

# Greater Victoria Business Toolkit on Homelessness

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A toolkit on prevention, offering help and creating pathways out of homelessness **together.**



greater victoria  
coalition to end  
homelessness

hope has found a home

December 2020

The solutions to end homelessness are as diverse as homelessness itself, and we all have a role to play. The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society (Coalition) was formed in 2008 with a mission to end homelessness in Greater Victoria. The Coalition consists of service providers, non-profit organizations, all levels of government, businesses, postsecondary institutions, the faith community, people with a lived experience of homelessness, and members of the community. This diverse membership is referred to as Coalition Stakeholders.

### **Our Vision**

A Region Without Homelessness

### **Our Mission**

To ensure appropriate solutions are in place to serve those individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the capital region.

To ensure all people facing homelessness in the capital region have access to safe, affordable, appropriate, long-term housing.



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# Introduction

Homelessness - visible or invisible - can devastate both the individual experiencing homelessness and their community. For many it is not easy seeing someone trying to survive on the streets and this painful reality can come with a variety of questions and concerns. Homelessness and its effects on an individual are not based on choices - they are often based on a lack of choices. The Coalition encourages you, our community, to practice empathy, increase your awareness on pathways into homelessness, and to become an ally. The Greater Victoria Business Toolkit on Homelessness was designed to help the Greater Victoria business community by providing some tips, perspectives, and options for how to act and how to make a difference when faced with the reality of homelessness in our region. This toolkit includes background information for understanding our current reality, practical advice on ways we can all jump in and help, an emergency calling list and a “what to do if” questionnaire.

We are inviting you to join us, our neighbours, local nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations in reaching our ultimate benefit: **communities throughout the region are safe, healthy, vibrant, welcoming and supporting of people from all walks of life and stages in their life journey.**

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“Homeless and barely housed people continue to die at an alarming rate, at half the age of the average Canadian. People using illicit drugs and living with mental illness continue to experience stigma and discrimination preventing access to and quality of care.”  
- **Too Little, Too Late: How We Fail Vulnerable Canadians as They Die and What to Do About It**, University of Victoria, 2018



# Our Current Reality



According to the 2020 Greater Victoria Point-in Time (PIT) Homeless Count, there were at least 1,523 people experiencing homelessness between March 11 and 12, 2020. It is important to note that this number is a snapshot of time, and it is not reflective of all the experiences of homelessness throughout the year, as homelessness is a fluid state that people move in and out of over time.

## Youth

under **25**

37.6% first experienced homelessness as a teenager under the age of 19. 1 in 2 respondents first experienced homelessness as youth (under 25).

## Indigenous

**35%**

One third of respondents Identified as Indigenous, much higher than the proportion of Indigenous among the broader population (4.7%).

## Permant Housing

**92%**

92% want permanent housing The top three obstacles to finding housing: high rent, low income, and lack of available options.

# How you can make a difference



**Start Somewhere.** One of the most common experiences of individuals noticing increased homelessness in their community is feeling uncomfortable and totally powerless. However, there are proactive steps you can take to address this issue, even if you feel unsure or overwhelmed.



Take some time to learn about this regional crisis. Read the Five-Year Community Plan to End Homelessness in the Capital Region at [victoriahomelessness.ca](https://victoriahomelessness.ca), this plan is a reflection of the work of many stakeholders including people with lived experience of homelessness, Indigenous serving organizations, community not-for-profit service organizations as well as representatives from government, business and funders. The on-the-ground experience of the homelessness serving sector as well as the perspectives of people with lived experience and Indigenous people have helped inform the development of Five Key Community-Based Outcome Areas and their associated goals and objectives. These outcome areas will help guide investments in housing and services over the next five years.



Learn about local resources and support services. For resources, including shelter availability, visit [bc211.ca](https://bc211.ca) an online information service that is an up-to-date, reliable gateway to community, social, non-clinical health and government services. Another resource is the Street Survival Guide, the guide provides users with knowledge of, and access to, homeless-serving resources in the area. [victoriahomelessness.ca/our-products/guides/](https://victoriahomelessness.ca/our-products/guides/)



Educational links: [homelesshub.ca](https://homelesshub.ca), [bcnpha.ca](https://bcnpha.ca), [awayhome.ca](https://awayhome.ca), [victoriahomelessness.ca](https://victoriahomelessness.ca), [uwgv.ca/unignorable/homelessness/](https://uwgv.ca/unignorable/homelessness/)

