

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, ON 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

June 25, 2020

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

Re: Continued 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 (HSJCC), we are writing to you today to thank you for your continued work regarding COVID-19. **We are urgently requesting that you take immediate action to resolve an emergency involving COVID-19 related changes to insurance policies which, if left unresolved, will result in the imminent shutdown of community service providers across Ontario.**

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a profound impact on the insurance industry and their clients. As insurers and reinsurers are now looking at ways to protect themselves from COVID-19 and future pandemic events, the industry is beginning to add exclusionary language to their policies related to contagious diseases. Organizations within the health care sector are particularly vulnerable to the risks associated with widespread changes to insurance policies.

As you may be aware, many community-based health care providers in Ontario are currently insured with Aviva Canada. Aviva Canada has recently added a "Contagious Disease Exclusion" to their coverage, which will exclude coverage for any claim, action or occurrence resulting directly or indirectly to specific diseases as listed, including Coronavirus (COVID-19), SARS and others, and to any contagious, infectious or communicable diseases, illnesses or viruses that are well known to be pandemic and widespread in Canada. Aviva Canada is but one example of a larger trend towards contagious disease exclusion language among insurance providers. Across Ontario, health care insurers are being hit especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and are introducing exclusions specific to the outbreak and/or have stopped writing any new business in the health care segment.

This leaves health care agencies with limited options for pandemic coverage going forward. Community-based health care organization who do not have adequate insurance coverage may be forced to cease operations to limit the risk of lawsuits. If these organizations are not able to get adequate coverage, the result will be province-wide Board resignations. This will ultimately result in

community-based health care organizations being forced to close their doors to clients, leading to an immediate and severe reduction in health care service for Ontarians.

Our network affirms the importance of a coordinated, cross-sectoral approach to addressing issues affecting Ontarians in conflict with the law and its effective means of reducing criminalization across the province. Our commitment to provide essential supports to these populations cannot be achieved if our community health partners are forced to close their doors. Clients leaving correctional facilities will not be able to attend their local community organization for reintegration services such as mental health and substance use programming and housing supports. As courts begin to open across Ontario, our court support workers will not be able to attend to help individuals with mental health and substance use issues navigate the court system and access the services they need.

Mobile crisis response teams (MCRTs) across the province that have remained operational during the pandemic or that recently resumed operations are beginning to cease operations because the mental health partner organization is no longer insured to provide services. As you may know, MCRTs are partnerships between police officers and mental health and addictions workers who respond to 911 mental health crisis calls. These teams de-escalate the crisis situation, conduct a clinical assessment, and connect the client to appropriate community services. These teams are recognized around the world as having lower use of force incidents than a traditional police officer response and divert clients from unnecessary hospital or criminal justice system involvement.

The Provincial HSJCC is concerned that the closure of mental health organizations across Ontario will have a catastrophic impact on vulnerable individuals who interact with police, are at risk of criminal justice system involvement or are being released from custody. We ask you to intervene immediately. If the provincial government fails to act **immediately**, community-based health care providers will be uninsured and will be forced to close their doors. This will send shockwaves across the health care system and is expected to have a significant negative impact on Ontario's economy. **We ask that you intervene immediately to preserve community health care in Ontario.**

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,



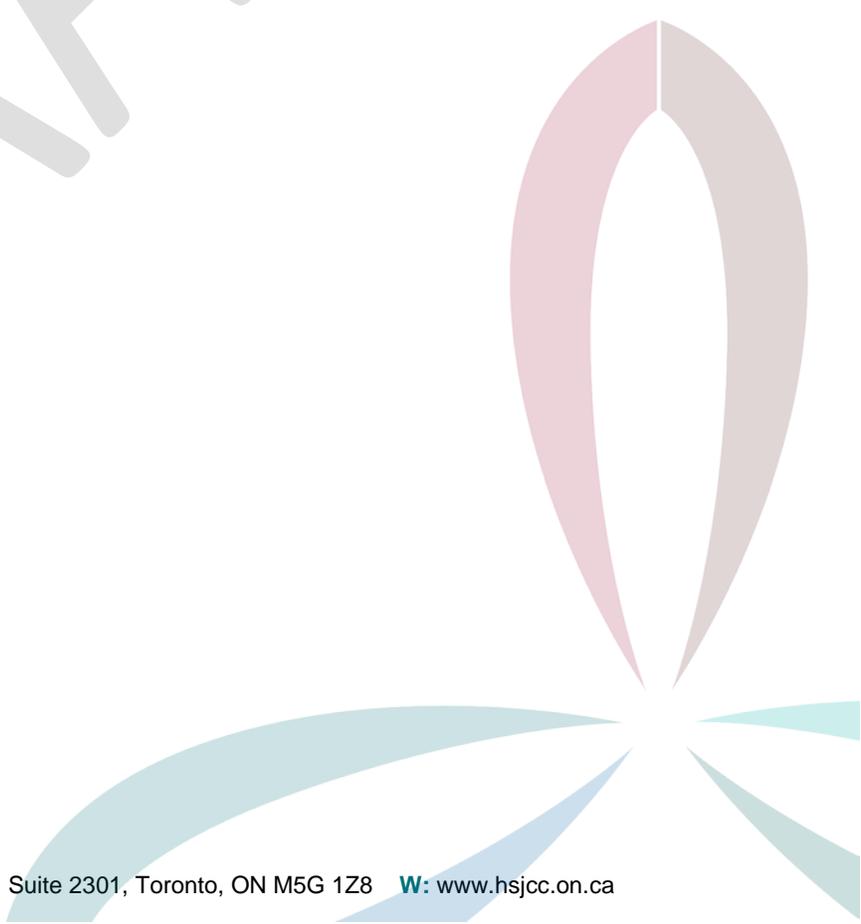
SARA DIAS

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)
Mario Di Tommaso, Deputy Solicitor General, Community Safety (SOLGEN)
Deborah Richardson, Deputy Solicitor General, Correctional Services (SOLGEN)
Irwin Glasberg, Deputy Attorney General (MAG)
Janet Menard, Deputy Minister (MCCSS)

Helen Angus, Deputy Minister (MOH)
Ragaven Sabaratnam, Assistant Deputy Minister (A), Mental Health and Addictions (MOH)
Chief Paul Pedersen, President, Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP)
Commissioner Thomas Carrique, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)

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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.

Earlier this year, the Provincial HSJCC also 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.