

DRUG TREATMENT COURTS AND THE IMPACT OF CANNABIS AND OTHER SUBSTANCE USE

VIRTUAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FORUM

OCTOBER 19, 2022

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario and John Howard Society of Ontario, in partnership with the Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee, are hosting a knowledge exchange forum to share the results of a community-based research project funded by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This project explores how cannabis use impacts mental health and whether it helps or hinders a participant's completion of a DTC Program. This forum will also examine DTCs and substance use more broadly, including discussions on potential policy options to improve these courts and the criminal justice system.



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Ontario



AGENDA

October 19, 2022 // 9:00am - 11:45am

AGENDA	TIME
WELCOME AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT Trevor Tymchuk, Project Consultant	9:00am - 9:15am
PROJECT BACKGROUND Sudha Sabanadesan, Policy Analyst- Substance Use Lead, CMHA Ontario Candace Vena, Director of Justice Policy, CMHA Ontario	9:15am - 9:30am
COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH RESULTS Meaghan Costa, Research and Evaluation Specialist, John Howard Society of Ontario Nikoleta Curcin, Project Consultant	9:30am - 10:10am
KEYNOTE SPEAKER Dr. Akwasi Owusu-Bempah, Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto	10:10am - 10:30am
HEALTH BREAK	10:30am - 10:35am
PANEL: DRUG TREATMENT COURT PROGRAMS Robin Cuff, (RP) Manager, Toronto Drug Treatment Court Stacey Shanks, (RP) Counsellor- Therapeutic Justice Program, Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Addictions and Mental Health	10:35am - 10:55am
MODERATED Q&A DISCUSSION Shawn Chirrey, Director of Public Policy, CMHA Ontario	10:55am - 11:40am
CLOSING REMARKS Candace Vena, Director of Justice Policy, CMHA Ontario	11:40am - 11:45am

Honoraria is available for people with lived experience of substance use and/or criminal justice involvement. For more information, please contact Sudha Sabanadesan at ssabanadesan@ontario.cmha.ca.

SPEAKERS

October 19, 2022 // 9:00am - 11:45am



Meaghan Costa

Research and Evaluation Specialist, John Howard Society of Ontario

Meaghan joined the Centre of Research & Policy at the John Howard Society of Ontario in 2019 and is currently a Research & Evaluation Specialist. Meaghan has been the Lead Researcher on the Cannabis & Drug Treatment Court Project since its inception, bringing in her extensive experience in conducting qualitative and quantitative research with marginalized populations. Meaghan brings a wealth of experience in her knowledge of the criminal justice system as well as research methodologies and community-based research engagement. She holds a B.A. in Sociology from McMaster University, an M.A. in Criminology & Sociolegal studies from the University of Toronto, and she is currently completing a graduate diploma from McMaster University in Community-Engaged Research and Evaluation through the School of Social Work.



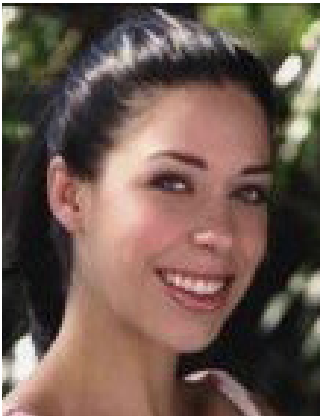
Robin Cuff (RP)

Manager, Toronto Drug Treatment Court

Robin Cuff is a registered psychotherapist and, in addition to other portfolios, she is the Manager of the Toronto Drug Treatment Court program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto. Robin's education and training spans the fields of business, theology, human resource management, counseling, addictions, concurrent disorders and trauma. She is a faculty member of the William Glasser Institute for Choice Theory, Reality Therapy and Lead Management. Robin has 23 years of leadership in the field of addiction and related services, both in the community and in a hospital setting, primarily serving marginalized populations. She has participated in the development of best practices for women's addiction treatment, withdrawal management and trauma-informed care. Robin has a passion for knowledge exchange and has contributed to diverse training opportunities across Canada and in the Caribbean and Latin America, sharing insights and experiences on topics such as trauma, addiction, and alternatives to incarceration. Robin is passionate about leading teams to provide quality, trauma-informed and hope-based care.