Real People, Real Stories: [invisiblepeople.tv](https://invisiblepeople.tv), [coolaid.org/our-impact/news-stories](https://coolaid.org/our-impact/news-stories), [ourplacesociety.com/stories](https://ourplacesociety.com/stories), [homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/stories](https://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/stories)

# How you can make a difference



**Communicate with Respect.** The most resounding advice from the Coalition's People with Lived Experience (PWLE) Steering Committee and experts on homelessness is to treat all people with respect, no matter their circumstance. Many individuals who live on the streets can often feel forgotten or non-existent in their communities, but thoughtfully acknowledging and connecting with them can go a long ways.



The following are quotes from the PWLE Steering Committee on communicating with someone experiencing homelessness in your community:

- **"Always communicate with respect."**
- **"One of the most important pieces is how you begin the conversation. A simple good morning, good evening or hello can make a big difference."**
- **"Tone. Your tone of voice can make a big impact on how a conversation is going to go."**
- **"Business owners have to understand that waking up on pavement, is a HARD wake up, so being thoughtful on your approach in the morning can set the tone for someone's day."**
- **"Take interest in the person, as a person."**
- **"They are a person, they have interests, they have goals, they have more intentions for the day other than being by their bedside."**
- **"Asking someone how they are doing can be redundant while they are on the street, find something to share and communicate about."**



Get to know the people experiencing homelessness in your area and treat them like any neighbour. Unless you feel that the situation is unsafe, ask the person if he or she needs assistance and has visited the Coalition or any other organization that helps people experiencing homelessness. For example: The **Downtown Outreach Services (DOS) Office** is a drop-in center providing advocacy, housing outreach, and referral services for adults who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to mental health and/or addictions issues, disability, incarceration, or poverty. **Address: 826 Cormorant St Victoria, BC V8W 1R1, Phone Number: 250-356-2555. Office Hours: Mon, Tue, Thu, and Fri from 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM, and Wed from 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM.**

# How you can make a difference



**Speak with Experts.** If you see someone regularly who appears in need of non-emergency assistance, contact a trained individual or outreach team who knows what to do.



The **Shelter and Street Help Line** is designed to assist people who are affected by homelessness in Greater Victoria. A wide range of circumstances can result in homelessness so this Help Line will provide you with information on a variety of programs and services. Contact the help line to find available shelter beds and services in the Lower Mainland and Victoria: dial or text **2-1-1** or visit **bc211.ca**.



Make a **Non-Emergency phone call**. Examples include: reporting a crime with no suspect, reporting a crime with suspect but the suspect is not on the scene, reporting a serious crime with suspect, but with a lengthy delay, on-going crime issues or crimes that are not in-progress and suspicious circumstance that may indicate an ongoing criminal activity. Contact Victoria line: **250-995-7654** or Saanich line: **250-475-4321**.

**If there is a medical emergency or you feel threatened in any way, call 9-1-1.**



Phone the **24/7 NurseLine. 8-1-1** is a free-of-charge provincial health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia. By calling **8-1-1**, you can speak to a health service 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.

## How you can make a difference.



**Get Involved.** Volunteering and participating in local events are great ways to not only provide real support to direct relief programs, but also meet people in the community who are experiencing homelessness.



Each organization has a wide range of needs, from administrative support, to preparing and handing out meals, to helping people prepare for a job, to assembling welcome home kits, to immediately help those recently housed. You can find a full list of serving organizations online at: [volunteervictoria.bc.ca](https://volunteervictoria.bc.ca).



If you're an employer, hire someone who is formerly homeless to jump start their transition to independence through employment.



If you're a landlord, offer housing to the Private market partnerships agreements between Pacifica Housing, BC Housing, Island Health (VIHA) and landlords in the private market. These partnerships encourage independent community living for clients requiring on-going supports and provide an alternative to subsidized housing. Learn more at: [pacificahousing.ca/private-market-partnerships](https://pacificahousing.ca/private-market-partnerships).



**Advocate for Change.** City and neighbourhood council meetings are happening every week, and this is where we have the chance to listen and provide feedback on how policies are being implemented.



The Victoria City Council meets every second and fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM, and holds additional meetings when necessary. There are four ways to request to address city council, to submit your form to Legislative Services go to [victoria.ca](https://victoria.ca).



