

Laying Our Foundation For Success

STRATEGIC PLAN

June 2022



Land Acknowledgement

We recognize with gratitude that this document was authored on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples — the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh* (Squamish), and *Səlilwətaʔ* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Further, we are grateful to live, work and be in relationship with First Nations from across many traditional and unceded territories, covering all regions of what is colonially known as British Columbia.

We are honored to be uninvited guests on this land and acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of First Nations and are committed to reconciliation, decolonization, providing services and building relationships with communities.

BCEHS — Who We Are and Our Unique Context

B.C. Emergency Health Services (BCEHS), one of the largest paramedic and ambulance services in North America, is part of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). BCEHS provides provincial emergency call-taking, dispatch, and paramedic healthcare services under the *Emergency Health Services Act* to all people in British Columbia.

BCEHS is also responsible for the planning and coordination of inter-facility patient transfers that require paramedic care as well as the community paramedicine program, which provides scheduled care to patients living with chronic health conditions in remote and rural communities across British Columbia.

While our focus is providing excellent health care, we work with our health authority, first responder and other public safety colleagues. BCEHS provides services in all weather conditions and across a vast and highly diverse geography, from remote fly-in communities to coastal and mountainous regions, and in both rural and urban areas of the province.

One of the Most Challenging Times in Our History

The last two years have been the most challenging times for all healthcare providers in all contexts. The **international COVID-19 pandemic** created incredible pressures on healthcare systems and frontline healthcare providers, including paramedics. Highly contagious variants became the norm, while our employees rose to the occasion and supported the rollout of the vaccination program. In parallel to the COVID-19 pandemic, more acute **drug toxicity deaths** were recorded in B.C. than any other year, putting additional strain on our front-line employees.

In the context of simultaneous public health emergencies, the province saw **record temperatures never seen before**. This led to an **unprecedented increase in calls**, again increasing pressure on paramedics — and the entire healthcare system. The **extreme heat wave** set the stage for one of the worst wildfire seasons we have seen, and unfortunately included the destruction of the **Village of Lytton**. In addition, in the fall of 2021, a series of **atmospheric rivers** brought record rain fall to southern B.C., causing extreme **flooding and landslides**.



During this time, core foundational cracks in our systems were revealed. These challenges are real and we acknowledge the significant impacts on staff. Despite these challenges, front line care providers have continued to provide excellent services to their communities. This strategic plan strives to address our foundational cracks and improve how we support our front-line employees and the patient care we provide.

Vision

BCEHS is a place where we care for the people who work here. Employees at BCEHS feel pride in the work they do together and feel supported to provide the highest quality, evidence informed emergency care, interfacility transfers, and community services to all patients.

Purpose

BCEHS brings compassionate, equitable, and professional emergency care, interfacility transfers, and community healthcare services to people in communities across British Columbia.

We Believe in...

- + Creating the conditions for employees to thrive – to learn, be healthy and effectively apply their professional expertise to do work they are proud of.
- + Providing high quality and timely emergency and community health care to meet the unique needs of patients and their families.
- + Collaborating and coordinating with partners across healthcare systems to provide people the right care at the right time, the first time.
- + Meaningfully consulting and partnering with communities to understand and better meet their needs to ensure equity as well as cultural safety and humility.
- + Using evidence-informed decision making to support a learning organization that drives quality as well as innovative and sustainable systems of care.



Building the Foundation for Success

This strategic plan will build our foundation over the next three years by focussing on supporting staff at BCEHS, improving access and quality care, making resource and system improvements, and creating a robust 10-year plan with staff, patient and stakeholder input.

The plan is grounded in four strategic priorities, each with specific goals and actions. This foundational plan will result in detailed operational plans which will set targets, establish timelines and be the basis of the accountability and reporting progress.

Ultimately, BCEHS is seeking to be an organization which has an excellent reputation for supporting those who work here to achieve their best, and to be world-renowned for our evidenced based commitment to cultural safety and humility, and innovative models of patient care. This plan, and the associated actions, are the vital first steps.

