

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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VCH'S NEW "KIDS AT HEATHER" PROVIDES CHILD CARE, AND HELPS RECRUIT STAFF

VANCOUVER – Opening the new "Kids at Heather" child care centre in partnership with the YMCA of Greater Vancouver is one of the strategies being used by Vancouver Coastal Health to recruit and retain health care professionals in today's competitive labour market.

Located at Vancouver General Hospital, the Kids at Heather space was renovated with \$2.7 million in funding from Vancouver Coastal Health and is one of three child care facilities located at VCH facilities. Others include the "Kids at General" program located in another area of VGH and the "Kids at GF Strong" program at the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre. Together the three centres provide a total of 160 child care spaces.

"The Province is encouraging workplace child care as it has become increasingly relevant given our province's booming economy, aging population and skilled labour shortage," said Linda Reid, B.C.'s Minister of State for Child Care. "I congratulate Vancouver Coastal Health for creating a flexible, supportive workplace to reflect and balance the needs of its employees."

Vancouver Coastal Health believes that making child care more readily available reduces the need for nurses, physicians and other healthcare providers to work casual or part-time shifts.

"Providing quality, convenient child care increases the number of staff able to accept full-time positions, and reduces the demand for staff to work overtime and on an on-call or casual basis," said Anne Harvey, Vice President, Employee Engagement, Vancouver Coastal Health. "There's definitely a high demand for it. We currently have a number of employees requesting access to child care support, and are exploring the possibility of working with partners to make it available for staff at other VCH locations."

Kids at Heather is operated by the YMCA and offers four programs for children from three months to five years of age. Approximately half of the 14,000 square foot space is dedicated to indoor activities with an equal amount of space dedicated to outdoor fun. In addition to a home-like environment with warm colours, plants and lots of natural light, the design incorporates spaces to stimulate interaction, creative play and learning, and is based on early childhood development principles.

"We are happy to be involved with VCH on the design and provision of quality child care for their employees," said Susan Low, General Manager, Child Care, YMCA of Greater Vancouver. "This new facility provides play spaces designed to meet the developmental needs of each age group, allowing children to learn through their play experiences."

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VCH is responsible for the delivery of \$2.4 billion in community, hospital and residential care services to over one million people in communities from Richmond through Vancouver, the North Shore, Sunshine Coast, Sea to Sky corridor, Powell River, Bella Bella and Bella Coola.

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1 backgrounder attached.

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