Homelessness  
is not a choice.  
**It can happen to  
ANYONE.**



# Emergency Calling List

The CRD has a strong network of agencies and dedicated professionals working together to help those in need get back on their feet.

## **The Shelter and Street Help Line: 2-1-1**

The Shelter and Street Help Line is designed to assist people who are affected by homelessness in Greater Victoria. We understand that a wide range of circumstances can result in homelessness so we provide information on a variety of programs and services. Contact us to find available shelter beds and services.

## **Vancouver Island Crisis Line - Crisis Support: 1-888-494-3888.**

If you require urgent emotional support, including having thoughts of suicide and other mental health issues.

## **Non-Emergency Calls**

**Victoria Line: 250-995-7654**

**Saanich Line: 250-475-4321**

Examples include: reporting a crime with no suspect, reporting a crime with suspect but the suspect is not on the scene, reporting a serious crime with suspect, but with a lengthy delay, on-going crime issues or crimes that are not in-progress and suspicious circumstance that may indicate an ongoing criminal activity.

## **24/7 NurseLine: 8-1-1**

**8-1-1** is a free-of-charge provincial health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia. By calling 8-1-1, you can speak to a health service 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.

## **VictimLink BC: 1-800-563-0808**

24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

VictimLink BC is a toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone service available across BC. Provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence, including victims of human trafficking exploited for labour or sexual services.

## **Street Outreach Nursing Program**

**250-361-7056 - outreach hours vary Monday to Friday.**

**Office: 250-388-2225, office hours are 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Monday to Friday.**

Provides free and confidential outreach nursing care to residents of downtown Victoria who do not have a primary physician, and/or have challenges accessing traditional health services, including intravenous drug users, sex workers, and street-involved or homeless individuals. Services include brief intervention, screening, treatment, and prevention for sexually transmitted infections (STI), HIV, and hepatitis; immunization for adults; assistance to access appropriate health services; wound care, tuberculosis (TB) testing and care; and pregnancy testing.

## **Greater Victoria Streets 2 Homes (S2H) Program: 250-260-6223**

Provides outreach services to assist in moving chronically homeless adults directly into permanent and private market housing while providing individualized support services to help them stay there. Also provides a rent subsidy to offset housing costs. Individuals must have been homeless for at least 12 months in the past two years, and have an observable mental health and/or substance use challenge. Referral accepted from self or other.

## **Downtown Outreach Services (DOS) Office: 250-356-2555**

**Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8:30 am to 12 pm and Wednesday from 1 pm to 4:30 pm.**

A drop-in center providing advocacy, housing outreach, and referral services for adults who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to mental health and/or addictions issues, disability, incarceration, or poverty. Services include housing search assistance; advocacy and support with accessing benefits; help with scheduling or attending medical, legal, or other appointments; and information and referral to community services.

## **Mobile Health Clinic: 250-893-7332**

A low-barrier, mobile health clinic provides free outreach health services to marginalized populations in Greater Victoria area; includes individuals who are homeless, experiencing drug addiction, of Aboriginal descent, and sex workers. Primary health care services provided include routine testing, harm reduction services, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) testing and treatment, contraception, vaccinations, wound care, and other basic medical health care. Partnership program with TELUS that works with other community partners and volunteer health care professionals.

## **Homeless Family Outreach: 250-388-5251**

Provides advocacy, information, and referrals for families with children and youth ages 18 and under who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. Outreach workers support families to find shelter and/or maintain their housing, as well as connect with other support services.

## **Victoria Women's Transition House Society: 250-385-6611 (24-Hour Crisis and Information Line)**

Provides support and information for women who are either experiencing abuse, or who have experienced abuse, as well as for family members, friends, and professionals. Operated by staff and trained volunteers.

**For emergencies or if a person seems to require urgent medical attention, dial 911.**

# Emergency Calling List

The CRD has a strong network of agencies and dedicated professionals working together to help those in need get back on their feet.

## Youth Supports

### Youth Against Violence Line: 1-800-680-4264

The Youth Against Violence Line is a safe, confidential and anonymous way for young people across BC to report crime or violent incidents, or to talk through any type of problem with a supportive person. We offer non judgmental support in many languages, and will provide you with options, information and referrals to services that can help.

Parents, teachers, caregivers, service providers and others can also call for information about youth-related resources.