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October 19, 2022 // 9:00am - 11:45am



Nikoleta Curcin

Project Consultant

Nikoleta Curcin graduated from the University of Toronto in 2012 with an Honors Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature. She is a consumer survivor and a graduate of Toronto's Drug Treatment Court program. Upon becoming an alumni in December of 2020, she started volunteering with WriteON, a prisoner rights organization that seeks to empower incarcerated individuals through information and knowledge sharing. Nikoleta currently works as a Project Consultant for the Cannabis and Drug Treatment Court Research Project and as a Peer Researcher with the Justice and Equity Lab at St. Michael's Hospital.



Dr. Akwasi Owusu-Bempah

Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto

Akwasi Owusu-Bempah (PhD) is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto and Chair of the Governing Board of Massey College. Akwasi's academic work has examined the racialized nature of drug law enforcement in North America. He has collaborated with major media outlets, such as the Toronto Star and Vice News to advance public dialogue about the perils of the war on drugs. As a changemaker, Akwasi has lobbied federal governments to revise their drug laws, and through his work with Cannabis Amnesty, has collaborated with some of the world's largest cannabis companies to advance their corporate social responsibility mandates. With an eye on social justice, he is currently exploring how drug legalization is being used as a means to redress the various harms caused by drug prohibition. He is the author of [*Waiting to Inhale: Cannabis Legalization and the Fight for Racial Justice*](#).

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Sudha Sabanadesan

Policy Analyst- Substance Use Lead, CMHA Ontario

Sudha Sabanadesan is the Lead Policy Analyst for substance use and addiction at CMHA Ontario. She previously worked at Toronto Public Health as a Policy Development Officer in the Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat to implement the Toronto Overdose Action Plan and led the City's health policy response on cannabis legalization. She has presented on drug policy extensively at conferences, panels, universities and community meetings, including providing expert testimony at a Senate of Canada Committee on cannabis legalization. Sudha played a key role in municipal by-law amendments to create healthier communities in Toronto, and she was instrumental in advancing equity-based policies for major initiatives in in disadvantaged communities.



Stacey Shanks (RP)

Counsellor- Therapeutic Justice Program, Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Addictions and Mental Health

Stacey Shanks, (MEd., Registered Psychotherapist) has been involved in providing support to persons experiencing mental health and addictions for over 15 years. Most of that time has been spent assisting individuals who intersect with the criminal justice system through various roles, including court support, outreach, case management, and as a therapist. Stacey has been working with Lanark Leeds-Grenville Addictions and Mental Health since 2015 and has been involved with the Therapeutic Justice Program since 2017. Currently, she is involved with the Drug Treatment Court, Mental Health Court Clinic, and Custody Release Clinic clients. Along with her Drug Treatment Court colleagues, Stacey has helped to redevelop the agency's Drug Treatment Court approach to use a phased treatment model for all justice-involved clients.

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Trevor Tymchuk

Project Consultant

Trevor is a person with lived experience of the mental health and justice systems. He first became involved with the HSJCC in 2000. He is a member of the London Local HSJCC and the Southwest Regional HSCC. Actively involved with the Provincial HSJCC, Trevor chairs the Communications & Knowledge Exchange Committee, and he co-chairs both the Conference Planning and Persons with Lived Experience Committees. He also provides advice to the Cannabis and Drug Treatment Court Research Project. Trevor is a past chair of the Northeast Regional HSJCC and the Niagara Local HSJCC.



Candace Vena

Director of Justice Policy, CMHA Ontario

Candace is currently the Director of Justice Policy at the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario Division. Over the last five years, she has been a member of the Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee (HSJCC) Secretariat in various roles that support the important work of the HSJCC Network. Candace has been involved in the successful planning and development of several HSJCC events, reports and partnerships including Racialized Populations and Mental Health Court Diversion, Police-Hospital Transitions, Housing and Justice, Specialized Courts, Community Reintegration Planning Tables and Provincial HSJCC Conferences.

Candace holds a BA Honours degree in Political Science and Criminal Justice Policy as well as a MA in Criminology and Criminal Justice Policy. Candace has also completed the Osgoode Certificate in Mental Health Law.