Strategic Priority: Improve Access and Quality

Patients and families in need of BCEHS services should expect timely high-quality care, wherever they are across the province. We will continually make improvements in the quality of care we provide while aggressively expanding our capacity to deliver care. Patients and families will be active participants in decision making and planning at BCEHS.

Goal: Implement a Quintuple Aim Quality Strategy with Staff, Patients, Families, and System Partners

BCEHS is committed to continuously improving the care we provide to patients across British Columbia and taking a 'Quintuple Aim' approach to do so. We are working to improve the way we gather and utilize data and feedback about our services, to achieve improvements in (1) health outcomes, (2) provider satisfaction, (3) financial efficiency, (4) experience of care, and (5) health equity for all.

Central to all our work on quality is our focus on supporting staff at BCEHS and including their voice in quality improvement initiatives. This work will include a particular focus on reconciliation, Indigenous cultural safety and anti-Indigenous racism.

In addition, we will have an increased focus on partnering with patients and other community, government, and health system stakeholders to ensure our planning and improvements are in alignment with our system partners, and supportive of meeting patient needs. We are committed to reporting back on how data, input and feedback has been used to support positive changes.

Goal: Improve Response Times in Urban B.C.

BCEHS will continue to increase the capacity to provide care by increasing the number of paramedics, call takers, and dispatch staff able to respond in a timely manner to patients in urban and metro settings across the province. This will ensure timely and appropriate care can be provided and support improved workloads for paramedics and our teams in dispatch.



Goal: Improve Service Levels in Rural and Remote B.C.

BCEHS is moving towards sustainment of the provincial government's Rural, Remote, First Nations, and Indigenous COVID-19 Response Framework and continuing to make improvements to staffing models. BCEHS will employ an equity-first lens to ensure effective and timely care is provided across the province. This work will result in a sustainable and foundational lift to service levels across the province, improve our interfacility transport capabilities, increase the number of acute care paramedics in rural and remote communities, and advance our engagement in First Nations and Indigenous communities.

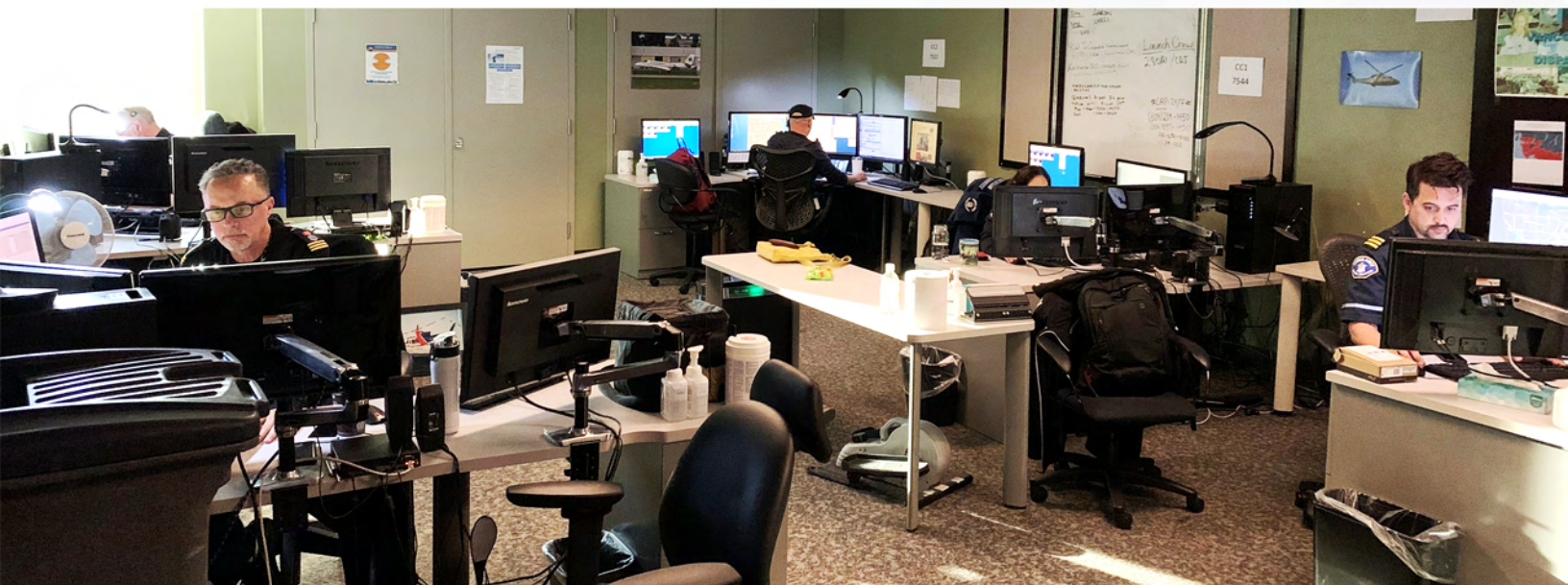
Goal: Develop Innovative Models for Non-Urgent Patients

