

Vancouver MHSU Services Advisor Involvement and Compensation Guide

Updated June 7, 2023 – Internet version

What is the purpose of the Advisor Involvement Guide?

The aim of this guide is to:

1. Recognize the importance of, and commitment to, advisor engagement within Vancouver MHSU services.
2. Clarify where and how advisors will participate in Vancouver MHSU services.

For more information about advisor sustainment and evaluation, refer to the [Vancouver MHSU Services Advisor Sustainment and Evaluation Guide](#).

Who is an advisor and when should they be included?

Advisors are persons with lived experience of the Vancouver MHSU system and/or their families¹/supporters. The VCH Community Engagement team Guide for Staff explains that advisors can be included when you need to:

- Receive feedback on policies, programs, documents or projects
- Develop a product or service, like a new building design or publication
- Build capacity in the Vancouver MHSU system for participation of persons with lived experience of the system and/or their supporters
- Receive ongoing feedback on the implementation of a plan or initiative

Effective and respectful inclusion of advisors means that they should be included when they are able to meaningfully influence decision makers and at the earliest stage possible. Advisors help support a different point of view, contribute expertise, and represent their own unique perspective (i.e. they should not be expected to represent an entire group of people). For this reason, a minimum of three to four (3-4) advisors is recommended for each group opportunity, and 2 advisors for panel opportunities.

Advisors can advise in a number of engagement techniques, including:

- By being members of committees, working groups, and interview panels
- Participating in focus groups or individual interviews
- Completing surveys
- Participating in staff education and education for clients and families

It is important to consider different engagement methods and note that multiple engagement methods might fit for single project.

Any program or process that involves services to clients is an opportunity for client and family advisors. The [IAP2 spectrum of participation](#) can help guide us on how and when to engage advisors, depending on the goal.

Where in Vancouver MHSU services is advisor representation expected?

- Interview panels for supervisory/leadership staff and physicians
- Clinical Practice, Education, Quality Improvement, and Leadership Committees
- Quality Improvement or other change initiatives
- Staff education on topics directly impacting clients and families
- Staff training/education
- Other committees or working groups whose work impacts clients and/or families directly

¹ VCH 2013 [Family Involvement with Mental Health and Addiction Services Policy](#) defines family as *a person who has been identified by the client... as being in a relationship of importance to the client and who provides support or care for the client on a regular basis*

How are advisors recruited?

The VCH Community Engagement team and Vancouver MHSU [Client](#) and/or [Family](#) Involvement Coordinators can help you determine how to best plan for and recruit advisors. A minimum of 6 weeks is suggested to recruit, screen, and orient advisors. In cases when advisors are not recruited at the earliest stages of planning, Vancouver MHSU Client and/or Family Involvement Coordinators can be used as temporary placeholders until advisors can be recruited.

Recruitment of advisors can take place through the [VCH Community Engagement Advisory Network \(CEAN\)](#) call outs and/or the [Spotlight on Mental Health](#) mailing list. Postings through these methods are also circulated to outside partners for maximum public reach. It is also possible to approach previous advisors, but keep in mind that diversity in advisors is important to ensure a variety of views, opinions, and experiences.

When selecting advisors, including someone with personal experience with Vancouver MHSU services is key. Other important roles include family and/or supporter (many advisors identify in multiple categories). When selecting advisors consider principles of Indigenous cultural safety and [diversity, equity and inclusion](#). Consider developing a matrix of desired backgrounds, including but not limited to: age; sex, gender, and gender identities; racial, ethnic and cultural identities; education and income; and diversity of health care and advisory experiences.

How are advisors oriented, on-boarded, and supported?

Advisors are strongly encouraged to apply for CEAN membership. CEAN members receive a foundational orientation to VCH as a whole which includes expectations-setting for how their participation can influence the health care delivery system. If not a CEAN member, Vancouver MHSU Client and/or Family Involvement Coordinators will provide an orientation adequate for the opportunity.

When advisors join a new advisory opportunity (e.g. panel, working group, focus group...) one Vancouver MHSU Client and/or Family Involvement Coordinator will be identified as the advisor's VCH point person. The coordinator will provide support/coaching, explore barriers and challenges to full participation, and offer debriefing. When possible, Vancouver MHSU Client and/or Family Involvement Coordinators can identify advisor mentors for additional advisor support.

The leader of the panel, committee, initiative or training is responsible for on-boarding new advisors, including introducing key contacts, the IAP2 level of participation for advisors, timeline, and background. Being a part of a large group can be confusing for advisors when they need to deal with a committee/council chair, a person who sends out invitations, multiple participants, etc. Advisors benefit from a written overview of names and roles embedded in the agenda or in the outlook invite.

Advisors often plan extensively for their participation; please keep rescheduling and cancellations to a minimum.

What are the expectations for advisor compensation?

Advisors are reimbursed for travel expenses, and refreshments/meals should be offered when in-person meetings fall over meal times, or are two (2) hours or longer in duration.

Advisors are offered an honorarium of \$25/hour for meetings, panels, and focus groups and an additional \$25 per meeting for preparation reading in excess of 15 pages. Advisors scheduled for meetings/panels that are cancelled less than 2 business days in advance are still paid the planned honorarium. Advisors involved in education opportunities will also be paid for agreed upon preparation time in addition to the time spent on the education session itself. Advisor cost is to be covered by the operating budget of the program that is including the advisor. For example: a working group with three advisors that meets six times for 90 minutes, with preparation in excess of 15 pages for two of these meetings will cost up to \$825 in honoraria.

Where can I find help and more information about advising?

- [Community Engagement at VCH](#)
 - [Spotlight on Mental Health website \(includes recruitment and information about Client and/or Family Involvement Coordinators\)](#)
 - [Spectrum of public participation](#)
 - [Patient Voices Network Diversity Equity and Inclusion](#)
-