

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 7, 2023

File: 195-20

CLIFF: 1065114

To: All BCEHS Staff

Re: Culture Review and Progress Update

Sent on behalf of Leanne Heppell, BCEHS EVP & Chief Ambulance Officer

As part of my commitment to regularly update you on actions we are taking to make BCEHS workplaces safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive of the mental and physical health and well-being of our employees, I am pleased to be able to share the external culture review done last year and offer an update on the progress that has been made on several initiatives that are fundamental to making improvements in our organization.

It's important to note that the report has been lightly redacted to ensure that sensitive and personal information that could have identified employees has been removed. The themes identified in the review served as one of the catalysts for the actions we have been taking to implement the culture and system changes we shared with you in our two recent updates to staff.

Experiences shared by BCEHS employees in the review and with me directly included examples of workplace bullying, sexual harassment, and racist attitudes and conduct. For people in a profession like ours — devoted to caring for others when they are at their most vulnerable — these behaviours have been difficult to experience, to see, and to hear about from colleagues and friends.

Now we are moving ahead — we are ensuring that those who need support receive it and have started laying the groundwork for the systemic changes that are needed. Sharing the report will help everyone, at every level of the organization, understand why it is essential we make improvements to ensure our workplaces are safe, respectful and inclusive.

Since the review, we have acted on many of the areas identified as needing action:

- We have strengthened our employee recognition and appreciation efforts, hiring a dedicated leader for Recognition, celebrating all four missed recognition ceremonies due to the pandemic, and focusing senior leadership efforts to regularly meet with staff across the province in person to both thank them and listen to their concerns and ideas for improvement.
- We have focused leadership on culture change, with regular reporting on progress in key areas to a committee of the BCEHS and PHSA boards and two special advisors guiding our work.
- We are working with these special advisors to develop a BCEHS People Strategy. The strategy sets out timelines, identifies accountabilities, and articulates clear roles for those involved in leading the work. This robust three-year plan will be shared as part of a comprehensive consultation process that will be rolled out this summer.

- We will have, for the first time in BCEHS history, a dedicated team that will support our efforts to improve our culture. This includes a Chief, People, Diversity and Equity position that we are in the final stages of hiring; an Executive Director, Employee Experience, who started in this new position in May; a Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position that is being finalized; a Director Mental Health; and a Manager of Recognition and Retention positions, both which are filled. As this team builds, we will see significant progress in areas critical to our growth and improvement as a caring, learning, safe and inclusive workplace.
- We have strengthened the HR team and ensured they have best practice training in handling sensitive workplace investigations effectively.
- We have improved our hiring practices, to ensure they are inclusive and that we are recruiting using diverse hiring panels.
- We are in the process of implementing training in conflict resolution for all leaders, to help them confront inappropriate behaviours effectively and address their negative impacts. This training will be expanded to all employees as part of a broader training and leadership improvement component of the People Strategy.

There is much more work underway, as you will see when the People Strategy consultation process begins in the coming weeks. We are intent on rebuilding BCEHS in the areas that are key to ensuring all employees are safe, supported and able to excel.

I want to assure you that there is a strong commitment to change at all levels, and that the necessary actions are being taken. That is something we can feel good about and hold onto as we lean into the heavy lifting that remains. We will get it done. Together.

Thanks to all of you who have committed to this work and continue to share your experiences as we push forward. Our dedicated phone line remains available at **1-877-522-1590** for anyone experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment, bullying, or discrimination.

I look forward to sharing the People Strategy and will continue to provide regular updates on our progress in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Leanne Heppell
Executive Vice President and Chief Ambulance Officer
BC Emergency Health Services
Provincial Health Services Authority