

Hope and help for Victoria residents in mental health crisis

March 21, 2022 - Victoria - See Spring Mental Health Coalition

A new mental health organization is working to provide much-needed peer support services in Victoria. [See Spring Mental Wellness Coalition](#) was founded this year by a group of Victoria residents with lived experience—and a lot of frustration—navigating the city’s mental health services.

See Spring will offer non-medical crisis spaces to people in Victoria living with suicidal thoughts and other mental health challenges. These will include a warmline, a 24/7 drop-in crisis centre, and a respite house for longer stays—all run by peers with lived and living experience of mental illness, and based on models that have been successful elsewhere.

“Peer support is the key to creating excellent, safe, and meaningful support for people in crisis,” says Jenifer Wilson, See Spring’s policy director. “And it also takes the pressure off other supports.”

The goal is that with See Spring’s services, the community will benefit from reduced hospital waitlists, and the city will benefit from significant financial savings. And most importantly, people in crisis will get the support they need.

See Spring’s plans have been enthusiastically endorsed by the CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association’s BC arm, and by the Executive Director of Island Community Mental Health.

“We want to collaborate with existing services,” says mental health advocate Shaely Ritchey. “This will be a midstream option that provides comfortable support for individuals in distress.” See Spring won’t take the place of emergency services, and will be in close contact with them as needed. “This will support those who are struggling and have experienced serious harm, individually and systemically, in traditional healthcare settings.”

[See Spring is currently raising funds](#) to get resources in place as quickly as possible.

Ritchey is optimistic: “In the end we all have the same goal, to better care for people in crisis.”

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