Vancouver Island Crisis Society

Helping People Find Their Way

Executive Director

THE DISCOVERY GROUP

Executive Profile Presented By

Since 2010, the **Vancouver Island Crisis Society (VICS)** has been the leading distress centre for emergency crisis calls on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. VICS offers 24-hour crisis line service, 365 days a year, to Vancouver Island, the islands of the Georgia Strait, and the mainland communities between Powell River and Rivers Inlet. As part of the BC Crisis Line Network, VICS supports calls from all over British Columbia. As a proud partner of the 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline, VICS answers calls and texts across Canada. Crisis responders provide short-term, non-judgemental emotional support, crisis intervention, information, and resources. It has been a lifeline – literally – for people in need, with more than 40 staff handling over 45,000 interactions per year.

Now, with the planned retirement of its long-time leader, VICS is ready to hire a new **Executive Director**. As a foundation of the crisis community and local social profit landscape, the Executive Director maintains important working relationships with health authorities, various levels of government and other funders, other crisis centres, social service organizations, clients, and the community at large.

Broadly, the ED leads the development and execution of the strategic planning process; plans, organizes, and directs the Society's overall day-to-day operations; and serves as a liaison to external stakeholders and partners. The ED provides mentorship and guidance to an exceptionally committed and passionate leadership team of five and a total staff complement of over 40.

Headquartered in Nanaimo, VICS is financially stable, has a history of success and a solid reputation, and serves a vital need. This is an exciting time for a new leader to:

- Join an exceptionally devoted, kind, and committed team;
- Provide strong leadership and vision to the Society's current initiatives, and bring innovative and creative ideas to advance the Society;
- Build on existing partnerships and identify and pursue new opportunities that further the Society's objectives;
- Advocate for the Crisis Society at the municipal, regional, provincial and national levels, articulating its social value to external stakeholders to encourage support for and investment in the Crisis Society.

Information for Candidates

This search is being led by VICS's search partner, The Discovery Group.

If you or someone you know is interested or curious, please connect with Christoph Clodius at christoph@thediscoverygroup.ca.

We welcome questions and enquiries prior to applications.

Application Timing and Process

All submissions should be received by December 1, 2026. To apply, send a cover letter/expression of interest and resume/CV, together in a single document to Christoph, or through The Discovery Group's website. Initial screening interviews and conversations will be held in December, with search committee interviews beginning in January.

Compensation and Benefits

The successful candidate can expect a starting annual salary of $110,000–$130,000. VICS offers a comprehensive benefits package, including a matched retirement contribution, employer-paid extended health, dental and vision coverage, generous vacation, and a focus on professional development.

Location and Working Environment

This is a full-time, permanent role based at VICS's offices in Nanaimo. For a new leader, maintaining a presence at the office will be important, and over time the Board will certainly welcome a flexible work environment to support strong work-life balance.

Territory Acknowledgement

The Board, volunteers, and staff of the Vancouver Island Crisis Society gratefully acknowledge that we provide our services on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

VICS is committed to the principles of equality and diversity in the workplace. VICS aims to hire the best candidate for the position based on their qualifications and merit in terms of knowledge, skills, and experience.

VICS encourages and supports candidates with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences to apply. Studies have shown that women and people of colour are less likely to apply to jobs unless they meet every single qualification. VICS is dedicated to building a diverse, inclusive, and authentic workplace, so if you are excited about this role but your past experience or competencies don't align perfectly with every desired trait listed in this brief, we encourage you to reach out anyway. You may in fact be just the right candidate for this or other roles.

About the Vancouver Island Crisis Society

Mission

The Vancouver Island Crisis Society is committed to providing accessible voice, text and chat crisis intervention and suicide prevention services, including postvention programs. We endeavour to provide emotional support during times of crisis, information about community resources, education intended to promote community wellness, and to reduce the incidence of suicide. We value the principles of confidentiality, non-judgemental acceptance, respect for diversity, personal empowerment and cooperation.

Services

VICS's main service offering is its four Crisis Lines:

1. Vancouver Island Crisis Line: Operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the Vancouver Island Crisis Line offers crisis line service to Vancouver Island, the islands of the Georgia Strait, and the mainland communities between Powell River and Rivers Inlet. Crisis responders provide short-term, non-judgemental emotional support, crisis intervention, information, and resources.
2. 1800SUICIDE: VICS and other members of the BC Crisis Line Network answer this 24/7/365 provincial service to support callers experiencing suicidal thoughts. Workers provide skilled suicide assessment, de-escalation, intervention, referrals, and short-term support.
3. 310Mental Health Support: VICS also answers the provincial 310Mental Health Support service 24/7/365, as part of the BC Crisis Line Network, to provide empowering emotional support, information about appropriate resources, and a wide range of support relating to mental health concerns.
4. 9-8-8: As a 9-8-8 partner, VICS is part of a network of local, provincial, territorial, and national crisis lines across the country whose responders take 9-8-8 calls and/or texts for Canada's Suicide Crisis Helpline. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) administers these Canada-wide services, which are available 24/7.

