

UMBRELLA REPORT

2021-2022



OUR MISSION

Umbrella demonstrates excellence in the development and delivery of innovative and unique services to support individuals and their loved ones struggling with substance use issues.

OUR VISION

Umbrella demonstrates excellence in the development and delivery of innovative and unique services to support individuals and their loved ones struggling with substance use issues.

OUR DEFINING VALUES

Diversity

Leadership

Equity

Trust

Inclusion

Hope

Respect

Full Access

Empowerment

Partnerships

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WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

Like the rest of the world, the pandemic turned Umbrella upside down. We had to change and adapt our programs to continue to support those who desperately needed it.

While navigating the COVID 19 situation we were also trying to ramp up our supports to tackle the overdose crisis that has taken the lives of thousands of British Columbians. We know that isolation fuels addiction, so the COVID mandates were working against those struggling with addiction.

To create connection, Umbrella created many new programs and developed new and helpful partnerships. Some examples are our Concurrent Outreach Support Team (COST), a partnership with Connections Place for individuals with both substance use and mental health issues, and Hammer Time, a group for those who work in the trades and need addiction support; a partnership with Vancouver Island Construction Association (VICA).

Umbrella also wanted to increase access to our services. To accomplish that we began working with a local pharmacy to deliver medication and support right to the client's door, which is a great opportunity to provide continuity of care. We also increased our staffing to seven days a week in both the emergency department and psychiatric emergency services in Royal Jubilee Hospital. Umbrella also expanded our reach with new outreach teams like our Indigenous Outreach Team and a few new short and long-term outreach teams.

Through the pandemic we learned that many participants enjoyed connecting online, while others preferred in person, so Umbrella changed the way we provided our services, like offering our groups a hybrid model.

The past few years have been our busiest to date, but Umbrella is proud of how responsive and effective we were during a very uncertain and often frightening time for so many.

A photograph of a person's arm with a large tattoo, wearing a blue t-shirt, washing dishes in a kitchen sink. The sink is set into a speckled granite countertop. The background is slightly blurred, showing a typical kitchen environment.

HOUSING

Those leaving residential treatment often find themselves vulnerable to relapse because they are no longer compelled to attend groups and meetings, see counsellors, read addiction-related literature, or practice the tools of recovery.

Umbrella's three supportive recovery houses, Foundation, Cooper and Potter offer a solution to this problem by keeping individuals accountable to their recovery while providing a safe place to gradually transition back to full independence.

The guiding philosophy behind Umbrella supportive recovery is community-building: as the residents progress to independence, they also learn to communicate, to collaborate, to resolve conflicts effectively. As a result, they tend to form enduring, supportive bonds and close friendships that extend well beyond their time at Umbrella.

"It is with great appreciation that I express my gratitude toward the Umbrella staff, and specifically the Foundation House. The contributions of both staff and residents alike provided me with the guidance and structure necessary for me to find my way in early recovery.

Most importantly, it is through the Foundation House that I found a true sense of belonging, one that can only be found through hard work, fellowship, and accountability. Having the opportunity to live in a safe environment during a very important yet complicated time in my life is something that I will always be grateful for.

As I move forward with my life in recovery, I can undoubtedly say that the Foundation House will always have a special place in my heart. Thank you!."

- Bill





OUTREACH

Umbrella outreach offers one-on-one support to those in the community struggling with substance use issues.

Our community-based philosophy to outreach led us to create teams which answer both the general and specialized needs of those in addiction. In this way, we are able to meet those in addiction where they are at, and when they fall into crisis. Whether a client is hospitalized, is struggling with their mental health, has just suffered an overdose, is involved in the criminal justice system, is a youth, or just generally needs help, Umbrella has an outreach worker or team ready to make a vital connection.

Staffed by those either deeply impacted by addiction, or in recovery, our outreach have 'been there' and can relate closely to client experiences. From being an empathetic ear, to offering guidance, to navigating local mental health and addiction supports, our outreach workers provide a vital link between the isolated world of addiction, and the connected realm of recovery.

"I have spent years battling my drinking and cocaine use, but I was always able to keep it at a somewhat manageable place. I held down a steady job, I had a nice enough place, I had a girlfriend, but when Covid hit, it was a recipe for disaster. I started working from home and had every excuse not to see my friends and family. This is when things really got out of hand for me. Drinking had fully taken over.

A friend of mine had mentioned Umbrella Society as a great resource so I gave them a call. It was the best decision I ever made. Before long I was attached to an outreach worker, and we met regularly for coffee where we created a plan for tackling my addiction.

I wouldn't be here without the support of my Umbrella worker. He was there every step of the way. He talked me off the cliff when I wrote myself off and wanted to give up.

I have hope, health, and a sense of purpose. I am forever grateful for the help and Umbrella."

- Alexander





COUNSELLING

Counselling is considered a vital element of recovery, and a very useful adjunct to any recovery program. For this reason, Umbrella offers counselling to anyone in the community struggling with substance use issues. Further, in recognition of the fact addiction is a 'family disease,' we also provide counselling to loved ones struggling to cope with a member's using or drinking.

Our family counselling is provided by a Registered Clinical Counselor with decades of clinical experience, and a lengthy tenure with Umbrella. He also provides individual counselling to residents of Umbrella housing sites, and supervises the Masters' students who fulfil their practicum requirements by counselling community members with substance use issues.

