

Hon. Doug Downey
Attorney General of Ontario
McMurtry-Scott Building, 11th Floor,
720 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Hon. Christine Elliott
Minister of Health
College Park 5th Floor,
777 Bay Street
Toronto Ontario M7A 2J3

Hon. Sylvia Jones
Solicitor General of Ontario
George Drew Building, 18th Floor,
25 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y6

Hon. Todd Smith
Minister of Children, Community and
Social Services
Macdonald Block Rm M2B-88,
77 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Hon. Michael Tibollo
Associate Minister,
Mental Health and Addictions
Whitney Block, 1st Floor, Rm 1618,
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

March 30, 2020

Dear Attorney General Downey, Minister Elliott, Solicitor General Jones, Minister Smith, and Associate Minister Tibollo:

Re: Impact of COVID-19 on service delivery across the Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee Network

On behalf of the Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee, I am writing to you today regarding COVID-19 and its impact on service delivery across our network.

We thank you for your commitment to supporting individuals living with mental health and addictions issues and your stated \$12 million investment for our sector in *Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19*. We also appreciate your ongoing commitment to consulting with representatives of the community-based human services and justice sectors during this challenging time.

Our network affirms the importance of a coordinated, cross-sectoral approach to address issues affecting Ontarians in conflict with the law and its effective means of reducing criminalization across the province. We remain committed to providing essential supports to communities that face multiple barriers to accessing health care.

For the human services and justice sectors to continue to provide the often life-saving treatment and services Ontarians need, we urge you to consider the following priorities from our network and invest in a critical emergency response fund to address these critical issues:

- **Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) is urgently needed for human services and justice system providers**, prioritizing community mental health and addictions, supportive housing, consumption treatment and overdose prevention sites, policing, corrections and intensive services that require face-to-face treatment. Our network's service providers work with marginalized and heavily stigmatized populations, who often face barriers in accessing care and are otherwise disengaged from health care. Community-based service providers must remain accessible for the people who need them, and PPE

(which includes but is not limited to: masks, gowns, gloves, protective eye equipment/face shields, hand sanitizer, etc.) must be made accessible to them with the same urgency given to hospital-based providers.

- **Additional funding is required to expand technology and digital solutions** to continue to provide high-quality, easily accessible, confidential services such as counselling and therapy, harm reduction, court support, supportive housing, corrections and reintegration services by phone or through virtual means (i.e. purchasing phones, laptops, and secure privacy-compliant virtual platforms for service providers to enable virtual therapy, and providing phone-minutes or devices to clients).
- **It is also essential that service providers are given flexibility with regards to fiscal year-end spending**, specifically the ability to roll-over any potential surpluses from the 2019/2020 fiscal year and reallocate remaining 2019/2020 funds in response to COVID-19. In addition, we ask that all existing base funding levels are sustained in 2020/2021.

Earlier this year, the Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee provided a [submission](#) to the Government of Ontario and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to inform the 2020 provincial budget.

Our network requested \$50 million in annualized funding in support for human services and justice services across Ontario, and \$500,000 increase for our network to continue our work to support this population. This request mirrors the provincial investment that was made at the inception of our network over 15 years ago. We strongly encourage you to consider this request, as a funding increase is crucial to sustain our existing capacity and meet growing demands. Our network would be happy to work with government to develop a multi-year investment plan for these funds.

We thank you in advance for your willingness to work with us on these issues. We are committed to continuing to work collaboratively with government and partners across the health, social services and justice sectors to deliver a robust response to COVID-19 that ensures our most vulnerable Ontarians and their mental health and well-being continue to be supported.

Please feel free to contact us through Uppala Chandrasekera, Director of Public Policy, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, by email at uchandrasekera@ontario.cmha.ca should you have any questions, comments or wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



SARA DIAS

Sara Dias
Co-Chair, Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee
807-468-1838 Ext:229
sdias@cmhak.on.ca

cc David Garland, Chief of Staff, Solicitor General's Office (SOLGEN)
Joseph Hillier, Chief of Staff, Attorney General's Office (MAG)
Sarah Letersky, Chief of Staff, Minister's Office (MCCSS)
Allan MacDermid, Chief of Staff, Associate Minister's Office (MH&A)
Heather Watt, Chief of Staff, Minister's Office (MOH)

About the HSJCC Network

Ontario's [Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee Network](#) was established in 1997 in response to a recognized need across the province to coordinate resources and services, and plan more effectively for people who are in conflict with the law. Our priority consideration is for, but not limited to, people with a serious mental illness, developmental disability, acquired brain injury, substance use issues, and/or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The network is a cooperative effort of the Ministries of the Attorney General, Children, Community and Social Services, Health, and the Solicitor General.

Our network includes 1,600+ members across Ontario. Each HSJCC is a voluntary collaboration between social service organizations, mental health and addictions organizations and partners from the justice sector, including police services, legal aid services, Crown attorneys, correctional and probation officers. There are 14 Regional HSJCCs who work to improve the issues that impact individuals regionally who require human services as they navigate through the criminal justice system. Over 39 Local HSJCCs provide education and training for their members, coordinate care for justice-involved individuals in their communities and provide input to regional committees.

The Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee functions as a planning body, supporting the individual and collective efforts of the Local and Regional HSJCCs. The table also identifies and addresses provincial service and policy issues, makes recommendations, and identifies system level solutions.