Additionally, VICS offers Community Education Programs: structured, in-person and/or virtual training designed for frontline workers, community helpers, and the public. The Community Education team delivers customizable workshops and school programs, and provides Suicide Grief Support services, travelling to many communities on Vancouver Island. Programs include:

- safeTALK (Suicide Alertness For Everyone): A 3- to 4-hour in-person training that teaches participants how to identify thoughts of suicide and connect individuals to suicide first-aid resources like ASIST.
- ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training): Intensive suicide intervention training (renewal recommended every three years).
- Additional customizable programs.

Finally, VICS has many programs for youth, including GRASP for students in Grades 8 to 12, covering self-awareness, communication, healthy relationships, boundary setting, community resources, suicide awareness, and how to access help for others.

Recent Accomplishments and Statistics

- Last year, through the provincial BC Crisis Line Network and Canada's 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline, VICS handled 46,187 interactions.

- Crisis Line Operations: VICS responded to a total of 29,255 calls for the BC Crisis Line Network, which includes the provincial 1800SUICIDE and 310Mental Health Support lines, and the Vancouver Island Crisis Line. It answered 10,510 calls and 5,870 text interactions on the national 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline. Crisis Line Responders answered 552 Chat and Text interactions during the year.

- Crisis Line Training: Two Crisis Line Responder training courses were delivered, with 14 trainees out of 20 candidates completing the program. Crisis Line Responders attended 12 monthly training sessions.

- Vancouver Island Crisis Line Promotion: In-person meetings continued to increase, along with participation in numerous virtual meetings, as VICS remained strongly connected with community partners across the Island. Mass emails were circulated to promote programs Island-wide, including presentations and events affiliated with World Suicide Prevention Day, community partnerships, and the recruitment of staff and volunteers. VICS continued updating its Community Resource Database, revising 920 resources during the fiscal year.

- **Suicide Grief Support Services:** Twelve group support meetings were held online, with an average group size of six participants. A total of 17 lay counselling one-on-one support sessions were held either online or by telephone to support those grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide.

- **Community Education:** VICS's Community Education workshops continued to be in high demand. With a facilitator team of four ASIST trainers, two safeTALK trainers, and three trainers experienced in presenting VICS customizable workshops, the team facilitated a total of:
  - 7 ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) courses to 131 participants;
  - 4 safeTALK workshops to 41 participants;
  - 2 CIST (Crisis Intervention Skills Training) courses to 44 participants; and
  - 16 customized workshops, delivered to 180 participants.

- **School Suicide Prevention Programs:** The GRASP (Growth, Resilience, Acknowledgement, Suicide Awareness, and Personal Safe Planning) 12-hour gatekeeper training workshop was provided 14 times to 132 secondary school students. A total of three COPE (Communication, Options, Perspective, Enjoy life) workshops were delivered to 247 elementary school students. Speak Out, Reach Out, Help Out in-person presentations were made five times to a total of 1,059+ students.

- **Provincial and National Initiatives:** VICS continued to answer the Vancouver Island Crisis Line, 1800SUICIDE, and 310Mental Health Support calls, as part of the BC Crisis Line Network. Members of the Supervisory Team participated in meetings as part of various working groups and committees. VICS has working affiliations with:
  - American Association of Suicidology (AAS) – Accredited Crisis Centre
  - BC Crisis Line Network
  - Proud Partner of 9-8-8
  - Greater Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce

Budget and Funding Sources

VICS's 2026 budget is just under $3 million, with about half coming from the federal government (9-8-8 Canada), $1 million from the provincial government (Provincial Health Services Authority), and the balance from donations, gaming, and custom training funding.

Community fundraising includes third-party events and many generous donations by individuals. Pattison Media donates a year-long, Island-wide radio campaign promoting VICS's services, as well as volunteering and employment opportunities. The Society does not have a dedicated fundraising program per se.

The large majority of VICS's expenditures go to staffing.

