



MHPSS Bulletin: February

A bulletin to connect people, networks, and organizations across British Columbia, fostering the sharing of resources and building knowledge in the field of mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings. Past issues of the bulletin and recordings of Lunch and Learn webinars will be available on our website using the button below.

[Provincial Psychosocial Services](#)

Education & Learning Opportunities

Public Online Courses (Free) by Provincial Psychosocial Services

- [Psychological First Aid for Professionals](#)

PFA is intended mainly for DPS members but may be accessed by other helping professionals interested in learning more about PFA.

- [Supporting Well-being Through Deployments](#)

Provides information that anyone deploying might find helpful for managing stress before, during, and after the deployment.

[Shareable document with QR codes](#)

All courses and trainings listed in this Bulletin are voluntary and intended to provide additional learning opportunities. They do not replace or fulfill any mandatory training requirements set by an organization.

Note: *The January MHPSS Bulletin listed a course, Introduction to Emergency Social Services. Please note that this course is intended exclusively for Disaster Psychosocial Support (DPS) members and is not designed to replace or complement the similarly named Introduction to Emergency Social Services course required for ESS volunteers.*

Wellness Exchange Series

The Wellness Exchange consists of five one-hour interactive workshops designed to support mental and emotional well-being.

[Register here](#) for Wellness Exchange or read more information in this [flyer](#) (PDF).

- Problem Solving
 - Tuesday, March 11, 2025: 7-8pm (PST)
 - Thursday, March 13, 2025: 12-1pm (PST)
- Positive Activities
 - Tuesday, March 18, 2025: 7-8pm (PST)
 - Thursday, March 20, 2025: 12-1pm (PST)
- Managing Reactions
 - Tuesday, March 25, 2025: 7-8pm (PST)
 - Thursday, March 27, 2025: 12-1pm (PST)
- Helpful Thinking
 - Tuesday, April 1, 2025: 7-8pm (PST)
 - Thursday, April 3, 2025: 12-1pm (PST)
- Healthy Connections
 - Tuesday, April 8, 2025: 7-8pm (PST)
 - Thursday, April 10, 2025: 12-1pm (PST)

Free Webinar

The Provincial Psychosocial Services is pleased to host a “Lunch and Learn” featuring Kim Gramlich on **March 5 at noon**.

Our guest speaker, Kim Gramlich, will share key insights and best practices for responding to police-involved matters, offering guidance for social service professionals, victim services personnel, and others supporting individuals during investigations.

The webinar details are as follows, and we can accommodate up to 500 attendees so *feel free to distribute to anyone who may appreciate this opportunity!*

[Register in advance using this link \(click here\)](#).

When:

Mar 5, 2025 12:00-1300 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Topic:

Police Victim Services

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is intended for anyone interested in learning more about how to provide emotional and practical support during emergencies and crises.

Weekday PFA Training March 2025: March 18 & 19, 2025: 9am-1pm, register [here](#)

Weekend PFA Training March 2025: March 22 & 29, 2025: 9am-1pm, register [here](#)

**Note due to high demand for PFA, registering does not guarantee a spot. You will receive a confirmation email in early March to confirm your spot.*

Engaging and Useful Links to Explore

Just want a short article and wondering how to reinforce the psychological well-being of staff during an emergency? Here are some points to keep in mind.

- [Keeping People Psychologically Safe When Disaster Strikes](#)

For mental health resources across Canada, *the Mental health: Get Help* site is great.

- [Mental Health: Get Help](#)

Prefer to keep it to BC? Check out the Wellbeing page (there is lots more too) on at HealthLinkBC.

- [HealthLinkBC](#)

You can also learn more about mental health through the Canadian Mental Health Association.

- [CMHA](#)

Shared by Partners

Start using the latest pamphlet on coping with stress that was collaboratively by the Canadian Mental Health Association and its MHPSS partners.

- [Emergencies are Stressful: What to Expect and What Can Help](#)

This is a great workplace health resources that you might want to check out.

- [People Working Well: Mental Health Training for BC's Community Social Services Sector](#)

For resources including webinars on supporting healthcare workers, check out

- [Care for Caregivers: Supporting the Mental Health of Healthcare Providers](#)

Have a training or resource you would like to share? We can help spread the word by posting it here. Simply send it to edu.pps@phsa.ca.

Article of the Month: The Chemistry of Teams: Oxytocin, Stress, and the Power of Relationships

In the fast-moving world of emergency response, where minutes count and the pressure doesn't let up, relationships aren't just a nice bonus—they're essential. If you've ever been in the thick of a crisis, you know this firsthand. The people beside you become more than just coworkers or teammates. They become your support system, your confidants, sometimes even your family.

Whether you are working as a wildfire crew or in a reception centre or an EOC, it's not just about the impact you make during a response—it's about the bonds you build along the way. Science backs this up: our brains are wired to connect, especially in high-stress environments. And one key player in this process is oxytocin, often called the "love hormone."

The Science Behind Team Bonding in Emergency Work

Oxytocin is best known for its role in childbirth, parenting, and romantic relationships, but it does something even more fascinating- it helps people come together in times of stress. Humans are social creatures at their core, built to rely on each other for survival. When things get intense, our bodies release oxytocin, encouraging connection, trust, and cooperation- all crucial in an emergency response team.

During emergency responses, some of the strongest connections are formed in the midst of the most intense situations. When people face extreme stress together, their brains release **oxytocin, dopamine, and endorphins**—neurochemicals that strengthen feelings of safety, trust, and belonging. These biological responses help responders develop **deep, lasting bonds** with those who stand beside them in critical moments.

This is why working through stressful situations with a team often creates a sense of **familiarity and deep trust**. The shared experience of navigating challenges together fosters connections that go beyond typical workplace relationships, creating a strong foundation of **support, resilience, and camaraderie** in emergency response teams.

Why These Bonds Matter More Than Ever

Having trusted colleagues isn't just comforting- it's what often keeps us going. The emotional safety that comes from working with people who truly understand what you're doing and what going through makes an incredible difference. That's why so many people in emergency management stick with it- not just for the work but for the relationships built along the way.

The bonds formed in the field, through long shifts, hard calls and those quiet moments in between, create a culture of support that helps responders not only survive the job but thrive in it. Whether it's a wildfire crew pulling endless shifts together, an EOC team coordinating resources, or a volunteer helping evacuees, the connections built in those moments of shared purpose are everything.

Team Care: Just as Important as Self-Care

We talk a lot about self-care in mental health conversations, but in emergency response, **team care** is just as important.

Checking in on each other, normalizing conversations about stress, and showing up for your team - these are the things that make a difference. Encouraging informal social gatherings, debriefs, and team-building opportunities isn't just a nice idea; it's a necessity.

At the end of the day, the relationships built in emergency response are what keep people coming back, shift after shift, emergency after emergency. Relationships make the hardest moments bearable. And they're what turn this work from just a job into a calling.

Definitions

Psychosocial: The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological dimension of a person and the social dimension of a person. The *psychological* dimension includes the internal, emotional and thought processes, feelings and reactions, and

the *social* dimension includes relationships, family and community network, social values and cultural practices. 'Psychosocial support' refers to the actions that address both psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities. (Psychosocial interventions. A Handbook, page 25.)

The title "MHPSS" in this bulletin refers to a broad approach to mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies. It does not signify the endorsement or inclusion of specific services or organizations.

Provincial Psychosocial Services

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