

Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition

November 28, 2007

William Blair
President
Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police
Corporate Office
40 College Street, Suite 605
Toronto, ON M5G 2J3

Dear Chief Blair:

RE: The Impact of Police Record Checks

The Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as the President of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

The Coalition is comprised of a group of over thirty organizations and individuals working to eliminate the discriminatory practice of releasing non-criminal information as part of the police records check process.

If a person is detained or transported by police under the *Mental Health Act*, this information is included in a police records check. As a result, some individuals may not be able to pursue career or volunteer opportunities or complete a student placement. Others may be placed in the awkward position of having to disclose the personal details of the contact with the police and the mental health system. In our opinion, the effect of the records check is discriminatory and contrary to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as it creates barriers for individuals with mental illness or a perceived mental illness.

Some police departments erroneously record such incidents as "arrests." The use of this harsh language creates an impression that the individual did something wrong and even suggests criminal activity, further stigmatizing the individual.

We are asking you to investigate the collection and release of personal information to potential employers, schools and volunteer organizations. We would like you to work with police forces across the province to develop a consistent procedure whereby individuals who have non-criminal contact with the police are treated as equal members of society.

We would like to discuss this important matter with you. Please contact David Simpson at 519.631.8510, x49619 to arrange a meeting. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



David Simpson
Program Manager
Psychiatric Patient Advocate
Office



Nicole Zahradnik
Community Mental Health Analyst
Canadian Mental Health
Association, Ontario



Theresa Claxton
Chair
Ontario Association of Patient
Councils