



## Provincial Court of British Columbia

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Victoria Integrated Court (VIC) was established in 2010 as part of an integrated approach recommended by a task force to address street crime in Victoria.

### **Goals**

- Improve access to health, social, and economic services for these repeat offenders
- Improve public safety
- Hold offenders accountable for their actions in a timely manner

### **Approach**

VIC deals primarily with offenders (called "clients") who are struggling with substance abuse disorder, have cognitive impairments or mental health difficulties and/or are experiencing homelessness resulting in them committing crimes. This court takes an integrated approach to a person's criminal behaviour when they accept responsibility for their offence. Individuals get help to address the underlying or root causes of their offending behaviour.

VIC is not a trial court. It conducts bail and sentencing hearings with follow-up support and enforcement for people who plead guilty to criminal offences. They are supported by an integrated team delivering emergency and health services. When a client pleads guilty, the judge is told about housing, medical, and other issues affecting them. The lawyers may recommend terms for a sentencing order designed to help a team support and supervise the offender. Sentences imposed often include:

- Support and supervision in the community as part of a probation order
- Community service requirements

- Requirements to attend court for reviews where the judge hears reports on a participant's progress and can make appropriate changes to the sentence

When a jail sentence is imposed, VIC provides pre-release planning. The client appears in court before their release from jail to have the conditions of their probation order reviewed and ensure necessary supports are in place. The judge may change the order to specify the housing and rehabilitation services that have been arranged for the client since they were imprisoned.

Participation in VIC is voluntary. Everyone appearing in VIC must consent to attend and participate and must be connected to a community support team. Crown counsel must also agree to their participation.

Judges sit in VIC for a year or longer to provide continuity. Crown counsel are also assigned to VIC for extended periods.

## **Community partners**

All VIC clients are supported by a team that may include community outreach workers, social workers, probation officers, and police. The teams include:

- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams
- Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) and agencies helping its clients
- Case Management teams
- Youth Intensive Case Management team (YICMT)

People ordered to attend the New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community ("New Roads TRC") as part of their bail or sentencing conditions are also supervised in VIC. This group includes

people from outside Victoria.

Representatives of the teams and New Roads TRC meet regularly with the VIC Crown counsel and defence lawyers to discuss cases and plan support and supervision for clients.

While completing their community service, clients have helped to create a mural and a community garden where they can learn gardening skills, grow their own produce, and earn a share in any profits from produce sold.

## **Eligibility**

Talk to your lawyer or duty counsel about whether you qualify for Victoria Integrated Court. They can speak to Crown counsel for you.

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