Increasing our system capacity is an essential but partial answer to the significant increase in service demands. Nearly half of patients require our support for low-acuity care. We will work with our partners to develop innovative models to better support the needs of all our patients, including those who do not require immediate intervention, improving efficiency in connecting patients to the right type of care for their condition. This will include introducing novel ways of assessing care needs, innovative pathways to access care, and providing alternative clinical options other than the emergency department. BCEHS will also develop and execute a public awareness campaign to improve general knowledge of appropriate 911 usage and other care options available to patients.

Building on our innovations, we will review and grow the community paramedicine program to ensure the care we provide is optimized and of benefit to more people across British Columbia.

Goal: Make Improvements to Our Ability to Provide Interfacility Transports

Not all healthcare services are offered in all communities and during the pandemic, it became even more clear that a high functioning interfacility transportation system is an essential element of a responsive healthcare system. BCEHS will make improvements to the interfacility transport system based on data and stakeholder input, to ensure there is a high-functioning, reliable service.



Strategic Priority: Improve Recruitment, Retention, Employee Wellbeing and Engagement to Enable Success

Exceptional emergency and community patient care is our responsibility, and we know that our employees are at the core of delivering on that promise to patients. As part of the three-year plan, BCEHS will focus on improving staffing levels and supports. Supports will include a focus on mental and physical wellbeing, streamlined business systems and processes, and building a culture that fosters anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, and equity. We will take actions that are tangible and measurable to ensure we are an employer of choice, and that employees at BCEHS are healthy and well supported.



Goal: Improve Mental Health Supports

Due to the nature of the work, paramedics, emergency call takers and dispatchers are exposed to and experience a disproportionate incidence of mental health injuries. Working collaboratively with our partners, we will put a plan in place to make key improvements to prevent and reduce mental health injuries, utilize meaningful and supportive work to accommodate injured employees, and increase positive mental health. This work will be based on trauma informed practice and Indigenous cultural safety.

Goal: Improve and Expand Programs for Employees at BCEHS to Keep Them Physically Well, Support Recovery, and Return to Work

BCEHS will reduce injuries caused on the job and improve processes to better support staff in becoming well again as soon as possible when they are injured. We will continue to look for additional ways to support employees with physical injuries and put systems in place to keep them connected and supported until they can return to their regular work.

Goal: Identify and Eliminate Systemic Causes of Racism, Sexism, and Discrimination

BCEHS will have an external review of our culture, to identify any systemic issues related to racism, discrimination, harassment, or barriers to equity, and will take action to address the recommendations of the review. We will ensure that workplace and service complaints are properly and promptly investigated.

Goal: BCEHS Employees Play a Role in Shaping the Future of BCEHS and are Recognized for Their Expertise and Valuable Contributions

BCEHS employees will be asked to provide their input into planning the future of BCEHS, including contributing to planning for new initiatives and programs. BCEHS will ensure that employees are recognized and celebrated for the excellent service they provide to British Columbians. We will work together to promote the profession, create a professional environment, and ensure public understanding and trust in our emergency and community service is strengthened.

