prisonjustice.org/>

A clinic that provides prison-related legal aid (other than appeals) to help people in federal and provincial prisons across B.C. They assist with issues that affect people's liberty right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, such as solitary confinement, involuntary transfers, parole suspensions, disciplinary hearings and more.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network



Phone: 1 888-371-2326

Web: <https://www.cfcn-rcafd.org/>

A charity organization that focuses on families, children, and friends who have someone they care about in jail. The organization offers storybooks, information booklets, and unique programs.

L.I.N.C. Society



Phone: 1-604-820-1015

Web: <https://lincsociety.bc.ca/what-we-do>

Programs and services include toll free support line, tailored support to assist individuals exiting the prison system, support for LGBTQ2S+ identifying persons in prison or on conditional release, and much more.

Connective (Formerly John Howard Society BC)



CONNECTIVE Phone: 1-250-216-6211

Web:

<https://johnhowardbc.ca/victoria/contact/>

Dedicated to assisting individuals, families, youth and adults with programs and services focused on employment, housing, mentorship, restorative justice.

Elizabeth Fry Society



Phone: 1-888-879-9593

Web: <https://efry.com/>

This organization offers programs and services to women, children and families affected by the criminal justice system.

Social Support Services

BC 211



Phone: 2-1-1

Web: <https://bc.211.ca/>

A free, confidential, multilingual service that links people to resources for help, where and

when they need it. They provide information and referral for a broad range of programs and services. Help is available to people anywhere in BC 24/7.

United Way



Phone: 1-877-557-1953

Web: <https://uwbc.ca/program/food-security/>

Call United Way or to this website to find a map of all the Food Banks and other food support services available across BC.

BC Housing Homeless Prevention Program



BC HOUSING

Phone: 1-800-257-7756

Web: <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/homeless-prevention-program>

Individuals leaving the correction system are eligible for the BC Housing Homeless Prevention Program, which can provide rent supplements to cover costs of housing. Contact a Homeless Prevention Program Service Provider to determine your eligibility.

Work BC



Phone: 1-250-952-6914

Web: <https://www.workbc.ca/employment-services.aspx>

In addition to online information, WorkBC offers a comprehensive database of B.C. job posting, a blog featuring trends, job search tips, live chat help, employment programs, and more.

My Self Serve (MySS)



Ministry of
Social Development
and Poverty Reduction

Phone: 1-866-866-0800

Web: <https://myselfserve.gov.bc.ca/>

Income and disability assistance for residents of British Columbia, including the application if you are not currently in receipt of income or disability assistance.



ISBN

978-1-7781841-6-1



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