

## Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition

### Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition Statement

#### Issue

When individuals have non-criminal contact with the police, information about the contact is included in their police file. Consequently, if individuals request a police records check for the purpose of working or volunteering with a vulnerable population, the non-criminal information is disclosed. Many consumers, family members and stakeholders are unaware of this practice and its harmful effects.

The Coalition believes that this practice is discriminatory to individuals who have contact with the police pursuant to the *Mental Health Act*. Reporting such information erroneously suggests that these individuals did something wrong or committed a criminal activity. The disclosure can negatively impact an individual's wellness, recovery and ability to pursue career, educational, vocational and volunteer aspirations. A process that is more respectful of and sensitive to the needs of these individuals must be adopted by police services across Ontario.

#### Principles

The Coalition is guided by the following principles:

- A collaborative approach where we work with stakeholders and the police to effect change.
- To ensure that all individuals who have contact with the police pursuant to the *Mental Health Act* are treated as equal members of the community.
- To uphold the rights of individuals who have contact with the police under the *Mental Health Act* as they should not be subjected to discriminatory practices.
- To address both the discriminatory practice and effects of disclosing non-criminal information as part of the police records check program.
- To raise awareness among consumers, families, stakeholders, the public and police how the process reinforces stigma, fear and discrimination against individuals who have come into contact with the police due to the *Mental Health Act*.
- To change current practices to ensure that such persons are treated with respect.

## Goals

The Coalition will work to achieve the following goals:

- To educate consumers, families, stakeholders, agencies and police regarding the practice and impact of the release of non-criminal information.
- To advocate for the development of consistent standards for police records searches across the province.
- To eliminate the discriminatory practice of releasing non-criminal information as part of the police records search process. This is the ultimate goal of the coalition – to advocate for something less implies that people with mental illness and disability are not equal members of society.

## Membership

To date, there are over thirty organizations and individuals who support the principles and goals of the Coalition.

New members are *a/ways* welcome to join the Coalition.

The Coalition is led by the Ontario Association of Patients Councils, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario and the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office.

## Additional Information

More information about the Coalition, including its views and activities, can be found at [www.ppao.gov.on.ca/sys-pol.html](http://www.ppao.gov.on.ca/sys-pol.html).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

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