

DURHAM HS&JCC: MEETING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY

One of the primary mandates of HS&JCCs throughout the province is to develop strategies to address the needs of individuals who present with complex, challenging issues that cannot be met effectively by any one provincial ministry or sector in our communities. As noted in the original Human Services and Justice Coordination Project report, the Project “was set up in response to a recognized need to better coordinate, resource and plan services for people with clinical needs who come into conflict with the law”¹ (p. 1). Recently, the Durham HS&JCC has responded to a situation that reaffirmed this important HS&JCC mandate.

The Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) member of the Durham HS&JCC identified an individual in the community who had multiple contacts with police services and had used a variety of resources extensively. They were contacted once beginning in 2006, gradually increasing to 2 contacts in 2007, 5 contacts in 2008, 19 contacts in 2009, and 17 contacts by the end of June 2010, with 12 of these contacts occurring in June alone! Not only were the number of contacts increasing over time but the seriousness of the calls was also escalating, with the most recent incident resulting in her arrest based on a call to the police when she stated she had a knife and was standing in a school yard. The police and the Tactical Support Unit attended, the school was locked down, the kids were kept inside, and the individual was arrested. The police did not want to put her in front of the courts but felt they had no other options given the multiple calls and the gravity of the most recent incident. The DRPS came to the Durham HS&JCC looking for effective strategies on how to deal with this individual with the hope of eliminating contacts with the police initiated by her.

The challenge with this individual was that none of the services, individually, could assist her in meeting her clinical needs. She did not meet the criteria for admission to either an acute or tertiary care facility; she also did not meet the criteria for ongoing involvement by an ACTT or individual case management provided by community-based mental health services.

In an effort to assist in addressing this matter, a special meeting was called that included representatives from Ontario Shores for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores), DRPS, Durham Mental Health Services (DMHS), Community Mental Health Association (CMHA) – Durham, ACTT Coordinator (CMHA – Durham), and a Crown Attorney. The goal was to generate a solution to assist this individual to meet her mental health/clinical needs and to decrease, if not eliminate, her incessant contacts with the police.

Following a 2-hour meeting, a coordinated care plan was created for her, which involved several sectors and mental health services, as follows:

- She will be seen by a psychiatrist from an acute care facility every day, Monday to Friday;

¹ Government of Ontario (1997). A Provincial Strategy to Coordinate Human Services and Criminal Justice Systems in Ontario. Human Services and Justice Coordination Project. Queen’s Printer for Ontario, Toronto, Ontario.

- She will be offered the opportunity to attend all groups offered by ACTT, despite the fact that she doesn't meet the criteria for ACTT;
- She will be registered as an outpatient in a tertiary care facility for ongoing support and to facilitate admission if and when required;
- She will be encouraged to participate in programs offered at a local addiction service to address ongoing challenges with addictions;
- She will receive grief counselling from a Social Worker from a community-based mental health agency; and
- The Crown Attorney will work proactively with her Counsel and have the matter dealt with by the Diversion Program which would provide her with a Case Manager.

The success indicator for this coordinated care plan was the number of phone calls received by the police following the implementation of the care plan. For the 6 weeks following the development of this care plan, the police received no phone calls from this individual while she continued to reside in the community! This suggests that this individual's mental health needs, which were not served well previously, are now being met.

The commitment of all members of the Durham HS&JCC to work in a coordinated fashion to meet the needs of an individual who was becoming criminalized as a result of not having her mental health needs met represents an affirmation of the spirit of the original Human Services and Justice Coordination Project. Affecting lives in such a positive way is the *raison d'être* of our HS&JCCs and provides further justification for their ongoing support throughout the province.

Submitted by:
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