### Youthspace.ca

Youth (under 25 years of age) may access youthspace.ca for online emotional support or text **778-783-0177**.

### Sanctuary Youth Centre: 250-385-6255

**Office hours are Tuesday 3 to 5 pm and 7 to 9 pm, Wednesday 3 to 5pm and 7 to 9 pm, Thursday 3 to 5 pm and 7 to 9 pm, and Friday 3 to 9 pm.**

Youth drop-in center aimed at youth who are isolated from mainstream society and/or living on the street. Provides tea& coffee, showers, food, and an artistic and recreational environment including musical instruments and pool tables etc, and community referral services.

## Indigenous Supports

### Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program: 250-384-3211

**Office hours are Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.**

Provides outreach services to individuals and families of Indigenous descent who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or difficult to house. Services include :advocacy; referral to community resources such as housing, income and/or rental assistance; and support related to tenancy, landlords, and property management. Serves Greater Victoria area.

### Victoria Native Friendship Centre: 250-384-3211

Aims to provide First Nations people with services and information designed to enhance traditional values and cultures. Includes a food box program, housing referrals, counseling, access to medical advice, and other referrals.

## Shelters

### Our Place Society: 919 Pandora Avenue, 250-388-7112

• Mat program, washrooms, food, showers and storage.

### Rock Bay Landing: 535 Ellice Street, 250-383-1951

• Shelter beds and showers (9:00 to 11:00 am, 1:00 to 3:00 pm daily)

### Salvation Army Addiction Recovery: 525 Johnson Street, 250-384-3396

• Shelter beds and community meals (12:45 to 1:45 pm Monday to Friday)

### Sandy Merriman House for Women: 809 Burdett Avenue, 250-480-1408

• Shelter beds. Residents will have access to showers, washrooms, laundry and food

### Mustard Seed Street Church & Food Bank: 625 Queens Avenue, 250-953-1575

• Food hampers (10 am to 1 pm Monday to Friday), lunch (12 pm Monday to Friday), clothing and portable toilet

Note that the numbers and organization names may change over time.

For the latest information and to get additional numbers and information, please visit **bc211.ca** or call **2-1-1**. Or connect directly with the The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness at 250-370-1512.

For emergencies or if a person seems to require urgent medical attention, dial **911**.

To access the Street Survival Guide visit: [victoriahomelessness.ca/get-help/street-survival-guide/](http://victoriahomelessness.ca/get-help/street-survival-guide/)






Together, we can  
**END HOMELESSNESS.**



# **“What to do if?”**

The question of how to help an individual experiencing homelessness in our community is not always an easy one, and while some general answers will be outlined, the best place to start is by remembering the humanity of each man or woman you see in a public place. Treat each and every person with dignity – but also follow your own instincts.

As a business owner, you always have the right to call emergency services like the Police if you feel a guest is being dangerous or overly disruptive to your place of work. But, we have provided some alternative options to reduce the likelihood of conflicts arising, to build trust and empathy, and to set a great example to your staff, customers, and colleagues





# “What to do if?”

## Business Owner

**Someone is sleeping outside of my business.**

**1.** Unless you feel that the situation is unsafe, establish a respectful relationship. Introduce yourself. Ask for the person's name or if they need assistance and have visited the Coalition or any other organization that helps individuals experiencing homelessness, you can print out and offer the person one of the Coalition's **Street Survival Guides**.

**2.** If you would like them to leave, ask using empathetic language or let them know where they can be, as opposed to only where they cannot be. For information about temporary sheltering in City of Victoria parks, visit **[victoria.ca/sheltering](https://victoria.ca/sheltering)**. To report a bylaw violation, contact Bylaw Services at **[bylawservices@victoria.ca](mailto:bylawservices@victoria.ca)** (7 days a week, 7 am to 4:30 pm) or call **250-361-0215** (weekdays, 8 am to 4:30 pm).

**3.** If you are still concerned about an individual's activity, or if they are not cooperative tell them you will call the police but would rather not. If you feel threatened call the Victoria Police Department's **non-emergency line** at **250-995-7654** or if they become disruptive or dangerous call **911**.

**I see someone collecting bottles from the trash.**

Many people rely on the income from bringing recyclables to redemption centers for their survival. Bringing in recyclables is good for the city, and it allows the person experiencing homelessness to earn some money. You can offer them your own recyclables to help.

