

# PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2022

## HSJCC PRIORITY AREAS: CRISIS RESPONSE

### ABOUT THE HSJCC NETWORK

The Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committees (HSJCCs) were established in response to a recognized need to coordinate resources and services, and plan more effectively for people who are in conflict with the law. Priority consideration is given to individuals with complex human service needs, which may include, but are not limited to, those living with mental health issues, substance use concerns and/or behavioral dependencies, or neurodevelopmental and neurocognitive disabilities including developmental disabilities and dual diagnosis. The committees were generated as a cooperative effort between the Ministries of the Attorney General; Children, Community and Social Services; Health; and the Solicitor General.

Regional committees were established to coordinate communication and service integration planning between health, criminal justice, and developmental service organizations within specific regions. Local committees provide input to these regional groups. The Provincial Committee, consisting of regional chairs and Ministry representatives, has been developed as a provincial planning body.

### CRISIS RESPONSE

- The Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee (P-HSJCC) has long been involved in examining the role police play in crisis response.
- In 2012, the P-HSJCC began a province-wide project to improve police-hospital transitions. In Ontario, a person experiencing a mental health or addictions related crisis may be apprehended by police officers under the *Mental Health Act*, and subsequently accompanied to a hospital emergency department for assessment and care.
- This process can have a number of negative impacts on everyone involved. These can include an increase in demands on police and hospital resources, longer wait times, and impact the care of the person in crisis.
- The P-HSJCC's resulting [Framework and Toolkit](#), endorsed by government in 2019, provides information on how police services and hospitals can work together to develop protocols for apprehensions under the Mental Health Act.
- As the province responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that individuals experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis require a compassionate response.
- This includes evidence-based approaches such as Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRTs), which partner a specially trained police officer with a crisis worker such as a social worker or nurse.

- Community mobile crisis response models composed of a pair of crisis workers are shown to be an effective alternative to police-led approaches where police are not required and/or there is not a risk to public safety
- Investments in both police-led and community-led mobile crisis responses are needed to ensure individuals experiencing a crisis receive a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive response, available 24/7 across all regions of the province.
- MCRTs help to de-escalate crisis situations at the scene. The work of these teams is crucial in diverting individuals from local emergency departments (where appropriate), helping to reduce strain on the health care system.
- MCRTs also improve outcomes for people in crisis by ensuring that individuals are connected with local services in the community for further support.
- MCRTs also help to divert individuals in crisis away from the criminal justice system, reducing pressure on police, the court system and the provincial correctional system.
- There is no standard mobile crisis response model; police and non-police models exist. There is a need for greater training and awareness of system capacity for these models. This presents an opportunity to establish provincial guidance and best practices for integrated and non-police crisis response models.
- While there are some common police and non-police crisis response models, they can be customized to the unique needs and resources of the community that a team serves.
- Expanding MCRTs to all communities will help to support individuals who are experiencing a mental health or addictions crisis.
- In response to the evolving pandemic, new models have been developed to respond to mental health and addictions crises, including crisis call diversion pilots and programs.
- In 2021, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) announced their Crisis Call Diversion Program, which embeds mental health and addictions crisis workers into OPP Communications Centres.
- Once a call has been received, crisis workers can be engaged to help individuals experiencing a crisis by providing resources and tools, offering referrals to services, supports, and system navigation.
- Crisis workers can also help officers who receive a call from an individual in crisis by assisting with preliminary de-escalation. Individuals who use this service are able to get the help that they need, all while reducing the need for police to respond to non-emergency situations.

## THE PROVINCIAL HSJCC RECOMMENDS:

1. Increased funding to deliver service improvements to existing MCRTs and an expansion of MCRTs across the province. Explore alternative funding streams for the various crisis response models; and
2. Governments at all levels support collaborative system efforts to develop, maintain and expand MCRTs as well as investigate and support system structure and development to include non-police crisis response, including:
  - a. Supporting the development and maintenance of relationships between community organizations, hospitals and police services;
  - b. Funding the development and delivery of standardized training for crisis workers and police officers;
  - c. Directing programs to collect and report consistent data; and
  - d. Evaluating data to support continuous quality improvement and program development.