Individual counselling is provided for free, and family counselling is by donation. No client is refused for lack of funds.

"I was worried about my child's addiction and was not sleeping or taking care of myself. It was hard to create healthy boundaries and I didn't want to go the "tough love" approach, but I didn't know what else to do.

A friend told me about Umbrella so I emailed them and they responded right away with some options for one-on-one counselling. After several counselling sessions I was starting to feel more confident with setting boundaries and supporting other family members with the same approach. I also learned more about addiction and the brain which helped me to understand how difficult it was for my child to stop using.

I have continued my learning by attending support groups for family members and I still reach out to my counsellor when I need extra support.

I am pleased to add that I was able to encourage my child to connect with Umbrella and that alone has helped me sleep better at night."

- Elizabeth





GROUPS

Groups are an asset to recovery because they supply much-needed education and support. Their greatest value, however, is their ability to foster connection, which is strongly considered vital to sobriety. This sense of connection is enhanced when groups address a specific need and/or demographic so that participants experience a common bond beyond that of addiction. Acknowledging this, Umbrella hosts groups for those with anxiety, tradespeople, women, LGBTQ2S+, family members, and those with behavioural addictions.

Other offerings include a gratitude group, a weekly check-in, and a connection group. Further, Umbrella hosts a very popular four-week, intensive outpatient program, Comfortably Un-Numb, which covers topics critical to progress in early recovery.

"After 20 years of active addiction, I had lost countless relationships, had not been able to hold down a job for over a decade, and I had nobody to lean on, I was alone.

In January 2022 I decided I was done with living my life this way and I was willing to do anything to make a change, however I had no idea how to do that. I reached out to Umbrella and explained my situation, I didn't know what I was looking for, but I knew I needed something.

It was suggested to me that I sign up for a group called Comfortably Un-Numb, so I did. I went through this 4 week, outpatient recovery program that was held in person. Comfortably Un-numb provided me with structure and routine, the opportunity to explore areas of my life I had never looked at before, and most importantly it gave me a chance to build a community for myself.

I had spent so many years alone in isolation and I now feel connected and have a sense of community. I keep in contact with fellow group participants, and I recommend this group to anyone who is in early recovery."

- Joseph



OUR FUTURE

We at Umbrella are looking towards the future with excitement, focus and hope.

We've heard loud and clear from the community that there is a need for more Umbrella everything! More recovery houses, a transitional recovery facility, and an expansion to our current slate of programs, groups and services are just a few of the tasks we are preparing to undertake in the coming years.

Umbrella is committed to being the voice of recovery. We will continue to champion the needs, rights and stories of individuals, and their loved ones bravely trying to navigate the very broken addiction system.

Together, we will bring hope back to our community.



Without community support, Umbrella would not be able to help as many people as we do. We are so fortunate to have generous community members who donate to Umbrella to help us with our important work. Thank you all for directing your donations to Umbrella.

It is with gratitude we thank the following funders and partners for their support of the work we do.



The Angels
Government of Canada
Island Health
Ministry of Social Development and
Poverty Reduction
Sutherland Foundation
United Way
Victoria Community Action Team

City of Victoria
Harbourside Rotary
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem
Knights Hospitaller
Telus
Vancouver Island Construction Association
Victoria Foundation

REMARKS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In my 14 years with Umbrella, I don't recall a more exciting time than right now. As we slowly and cautiously open our world up after a long hibernation, I cannot help but reflect on the past few years. COVID forced organizations, like Umbrella, to change some of the services they offered and the ways they were offered. Umbrella came out of COVID bigger, better, and stronger. We have had unprecedented growth since 2020, and with this growth we have created more ways to connect with individuals who need substance use and mental health supports. We have crafted new programs, grown our partnerships, increased our group offerings and opened new recovery housing. In the face of two health crisis's, Umbrella is working harder, building connections, and strengthening our community. However, none of the work we are doing would be possible without our resilient and hardworking team, our supportive board of directors and our generous funders, partners, and donors. Thank you all for your commitment to Umbrella. I am honoured to lead this amazing organization.



Sharlene Law, Executive Director

REMARKS FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



I am so proud of the work Umbrella has accomplished this past year. It has been another year of unpredictable developments and stops and starts with the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also been another year enduring the tragic effects of the ongoing drug toxicity crisis. Amidst these circumstances, Umbrella continues to deliver services to those who need them – creatively and compassionately. The Umbrella team has grown exponentially, as have the opportunities to work in partnership with other organizations and to be a leading voice in the field in our region. The success of Umbrella has many factors. Our tireless, innovative Executive Director Sharlene continues to build for the future. Every single employee of Umbrella is a strong representative of the organization in the community. Our board of directors, volunteers, donors, and funders ensure we can do the work we do. And finally, Umbrella's clients inspire us every day and remind us that healing is possible. Recovery is possible.

Alison James, Board Chair



To our staff and Board of Directors, thank you for choosing to spend your time, energy, and passion with Umbrella . We appreciate each and every one on the Umbrella team for their valuable commitment to our clients, residents and each other.

A huge thank you to our residents and clients for reaching out for help and trusting Umbrella to be a part of your journey.

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**Front cover picture features resident James and Foundation House dog, Lyca.*