**An individual is in my business. I'm worried that they are making my employees & customers uncomfortable because they are being loud, are dressed strangely, or seem off.**

If they purchase something, treat them like any other customer. This sets a great example for your employees and customers. If they do not make a purchase, let them know that your space is for customers. If they begin to become dangerous or disruptive ask them to leave clearly and respectfully. Your safety, and the safety of your employees and customers are your priority. If you are feeling unsafe call **911**.

# “What to do if?”

## Litter, Graffiti or Drug Paraphernalia Disposal

**I need help cleaning up litter and graffiti left at my business.**

**Weekday:** The City of Victoria is responsible for removing graffiti from public places such as City buildings, lamp standards, signs, and other public amenities. If you encounter litter or graffiti at your business contact the Downtown Victoria Business Association's Clean Team who compliment the City's efforts to keep our Downtown clean. Call them at **250-386-2238** from 8 am to 4 pm every weekday or report it online through the City's ConnectVictoria app. Find at **victoria.ca**

**Weekend:** If you encounter litter on the public portion of the sidewalk in front of your business, contact the City of Victoria: call Public Works at **250-361-0400** or report online by filling out a request. Find at **victoria.ca**.

**I found a needle in front of my business.**

If you see a discarded needle, you can choose to dispose of it yourself, or you can call for help. If you see uncapped needles in public areas, feel free to use the instructions provided by SOLID Outreach **[solidvictoria.org/outreach/if-you-find-a-needle/](https://solidvictoria.org/outreach/if-you-find-a-needle/)** or call them directly at **250-298-9497**. If it is found in the downtown core, call the DVBA's Clean Team for pickups, **250-386-2238**.

**I was poked by a hidden needle.**

If you have been poked by a needle or other sharp object that you suspect has been in contact with blood or a body fluid containing blood.

**IMMEDIATELY:**

Wash the affected body part with soap and water; Disinfect with an alcohol swab; Apply a band aid. Call VIHA Communicable Disease Program (weekdays 8:30 am to 4:30 pm) at **1-866- 665-6626** or go to the emergency room for assessment.

If the injury happens when you are at work, be sure to tell your immediate supervisor.



# “What to do if?”

Suspected Overdose - If you suspect an overdose, follow the SAVE ME steps.

**Overdose Safety - please consider having Naloxone Kits available at your business, and having you and your staff take Naloxone Kit training ([towardtheheart.com/naloxone-training](https://towardtheheart.com/naloxone-training)).**



**S - Stimulate.** Check if the person is responsive, can you wake them up? If they are unresponsive, call **911**. If you are alone, you can put the phone on speaker. Remember, you will not get in trouble if you call 9-1-1 for a suspected overdose.

**A - Airway.** Make sure there is nothing in the mouth blocking the airway, or stopping the person from breathing. Remove anything that is blocking the airway.

**V - Tentative.** Help them breathe. Plug the nose, tilt the head back and give one breath **every 5 seconds**.

**E - Evaluate.** Do you see any improvement? Are they breathing on their own? If not, prepare naloxone.

**M - Medication.** Inject one dose (1cc) of naloxone into a muscle. Learn more about naloxone and how to safely administer it at this link [towardtheheart.com/naloxone-training](https://towardtheheart.com/naloxone-training).

**E - Evaluate and Support.** Is the person breathing? Naloxone usually takes effect in 3-5 minutes. If the person is not awake in 5 minutes, give one more 1cc dose of naloxone.

It's important to stay with the person until they have woken up or emergency services have arrived. If you need to leave the person alone for any reason, place them into the **recovery position** before you leave to keep the airway clear and to prevent choking. [nhs.uk/conditions/first-aid/recovery-position/](https://nhs.uk/conditions/first-aid/recovery-position/).

**Sources:** Government of British Columbia - [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/overdose/what-you-need-to-know/responding-to-an-overdose](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/overdose/what-you-need-to-know/responding-to-an-overdose)



greater victoria  
coalition to end  
homelessness

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**hope has found a home**

211 - 611 Discovery st.  
Victoria, BC V8T 5G4  
[www.victoriahomelessness.ca](http://www.victoriahomelessness.ca)

For further information on the Greater Victoria Coalition  
to End Homelessness Society please contact us at:

250-370-1512  
[admin@victoriahomelessness.ca](mailto:admin@victoriahomelessness.ca)

or visit :  
[www.victoriahomelessness.ca](http://www.victoriahomelessness.ca)