Society History

The Vancouver Island Crisis Society (VICS) is a non-profit organization that has operated in Nanaimo since June 3, 1970. Its mandate began with counselling and referrals for people using illicit drugs and broadened over time to include youth counselling, housing and emergency relocation support, and a Community Law Office. In the 1990s, when Nanaimo's suicide rate was double the national average, the Society developed two new crisis lines and, in 1998, its staff became registered ASIST trainers, launching its Community Education programs. In 2003, it was accredited as a Crisis Intervention Centre by the American Association of Suicidology, an accreditation it holds to this day.

Through the 2000s, the Crisis Line became the public access point for Nanaimo's Mental Health Crisis Response Team, and in 2006 VICS began answering the provincial 1800SUICIDE line alongside four other crisis line partners.

In 2010, Island Health consolidated crisis line services on Vancouver Island and, following an RFP process, selected the Society to provide crisis line services for all of Vancouver Island, beginning its transition to become the Vancouver Island Crisis Line. In 2012, the Society adopted its current name, and its motto, "Helping People Find Their Way," was officially recognized.

Since then, VICS has launched Crisis Chat and Crisis Text services, expanded its school and community education programs, and celebrated 50 years of service in 2020. In 2022, its funding moved from Island Health to the Provincial Health Services Authority, and in 2023 it joined the national 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline, doubling its workforce. In 2024, the AAS honoured Executive Director Elizabeth Newcombe with its Crisis Services Award.

To learn more about VICS, see https://www.vicrisis.ca/
To learn more about VICS's history, see https://www.vicrisis.ca/history/

The Executive Director Role: Position Summary

The ED's specific responsibilities include:

Leadership, Culture, and Strategy

- Lead a client-centred organizational culture that exemplifies the values and goals of the Crisis Society.
- Provide strategic leadership for staff, volunteers, and the Board in delivering high-quality programs and services, ensuring alignment with the organization's mission and values.
- Lead and implement quality improvement plans and initiatives.
- In collaboration with the Board and staff, ensure that the Strategic Plan is reviewed and refined as necessary.
- Formulate long- and short-term goals and objectives; identify new opportunities and resources in consultation with the Board, staff, and volunteers.
- Provide information, assistance, and advice to the Board and its Committees on all matters concerning the governance of the Crisis Society.
- Educate, inform, and orient the Board, ensuring that Board members are fully informed on all programs and services as well as financial and personnel matters relating to the Crisis Society.
- Lead a culture that attracts, retains, empowers, and motivates a diverse, high-quality team.
- Develop a positive and constructive relationship with the Crisis Society's staff, volunteers, and Board.

Management

- With the HR, People and Culture Specialist, ensure the development and implementation of staff and volunteer training programs; selection, hiring, termination, and supervision of all staff; and other staff duties.
- Prepare, manage and submit an annual operational budget to the Board; report to the Board regularly and accurately on the budget, acknowledging any progress and challenges encountered.
- Ensure sufficient funds are always available for the Society's operations, including by researching grant opportunities and submitting grant proposals.
- Coach staff and volunteers as they implement the goals and objectives associated with the Strategic Plan and overall organizational mission.
- Review staff benefits and salaries to make recommendations to the Board Personnel Committee.
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are offered professional development and ongoing training opportunities.
- Exercise considerable independence of judgement in both the recommendation and implementation of policies, plans, and procedures.
- Communicate Board directions to staff, as required.
- Continue advancing the Crisis Society's technology to deliver efficient, user-friendly services.

Community Engagement

- Respond to existing and anticipated future needs of both current and potential stakeholders; ensure that the Crisis Society provides services reflecting these evolving needs.
- Recognize the diversity of the Crisis Society's stakeholders and determine strategies that will ensure the Crisis Society is well positioned to serve and engage its community.
- Manage and cultivate relationships with key external stakeholders (e.g., funders, government) to identify new prospects, collaborations, projects, and initiatives.
- Maintain and initiate contacts with other relevant organizations in the sector throughout British Columbia and Canada; maintain a working knowledge of significant developments and trends in the sector.
- Oversee the Community Education department and the promotion of the Crisis Society, and support its public representation with community, governmental, and private organizations.
- Manage the Society's public image in the community, including advertising the Society's programs and volunteer opportunities; ensure effective promotional materials are in place.
- As the face of the Society, represent it publicly at events, speaking engagements, community forums, and in the media as needed.
- Advocate persuasively on behalf of the Crisis Society; leverage and strengthen the Crisis Society's image and identity in the community.

Other Specifics

- Manage the Society's lease agreement(s), negotiations, and renewal.
- Review and ensure adequate insurance coverage for the Society.
- Support other Society staff members as operational needs require and ED skills allow (which for instance may include assisting with training, shift coverage/crisis line responder meetings).

