

Current state, challenges, and successes of compassionate communities in British Columbia

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The compassionate community (CC) concept is one way to apply the public health approach to palliative care. This approach has gained global recognition for mitigating challenges common with serious illnesses such as social isolation and access to psychosocial supports closer to home. A CC is a community of people taking an active role in supporting those affected by a serious health challenge, caregiving, dying, or experiencing grief. This can be done through connecting people to supports, raising awareness about end-of-life issues, and building supportive networks in the community.

BC's compassionate communities are the first provincial movement to spark in Canada. In spring 2016, the movement started through a seed grant program launched by BC Centre for Palliative Care to inspire, engage, and empower community organizations to initiate, sustain, or expand a CC initiative. To date, the program has supported over 100 compassionate communities across BC with seed funding, training, resources, coaching, and networking.

In this presentation, we will share the results of a study conducted in 2021 to identify current CC activities in BC, successes achieved, existing resources, supports needed to overcome challenges, and inspiring ideas for new CC initiatives. This information was collected from not-for-profit organizations in BC through an online survey followed by in-depth interviews.

These results will inform the efforts in BC and other jurisdictions to foster the spread of the compassionate communities movement across Canada. Furthermore, the results are expected to enhance public and healthcare providers' awareness and utilization of existing community supports in BC.