

**REPORT TO CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT BOARD
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2026**

SUBJECT Youth Counsellor Funding – Existing Service, Grant-in-Aid, or New Service

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present options for ongoing funding of a youth counselling position associated with the Mobile Youth Services Team (“MYST”), a youth-focused anti-exploitation unit operating in the capital region.

BACKGROUND

On July 8, 2026, the Capital Regional District Board passed the following motion:

That the CRD Board direct staff to report back on potential methodologies for funding the civilian counsellor position affiliated with the Mobile Youth Services Team, which operates as an Integrated Police Unit under the direction of the Greater Victoria Police Chiefs and Detachment Commanders.

The Mobile Youth Services Team, or MYST, is a collaboration between local police forces in the capital region and the Pacific Centre Family Services Association (“PCFSA”), to provide a team consisting of a police officer and a youth counsellor to support vulnerable, at-risk youth in danger of sexual exploitation or gang involvement. It was formed after recognition of an increase in youth prostitution and exploitation in the capital region was identified by police, front-line workers, and municipal leaders in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Starting in 2026, a Ministry of Child and Family Services worker has been assigned to work with the team. A backgrounder on MYST is enclosed as Schedule A.

In June 2026, PCFSA wrote to regional local governments requesting creation of a contribution service in the amount of \$150,000 per year, to pay for a full-time counsellor salary and administration, travel, and overhead, with cost sharing based on population and service demand. The proposal excluded Colwood and Langford, who jointly fund a separate but similar full-time position just for those communities by way of municipal grant-in-aid (Schedule B). The proposal requests bridge-financing until a service is created, as the current Federal funding for the position is ending.

This report details options for new service establishment, service amendment, and providing grant funding.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The CRD Board has advocated for increased support levels and ongoing funding for MYST to the Provincial and Federal governments for several years, without funding materializing except in the form of one-time grants.

CRD currently offers two justice and youth related services:

- The Greater Victoria Victim Services contribution service, which provides a single operating grant of \$330,000 annually to the Greater Victoria Police Victims Services Society; and
- The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee (“VFC&YJC”) service, for operations and small grants, in the amount of \$15,000 per year.

The contribution to the Greater Victoria Police Victims Services Society was established at Provincial request in the 1980s. The society works in partnership with the seven police agencies in Greater Victoria to provide police-based victims services, intaking 1,667 new clients and closing 1,788 files in 2025. While the service receives CRD funding, additional funding is obtained from senior-levels of government as well as donations and direct grants from individual municipalities seeking additional support.

The VFC&YJC has the power to fund third parties where the work relates to youth and family initiatives in the capital region, though it only has a \$15,000 annual requisition. In 2024, it directed \$5,000 to PCFSA to support a study on MYST, which resulted in a report by Dr. Rebeccah Nelems, PhD, a sociologist (Schedule C). The study details that in 2024, MYST served approximately 250 clients, and made the primary recommendation for MYST to secure long-term, ongoing funding to support and expand MYST.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion / Social Implications

Funding an ongoing position will directly benefit at-risk and equity-seeking groups vulnerable to exploitation. Consistent service levels will directly benefit the community now and in-future by reducing negative interactions with the justice system and reducing recidivism, as well as breaking inter-generational cycles that arise when youth are exploited.

Legal Implications

The CRD has the following options for funding the MYST counsellor position:

- regional grant-in-aid to provide one-time or fixed-term funding for such a position;
- amending an existing service; or
- creating a new service.

Creating a New Service

A new service could be created with consent of participants, by way of alternative approval process or referendum. While municipalities could proceed by council consent, when creating non-regulatory services, electoral areas are required to run an alternative approval process or referendum for participation. As a result, an AAP would be recommended.

Creation of a new service would split the operating and granting function of the VFC&YJC from the ongoing funding of the MYST counsellor position. Any service would have a maximum requisition. Despite the request to omit Langford and Colwood from the contribution service, any service which excludes participants may lead to issues in future regarding the ability of the MYST team to service individual clients in those areas, and prior to considering this, Langford and Colwood should be approached to determine their interest in participating in the service.

Amending Existing Service

CRD could amend an existing service, by way of establishing bylaw amendment approved by two-thirds of participants, to increase a requisition and establish a contribution to PCFSA. Municipal consent and EA director consent would be acceptable participating area approval methods in these circumstances.

If approved, the Board would set out funding by way of its five-year financial plan, as with any other service, with budget information being requested from party receiving the contribution by the early Fall of each year. There would be no need for ongoing application for funding, similar to other ongoing contribution services.

A contribution agreement would be negotiated, setting out reporting obligations, how the contribution would be calculated, when it would be paid, and what service levels would be expected of the position.

The most relevant existing service which could be amended is the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice service, which currently has the ability to provide assistance to youth and family programs in the capital region, but has a long-standing maximum \$15,000 requisition which would need to be increased. The current participants include Langford and Colwood.

Regional Grant-in-Aid

The CRD Board may provide assistance to any person it deems operating a program or project of benefit to the community under its regional grant-in-aid powers. This funding is requisitioned from those participating areas deemed to be benefiting from the services.

The CRD Board has maintained a “no regional grant-in-aid” policy since 1994, based on the principle that the CRD should not fund matters that municipalities can address through their own grant programs or local priorities. Since that time, the Board has only approved three exceptions; Island Corridor Foundation to restore the E&N rail corridor (2012), Fort McMurray wildfire fundraising (2016), and the Ukrainian Aid and Displaced Persons Assistance Fund (2022).

Given the Board’s long-standing “no regional grant-in-aid” policy, regional grant-in-aid is not a suitable funding mechanism for the MYST counsellor position. In addition, as a regional funding tool, a regional grant-in-aid would include all member municipalities and electoral areas. To utilize this funding, the CRD Board must resolve by majority vote to provide a grant-in-aid and direct staff to negotiate or enter into a funding agreement. It would require a financial plan amendment by bylaw. The money would be requisitioned from those areas the Board deemed to be benefitting from the funding, which should be noted in the resolution.

Direct Delivery

Some local governments, such as Burnaby, which have direct relationships with police departments, directly fund similar youth and family counsellor positions, as well as restorative justice positions. While some regional district contribution services contain the option for direct delivery of the service by the regional district, that is not recommended in this case. CRD has no

similar direct delivery services nor a direct relationship with regional police forces.

Intergovernmental Implications

Prior to creating a new service or taking on a bylaw amendment and elector approval process, the Board may wish to gauge the level of interest from municipal councils by way of letter prior to reading a service establishment or amendment bylaw. PCFSA's proposed service excludes Langford and Colwood, but increasing the requisition for the VFC&YJC would necessarily include those jurisdictions. Confirmation of possible exclusion of the Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring Island Electoral Areas would also be necessary. Neither are current members of the VFC&YJC service or the Greater Victoria Police Victims Services funding service.

CONCLUSION

MYST continues to have precarious funding for its counsellor position. A contribution service or regional grant-in-aid could be used to direct funding, with an amendment to an existing similar service being a method with the least amount of CRD administrative overhead.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Mobile Youth Services Team: Sustaining a Proven Regional response for High-Risk Youth

Appendix B: Request for Funding – Pacific Centre Family Services Association

Appendix C: Rebecca Nelems (PhD), *Mobile Youth Services Team: Critical Status Report and Recommendations* (26 September, 2024)