Goal: Improve Business Systems and Processes

Efficient and effective business systems and processes support our employees' satisfaction and improve transparency throughout the organization. BCEHS, with our PHSA business partners, will drive to improve processes such as scheduling, payroll, and employee records/benefits to make meaningful improvements.

Goal: Hire Staff to Meet Service Demands

We need to support current employees and patient care by augmenting our staffing levels. With our commitment to equity and diversity, we will recruit locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally to ensure we have the broadest pool possible of qualified recruits that show our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. A central focus will be ensuring Indigenous cultural safety in how we recruit staff. Novel as well as tried and true recruitment methods will be used to ensure we reach the right audiences while also raising the profile of a career of paramedicine in British Columbia. BCEHS will play an active leadership role in addressing challenges related to recruitment and retention.

Goal: Invest in Development of BC's Paramedics, Emergency Dispatch Staff and Leaders

Evidence from within B.C. and Canada demonstrates that a nimble approach to training people in communities nearer where they work, live and play supports recruitment and retention. Staff at BCEHS will have exciting opportunities to grow in career paths, including mentorship. BCEHS will work with system partners to expand regional and local training opportunities to overcome workforce shortages being faced across healthcare, including paramedicine. Career ladders and leadership development programs will be enhanced to ensure the next generation of leaders are better prepared for the challenges.

Strategic Priority: Develop an Indigenous Health Strategy

Addressing Indigenous racism and discrimination is essential for BCEHS. Building upon the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's: Calls to Action and the In Plain Sight report, and in alignment with the Rural, Remote, First Nations, and Indigenous COVID-19 Response Framework, BCEHS recognizes inequities in care provided to First Nations and Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia.



BCEHS is committed to taking tangible action to ensuring that culturally appropriate care is provided to Indigenous patients and their families. BCEHS will engage meaningfully with communities to develop and implement our organization's first Indigenous Health Strategy, to ensure each person who asks for care or services from BCEHS is treated with respect, dignity, and compassion. We commit to ensuring inclusive hiring practices and providing meaningful employment opportunities at all levels of the organization.

Goal: Develop and Implement BCEHS' First Indigenous Health Strategy

With our partners in communities, BCEHS will develop and implement an Indigenous health strategy. The strategy will be developed at the pace of meaningful partnership and will set the path forward on how BCEHS will contribute to reconciliation. Our work will build on foundational documents, including:

- + Creating the conditions for employees to thrive — to learn, be healthy and effectively apply their professional expertise to do work they are proud of.
- + Providing high quality and timely emergency and community health care to meet the unique needs of patients and their families.
- + Collaborating and coordinating with partners across healthcare systems to provide people the right care at the right time, the first time.
- + Meaningfully consulting and partnering with communities to understand and better meet their needs to ensure equity as well as cultural safety and humility.
- + Using evidence-informed decision making to support a learning organization that drives quality as well as innovative and sustainable systems of care.

Through engagement with our partners, including FNHA and Indigenous community health leadership, BCEHS will provide interfacility transportation, emergency care, and community services with core principles of equity, cultural safety and humility for Indigenous peoples in B.C.

Goal: Increase Meaningful Engagement with Indigenous Communities

We will work to expand and improve our partnerships and relationships with Indigenous communities, ensuring their voices are heard and play a key role in decision making. Central to this will include increasing our capacity to engage in a meaningful way, while working to create safe spaces to identify opportunities for improvements.

Goal: Ensure Every Person and Family Who Asks for Care or Services is Treated with Respect, Dignity and Compassion

Every interaction in BCEHS will be free from Indigenous-based racism. Policies and education will be reviewed to ensure we drive toward respectful care based in quality with a focus on equity. We will continue to enhance our process for Indigenous patient file reviews and complaints.