Desired Qualifications

- Significant leadership and management experience, ideally including leadership in or of a social profit organization.
- Current knowledge of trends and issues in crisis services, mental health, or community services will be considered a significant asset.
- Degree in business administration or the social sciences, complemented by working knowledge of accounting procedures, business planning, and fundraising, or some equivalent combination of experience, education, volunteering, and community leadership.
- LivingWorks ASIST and/or AAS crisis specialist certification are strong assets; VICS will provide ASIST to the successful ED.

Desired Skills and Knowledge

- Experience mentoring and coaching senior staff and volunteers.
- Experience leading and/or operating in a service organization with complex internal and external stakeholders.
- Excellent listening and interpersonal skills.
- Strong mediation and communication skills (verbal and written).
- Strong time management skills, organizational skills, and flexibility to effectively prioritize and to change priorities as needed.
- Strong problem-solving skills, focused on positive outcomes.
- Experience overseeing program budgets and/or organizational fiscal management.
- Experience working with a volunteer Board.
- Experience managing change within an organization.

Traits and Competencies

To thrive and succeed in the ED role, VICS ideally seeks someone with:

Caring, people-centred leadership: A collaborative, trustworthy, inspirational leader and mentor who leads by example. Visibly empathetic and compassionate, with an approachable manner. Builds team culture through creativity and understands that the details matter.

Strong team management and delegation: A confident delegator who trusts the team, while staying connected to what's happening on the front lines. Values dialogue and treats supervision as a give-and-take. Has the humility to honour staff expertise and organizational history, and the skill to navigate difficult personalities with fairness.

Funding, government relations and financial acumen: A politically savvy leader who understands how money moves between federal and provincial governments and knows when to step forward. Keeps an eye on emerging priorities in mental health, Indigenous, and trauma-informed work, and positions the organization to benefit.

Mission and sector understanding: Grounded in mental health and committed to VICS's mission. Understands crisis and responder work, including the lived experience of responders. Knows this is a human business first, and resists approaches that are overly technical or clinical.

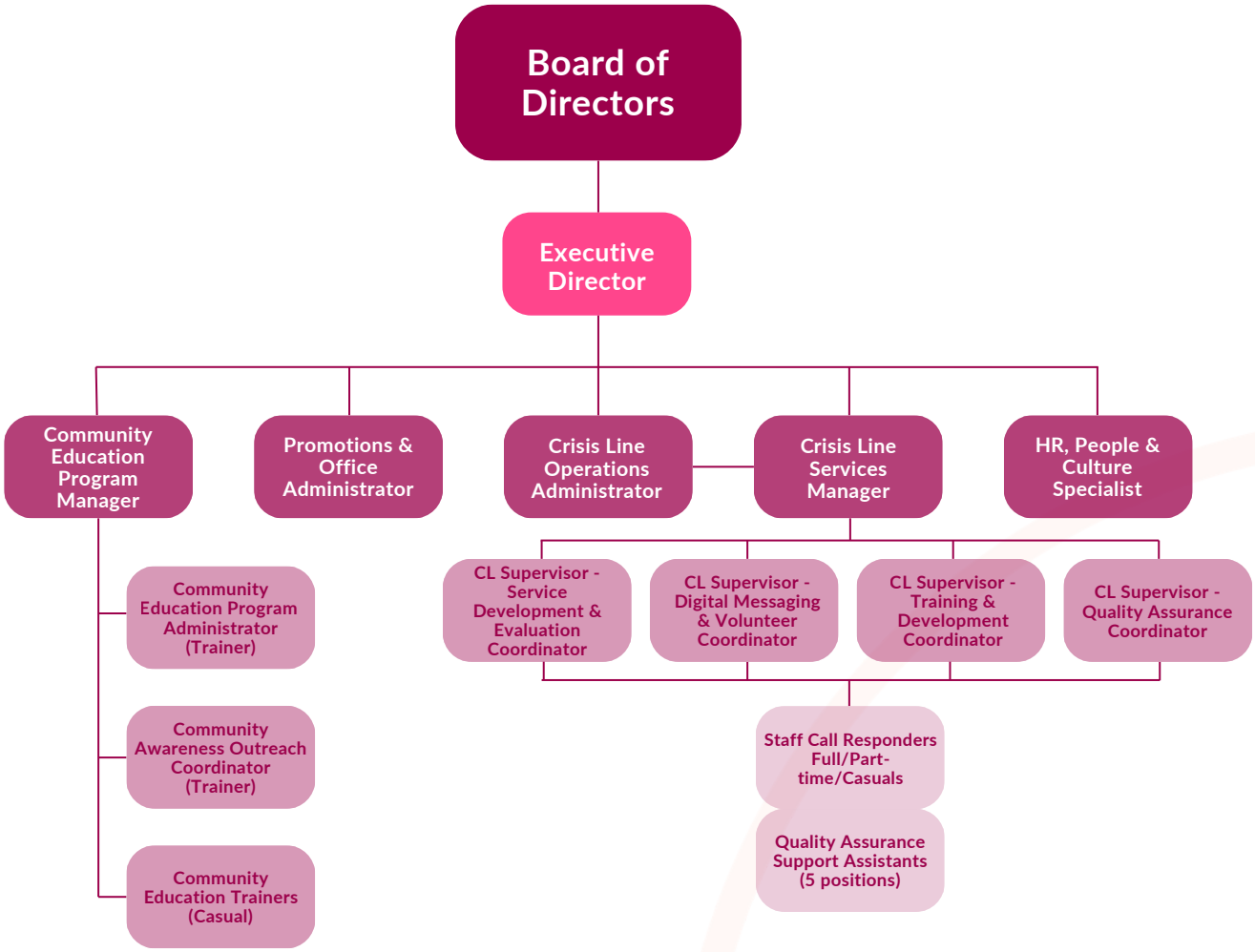
Communication and transparency: An honest, direct, and emotionally intelligent communicator who can make a compelling case to any audience. Explains not just what is changing, but why.

