



Butterfly Support Network

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Legislative Briefing: Improving Mental Health Support for Bereaved Parents in British Columbia

Date: October 2025

Prepared by: Butterfly Support Network (BSN)

Intended Audience: BC MLAs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

1. Executive Summary

Families across British Columbia (BC) who experience infertility, pregnancy loss, or infant loss face profound grief with limited or no access to specialized mental health care.

Butterfly Support Network is calling for provincial legislation and dedicated funding to establish equitable, research-informed supports for bereaved parents – including publicly funded counselling, education for care providers, and standardized bereavement protocols across BC's health authorities.

2. About Butterfly Support Network

Who Are We?

Founded in 2019, Butterfly Support Network (BSN) is a **registered non-profit** created by bereaved parents in partnership with **BC Women's Hospital + Health Foundation**.

Since 2020, BSN has been bridging the gap in bereavement care across BC by providing free, province-wide support for families, including:

- **Individual Counselling & Group Support**
- **Peer and Community Programs**
- **Educational Training for Care Providers**
- **Bereavement Boxes & ER Care Kits for hospitals across BC**

Mission Statement

We exist to offer support, compassion and community to honour the babies gone too soon and hold hope for the children to come. Together we raise awareness around infertility, pregnancy loss and infant loss by organizing community events and fundraising for local and provincial support programs.

3. Context of Bereavement Care in BC

Despite the growing prevalence of infertility, miscarriages, stillbirths, and infant loss, **bereavement care remains inconsistent and underfunded in BC.**

BC Statistics	
Infertility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ~15% (1 in 6) of Canadians are impacted by infertility• Prevalence is gradually increasing
Miscarriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ~15–25% of clinical pregnancies end in miscarriage• ~15,000 miscarriages occur annually in BC
Stillbirth*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ~500 stillbirths annually in BC
Infant Loss**	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ~160 infant deaths annually in BC

*Babies who have died after 20 weeks of gestation and/or weigh 500+ grams

** Babies who have died under the age of 12 months old

Policy Context

- Ontario’s Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness, Research and Care Act (Bill 141) was passed in 2015. Bill 141 requires ongoing research, data collection, and the creation of programs that support bereaved parents as they navigate pregnancy loss and infant loss. **BC currently has no equivalent legislation to protect or support bereaved parents.**

4. Current Gaps in Bereavement Care in BC

When a family faces the loss of a pregnancy or an infant, their need for mental health and social support is immediate and profound. However, the **accessibility and quality of bereavement care in BC vary dramatically between health authorities.**

Current Health Care Gaps include:

- **Few publicly funded counselling resources** for bereaved parents
- **Inconsistent care standards** between health authorities in BC
- **Limited grief support groups** for bereaved parents (in-person & online)
- **Limited pregnancy loss and grief training** for healthcare providers

Without systemic support, families face isolation, delayed healing, and higher reliance on emergency or crisis services **costing the healthcare system more over time.**

5. Proposed Provincial Legislation

BSN recommends that the Province of British Columbia introduce a **Pregnancy and Infant Loss Research and Support Act**, modelled after Ontario's Bill 141.

Key Actions

1. Establish Provincial Research Funding

- a. Study the psychological and medical impacts of perinatal loss
- b. Develop strategies to reduce stillbirth and miscarriage rates in BC

2. Implement Education & Training Programs

- a. Mandate grief and bereavement training for healthcare professionals
- b. Provide resources to reduce burnout and promote the well-being of healthcare providers

3. Expand Publicly Funded Mental Health Services

- a. Create accessible counselling and peer programs across all health authorities

6. Benefits of Proposed Solution

For Families

- Provides timely, trauma-informed care for bereaved families regardless of their location and income
- Reduces isolation and enhances individuals' long-term mental health and well-being

For BC's Health Care System

- Lowers the strain on emergency and acute care services
- Increases positive health outcomes for parents in future pregnancies

For Provincial Government

- Aligns with BC's Perinatal Mental Health Framework and Pathway to Hope strategy
- Demonstrates leadership in compassionate, family-centred policy

7. Call to Action

We call upon the Province of British Columbia to:

1. Introduce the **Pregnancy and Infant Loss Research and Support Act** in 2025
2. Provide **stable provincial funding** for bereavement and fertility-related mental health services
3. Integrate **training and standardized bereavement care** across health authorities in BC

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, and MLAs committed to improving perinatal mental health outcomes for all British Columbians. Every family experiencing loss deserves timely, dignified, and comprehensive care.

With legislative commitment, we can lead the nation in providing effective and compassionate bereavement support to BC families.