



Abbotsford Police Department

2838 Justice Way, Abbotsford, BC V2T 3P5 Phone (604)859-5225 Fax (604)859-2527

Chief Constable Mike Serr

"Protecting with Pride"

NEWS RELEASE

Police Partner in initiative combatting the opioid crisis- Project Angel

The Abbotsford Opioid Working Group received a grant from the Province of British Columbia to fund 'Project Angel', an initiative aimed at combatting the opioid crisis. Project Angel works closely with community groups within Abbotsford and Fraser Health.

Project Angel is managed by an AbbyPD Police Officer (Cst. Ian MacDonald) and a paid Peer Support Coordinator (Kiah Ashley). The Peer Support Coordinator receives client referrals from first responders (police, fire and ambulance), community support agencies, the client's family and friends - and often the client themselves. The Peer Support Coordinator then connects the client needing help with a Peer Support Worker – in most cases within a matter of hours. Once the connection has been made, the Peer Support Worker provides support and facilitates access to resources.

"A sustained, coordinated and concentrated effort is required to defeat this continuing crisis in our communities. Collaborative interventions, like Project Angel, help rapidly mobilize services and are standout examples of police departments taking leadership on the ground - in this case prioritizing the need to connect the most vulnerable people to the treatment and the care they need," says Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

The Project Angel Peer Support Coordinator and all of the Peer Support Workers are persons with lived experience and significant connections to Abbotsford. This background provides them with credibility with the individuals they are assisting, as well as knowledge of the region and the resources available.

Our Mission:

To make Abbotsford the safest city in B.C.

“I am so grateful for the pioneering work Project Angel is doing to help connect people to treatment and recovery in Abbotsford,” said Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “Peers have been integral to our ongoing response to the overdose crisis and they are uniquely qualified to help people living with addictions along their pathway to hope and healing.”

Inspector Casey Vinet, Officer in Charge of the Operations Support Branch, states “We are pleased to support the Project Angel initiative. Helping at-risk individuals improve their lives by connecting them to much-needed services is important and rewarding work”.

Project Angel staff is provided with resource manuals, cellular phones, first aid kits, naloxone kits, blankets and business cards - all carried in a bright-orange, easily-identifiable backpack (photo attached).



“This is an important initiative that connects people involved with police to people with lived experience, and through engagement and dialogue, to substance use services in a seamless manner,” says Stanley Kuperis, Director for Mental Health and Substance Use at Fraser Health. “This is an example of how partnerships with first responders, Fraser Health and the City of Abbotsford can make a direct impact on people’s lives by responding in a practical way to the ongoing opioid crisis.”

The objective of the program is to connect with people who have needs and challenges, and to encourage them toward positive pathways. These connections are created within the context of a relationship; AbbyPD recognizes that often multiple contacts must occur before a client accepts help and begins to make positive changes in their life. Since the launch of the program on November 26, 2018, Project Angel has received over 200 unique referrals, and currently has dozens of continuing/active clients.

Sgt. Judy Bird.....	Phone (604) 864-4899
Abbotsford Police Public Information Officer	pio@abbypd.ca
2838 Justice Way, Abbotsford, BC V2T 3P5	Fax: (604) 859-2527

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