Goal: Improve Equitable Access to Appropriate Services in First Nation and Indigenous Communities

New models to better support care in Indigenous communities will be trialed and scaled as appropriate. We will work to strengthen the collaboration between BCEHS, regional health authorities, and the First Nations Health Authority in the emergency transport of patients to higher levels of care with a particular emphasis on rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

Strategic Priority: Create a 10-Year Plan for BCEHS, with an Aligned Capital Infrastructure Strategy

This plan is focused on creating a stable foundation. There are some actions that can be taken in the next three years to improve our foundation with respect to key infrastructure; however, there are more significant systems and infrastructure changes will need to be made over the next 10 years to realize our vision of becoming a world leader in emergency services. At BCEHS, services have developed organically, responding to the population growth and needs over time.

Over the next three years, we will be looking at our service delivery models and using best practice research, looking at the innovative changes we need to implement over time to be a sustainable, world-class provider. This will have associated infrastructure needs to ensure our buildings and transports are located and are designed to support a world-class service.

In consultation with our employees, key system partners and patients, we will consider the long-term system and infrastructure requirements, and develop a detailed plan for ensuring that BCEHS can provide exceptional community and emergency services to British Columbia. This plan will become the road map for our efforts and investments going forward.

Goal: Develop a 10-Year Strategic Plan

Building on the foundation set forward in this plan, we will deliver a long-term strategic plan to ensure BCEHS is a world leader in emergency care, interfacility transfer, and community health services. Meaningful public and patient engagement through the planning process is vital to charting a future that meets the needs of British Columbia. Careful monitoring and ongoing planning with our partners in community, health authorities, patients and BCEHS employees will guide the future of our organization.



Goal: Plan and Execute a 10-Year Infrastructure Plan

A comprehensive and long-term organization and facilities strategy will enable BCEHS to review current state operations relative to the existing facilities portfolio and determine a strategic framework for transforming our operations. We will actively seek meaningful partnerships to drive our future planning.

The long-term plan will assess existing conditions, locations, and project future demand, in order to set the vision for how infrastructure needs will better support operational requirements. This organizational goal will secure regularized capital budgets to ensure assets are replaced, upgraded, and refurbished ensuring optimal performance during their lifespan.

Goal: Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Through the Introduction of New Vehicles and Technologies

BCEHS operates one of the largest ambulance fleets in North America with a vehicle fleet of 866 vehicles. BCEHS is committed to decarbonizing operations and has affirmed this commitment by signing on to the West Coast Fleet Electric Pledge in early 2022. We will start onboarding light-duty electric vehicles into the BCEHS support vehicle fleet and strive to meet the B.C. Government's CleanBC targets. BCEHS will identify opportunities to install new electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure at multiple facilities to support the decarbonization of the transportation system within B.C.

Goal: Routine Facility and Asset Refreshment

While the status of BCEHS facilities is variable from community to community, most sites in the province will benefit from capital upgrades to better support care provision (increasing sheltered ambulances to decrease the variance of temperatures of pharmaceuticals onboard) and the comfort of workplace experience (replacing dated equipment and infrastructure), as well as ensuring we are meeting national accreditation standards.

Building On The Foundation

Our goal with this plan is to create a strong, stable foundation and a shared understanding of our organizational priorities. With the outlined goals and actions, we expect to see improvements in our quality indicators, in particular with respect to access. The plan places great emphasis on supporting employees at BCEHS and creating more robust staffing models, with the aim of improving their satisfaction and health, and hopefully in turn improving recruitment and retention.

Finally, at the end of this three-year plan, we should be well positioned to launch our 10-year strategy for BCEHS to strive to be a world leader in the provision of emergency and community services, including a detailed plan for sustainability.

As the world and the communities we serve continue to shift and change, we will continue to work with BCEHS employees and partners to develop and deliver a detailed action plan flowing from this strategic plan with clear deliverables, timelines, and measures to demonstrate, track and publicly report on our successes and challenges.