Measured approach to change: An implementer willing to roll up their sleeves and bring the organization up to date, including on technology, without unsettling what already works. Understands that this is not a quick-reward role and that lasting progress comes at the right pace.

Advocacy and external profile: A fighter and champion who won't settle for less than the organization deserves. Builds connections and finds creative ways to show the value of the work, while also being comfortable as the strategist behind the scenes.

Judgement and character: Sound judgement, initiative and discretion. Assertive and decisive, yet relaxed and fair. Sets clear, respectful boundaries and models them, while remaining open and compassionate.

Organizational Chart



Living in Nanaimo

Known as the Harbour City, the City of Nanaimo is located on the southeast side of Vancouver Island and is one of Canada's top island destinations. Home to approximately 112,000 residents, Nanaimo is the second largest urban centre on Vancouver Island and has one of the longest shorelines in Canada. Nanaimo is British Columbia's third oldest city, fifth largest city, and one of its most livable. The city projects out into the strait like a headland, affording waterfront on three sides and spectacular ocean views at every turn.

Nanaimo residents enjoy a relaxed yet vibrant lifestyle in a modern urban centre characterized by the natural beauty of the forest, mountains, and oceanfront. Vast recreational opportunities through sports, outdoor recreation, and cultural festivals and activities are abundant and diverse in Nanaimo and provide something for everyone. Golfing, kayaking, whale watching, fishing, swimming, scuba diving, and skiing are just some of the popular activities within reach. Nanaimo has over 1,000 hectares of City-owned parks, including 13 destination parks, 90 neighbourhood parks, and 180 km of trails.

The city has numerous compelling festivals such as the Dragon Boat Festival and the Nanaimo Marine Festival – World Championship Bathtub Race that bring the city to life every year. The popular Nanaimo Aquatic Centre, Port Theatre, Nanaimo Art Gallery, Nanaimo Museum, and many public art installations showcase the diverse cultures and unique history that Nanaimo is home to. Nanaimo was named one of Canada's comfiest climates by Environment Canada due to its mild temperatures. Winter in Nanaimo is mild with rain, and temperatures rarely fall below freezing. In the summertime, the days are warm and dry, and the average daily temperature is around 24°C.

Nanaimo is a growing city that enjoys a skilled and educated labour force, an impressive infrastructure network, and is a central hub for business and services for the central and northern regions of Vancouver Island. While feeling like an urban centre surrounded by natural beauty, it is also easily accessible: it is located 113 km north of Victoria, and 55 km across the Salish Sea from Vancouver. Three ferry terminals, including the rapid Hullo ferry service, an all-weather airport, and helicopter and seaplane services serve Nanaimo, meaning coming and going are quick and convenient.

The city of Nanaimo is a classic West Coast community, offering natural beauty at every turn, and vast recreation potential. With a forested mountain backdrop just outside downtown, in Nanaimo you can go from the wilderness to the city centre in just a few minutes and spend more time in the places you want to be.

Navigating complex challenges for social profits

The Discovery Group is an international consulting firm dedicated to the social profit sector. We believe that social profit organizations can change the world. Since 2017, it has been our mission to help social profits across the globe achieve their vision and elevate community impact. We work side by side with our clients to help them envision change, determine how to make it happen, and put the necessary tools and skills in place for success.

www.thediscoverygroup.ca

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