



**Meeting Minutes
November 5, 2020
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Present: Katie Almond (Co-chair) Riverdale Probation and Parole; Natasha Bartlett, Fred Victor; Debbie Lynch, CTYS; Judy Virgo, Fred Victor; Vesna Milinkovic, Fred Victor; Gord Reid, Toronto Police Services 14 Division; Flora Matheson, Centre for Urban Health Solutions; Robin Cuff, CAMH Drug Treatment Court; Mary Hogan, Judiciary; Scott Skinner, Community Network of Specialized Care Toronto Region; Charlene Crews, Toronto Housing; Amber Kellen, JHS Toronto; Cylene Rainville, LOFT Community Services; Natasha Bronfman, CMHA; Esther Daniel, Justice of the Peace; Robyn Miller, CHIRS; Michael French, Defense Counsel; Dara Gordon, Women’s College Hospital; Courtney Miller, Operation Springboard; Leemor Valin, Duty Counsel; Elizabeth Witzke, Legal Aid Ontario

Welcome and Introductions

Katie welcomed the committee members. Robin Cuff provided assistance with the attendance and Chat questions.

Review of September 10, 2020 Minutes

Approval of the minutes of September 10, 2020 was deferred as committee members had not had the opportunity to review them.

Review Action Items:

None reviewed.

Presentation for next meeting:

Katie informed that there had been some communication with an organization working with the encampments, but had not yet been able to further connect. Will follow up.

Lunch and Learns

The next Lunch N’ Learn will take place virtually today. It is the same as last month’s: “Effectively Working with People using Crystal Methamphetamine” with Sanda Kazazic. All Local HSJCC members are invited to attend. The October launch of the webinar had more than 300 people signing in, which exceeded the capacity of the platform. Many thanks to Pilar Ramirez for her assistance setting up today’s webinar.

How is COVID-19 affecting service delivery in your organization, sector and/or community?/Legal Aid barriers and challenges

- Cylene from LOFT advised that the head office is closed; there is nowhere to do intakes, so staff must interview clients outside, which is a challenge with client confidentiality and colder weather; sometimes use meeting rooms, libraries, patios
- Amber related that JHS is providing PPE for clients when they attend to meet with a worker—in person, but distanced.
- Vesna noted that Fred Victor is having the same problem, and has used locations in the community, as they want to continue meeting with clients where they reside/spend time; there has been a reduction in the number of contacts for court diversion—about 50% which is not ideal.
- Both Amber Kellen and Robin Cuff noted similar issues with decreased client contact
- Scott Skinner related that their Luminous crisis network funding is almost depleted and will not be replenished until April 2021; there are challenges of providing PPE and running out of funding.
- Debbie Lynch of CTYS noted the challenges with virtual court for clients—there are long waits, they often do not have a reliable cell phone; sometimes the number or codes are wrong and they can't get through; issue of bench warrants being issued for no-shows?; try to see some clients in the office but they are afraid to take transit; noted some success when can have discussion with the Crown re withdrawing charges.
- Esther Daniel related that case management courts are going late—sometimes 9 am to 830 at night; trying to do different things at different courts; use of Zoom, breakout rooms; try to make contact with Duty Counsel or Crown Attorney and advise the client; some have trouble getting through on the phone line; courts are trying to move things forward with set-dates/remand.
- Justice Hogan admitted that it is chaotic at times; they are trying not to issues bench warrants and agreed that regular contact with D/C and CA is important; difficulties are with self-represented people; issues with TSDC regarding releases—papers are sent electronically but people not released in a timely manner; unconscionable that people are released without proper winter clothing, although some provision is made for women who have been released from Vanier via the TSDC.
- Katie related that she had a client released without warm clothing on a cold night; he slept in a porta-potty to try and stay warm.
- Amber asked about people being released very late in the day—they need support but none is available ; clients are given taxi chits to go to the JHS but don't go—a huge challenge without the Reintegration Centre on site; shelter system is full; what is the solution?
- Duty Counsel noted the releases from TSDC are not always during daytime hours
- Robin noted midnight releases, and attempts to have staff waiting for clients in the parking lot of the jail; issues of amount of time to process—if not by afternoon, then 8 or 9 pm.
- Cylene asked what agencies are doing for the holidays; an acknowledgement by others that they had not discussed this yet; Robin related that DTC provided take-out Thanksgiving Dinner for clients and also delivered dinners to those in their housing programs or whoever could not make it.

- Debbie Lynch informed that CTYS provides gift cards of up to \$10 for food; holiday plans have not yet been discussed.
- Natasha Bartlett indicated that a MH Court subcommittee has been struck to address gaps in service.
- Duty Counsel noted that the new bail “hub” will be at Metro West Court at the 427/401—very far from the services that OCH and CP clients use.
- Robin observed that this proposed model is a nightmare.
- Duty Counsel noted that there are delays getting through on the LAO phone line; they are trying to get back to people as fast as possible; not sure of certificate wait times; major challenge serving clients at TSDC—can’t always get the Bail Programme or Fred Victor to talk to them; have to adjourn matters.
- Debbie agreed that calling Legal Aid has been a problem.
- Gord Reid informed that they are using Form 9 and 10 releases when possible; 14 Division is conducting daily wellness checks on the encampments in their area.
- When will the courts fully open? Justice Hogan stated that there are a lot of in-person courts operating; there have been some COVID cases at the courts so staff shortages; some witnesses do not feel comfortable attending court, so they are using hybrid Zoom proceedings.
- Elizabeth Witzke advised that D/C are not to go back to the courts until January 2021.
- Robin related that they are having Zoom meetings with DTC clients, as the courthouse will not give them court time; a challenge to have graduation/sentencing.

Agency/Organization Updates

Flora Matheson informed that she has received a new grant, with funding from CIHR and MOH, to study service disruptions for clients with MH and substance use issues who have been released from custody; the study will consist of three quick cycles; Katie is the primary knowledge user as a member of the HSJCC; Flora will provide a one-pager.

Video Bail – no updates

Service Resolution/Coordination Issues:

Katie indicated that she has not had the chance to complete the Terms of Reference. She will discuss this further with Domenica and Susan and report back.

Updates from T-HSJCC and Provincial HSJCC:

Katie reported that planning has started for the virtual Provincial HSJCC 2021 conference. The Toronto Regional HSJCC meeting has not yet been rescheduled.

Presenter for next meeting: TBA; Robin noted the need to address issues at the planned Bail Centre; Specialized Courts, OW/ODSP changes; client’s issues with access to services due to not having internet access, cell phones or computers.

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 7, 2021 (virtually) from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.