

PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2022

HSJCC PRIORITY AREAS: SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

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.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

BACKGROUND

- Improving supportive housing for justice-involved individuals with mental health and substance use issues has been a longstanding priority issue for the HSJCC Network¹.
- Numerous reports outline the complex relationship between housing, mental health issues, and justice-involvement, which can lead to instability and ignite a cycle between homelessness and incarceration.
- The broader social determinants of health² can also reinforce these issues as poverty and social inequality can create or exacerbate housing instability, mental health and substance use issues, and the risk of justice-involvement.

1 HSJCC Network engagement and recommendations on improving supportive housing for justice-involved individuals with mental health and substance use issues were included in the Provincial HSJCC's Housing and Justice Report (February 2020). Online: [HSJCC_Housing-Justice-Report_EN-updated.pdf](#)

2 The social determinants of health are conditions in the environments where people live, learn, and work that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes.

- Supportive housing³ is an essential way to interrupt the cycle between mental health issues, justice involvement, and homelessness. Providing access to housing with supports plays a preventive and recovery role.
- Supportive housing also has wider economic benefits across the health care, social services, and justice sectors. Every \$10 invested in supportive housing results in an average savings of \$21.72 in areas such as reduced hospitalizations and interactions with the justice system⁴.

BARRIERS:

- People that are experiencing mental health challenges and have previous involvement with the justice system face severe barriers to accessing supportive housing, including:

I) HOUSING SUPPLY

- The number of people on waitlists for supportive housing in Ontario is growing and the demand for supportive housing has long outpaced supply.
- The current shortfall of supportive housing has a disproportionate impact on individuals discharged from custody facilities and courts, since this population is often discharged without a fixed address.
- Experts have consistently identified the immediate need for 30,000 new supportive housing units across Ontario⁵.

II) SUPPORT SERVICES

- The needs of supportive housing applicants with justice involvement are typically much more complex than the general population. Prominent needs of justice-involved populations include but are not limited to mental health and substance use services, crisis management, social connections and employment, and integrated trauma supports.
- Support services across the province are failing to meet the diverse needs of justice-involved populations for a variety of reasons, including varying definitions and understandings of support within the sector, misalignment between client need and the types and intensities of supports provided, a lack of standardized assessments, gaps in the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works policies that increase the risk of housing loss for individuals released from custody, and a need for more collaborative approaches to discharge planning in correctional facilities⁶.

III) STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION

- Due to stigma and discrimination, the challenge of obtaining appropriate housing is further compounded for people with complex needs.
- Community service providers consistently report that landlords may discriminate against this population for reasons such as having criminal records, showing past patterns of disruptive behaviour, having multiple complex social and health care needs, and having inconsistent tenancy histories.
- Addressing the complex needs of the HSJCC's priority populations requires a targeted and coordinated response.

3 Supportive housing generally refers to individuals living independently in the community who may need on- or off-site supports. Supports include clinical mental health and substance use services (i.e. case management, assertive community treatment, etc.) and social supports (i.e. employment, peer support, and life skills, etc.)

4 Goering, Paula, et al. (2014) National Final Report. Cross-site at Home/Chez Soi Project. Mental Health Commission of Canada. Online: [mhcc at home report national cross-site eng 2 0.pdf \(mentalhealthcommission.ca\)](#)

5 Ontario Mental Health and Addiction Leadership Advisory Council. (2016). Mental health and addictions. Moving forward: Better mental health means better health.

6 P-HSJCC Housing & Justice Report (February 2020). Online: [HSJCC_Housing-Justice-Report_EN-updated.pdf](#)

THE PROVINCIAL HSJCC RECOMMENDS:

1. Dedicated, long-term investments in supportive housing for individuals with complex needs who are involved with the criminal justice system, including increased funding for capital costs, rent subsidies, and case management supports.
2. Reserving 10-20% of the 30,000 new units of supportive housing for justice-involved individuals.
3. Government at all levels should support increased collaboration and co-operation between the health care, social services, and justice sectors, including:
 - a. Coordinated funding announcements across ministries that provide housing with appropriate support dollars.
 - b. Developing standardized policies and practices for all supportive housing programs, including standard definitions of support levels, common assessment tools, and coordinated data collection.
 - c. Enhancing the continuity of care through more standardized discharge planning and connections to supportive housing programs for individuals released from custody.