

## **Mental Health and Addiction Sector Responds to the Ontario's Transformation Agenda**

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Ontario, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs (OFCMHAP) are pleased that the Ontario government released more information this week about their transformation agenda including more details about the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs).

Although there are still many unknowns about LHINs and how they will be implemented, we support the government's goal of transforming the health care sector into a system that is truly able to provide a continuum of care to people in their communities. The fact that the government specifically acknowledged the critical role that community-based services play within the overall system is very significant for people who need services for mental health and addiction problems.

Mental health and addiction care has long been the orphan of the health care system, so we are particularly pleased that the Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) continues to champion the needs of people experiencing mental illness and addiction issues.

In anticipation of this announcement, our sector came together in September to identify key themes that must guide this government in its health care transformation agenda if it is to be of benefit to people living with mental health and addictions issues and their families. Our initial advice about the principles and criteria for assessing change, and ensuring better care and treatment for people experiencing addiction and mental illness is as follows:

### Principles for a Transformed Health Care System

- Addiction and mental health care must be integral to a transformed system.
- Consumers and families must be at the centre of the transformation agenda and involved in all aspects of planning, decision-making, implementation and service delivery.
- Access to housing, income, employment and social supports is critical to treatment and recovery. Without investments in these areas, the government's transformation agenda cannot fully address the addiction and mental health needs of Ontarians.

### Preliminary Criteria for Evaluating LHINs

- For LHINs to truly enable an integrated health care system that provides a continuum of care for people in their communities they should include *all* parts of the system. .

- LHINs must plan and fund services based on population needs, respond to local communities and be able to address the needs of diverse communities and marginalized groups. LHINs must have the mandate, authority and resources to do this work effectively. The true success of the LHINs should be measured by the impact they have for the most marginalized populations – specifically people with mental health and addiction issues.
- Accountability relationships must occur horizontally among organizations, as well as vertically between consumers, families, service providers and government.
- There must be continued investment in community-based services to ensure the capacity is in the system to reduce hospitalization and meet people's needs in the community.

We are pleased that many of the principles the government announced yesterday are consistent with this advice.

Although we are concerned about the limited time to prepare, we do intend to participate in the government's consultation process. This is an opportunity to continue working with the Ontario government to plan a mental health and addiction system that is an integral part of the mainstream health care sector.

We look forward to learning more about the implementation process for the LHINs so that we can continue to contribute to the government's efforts, and ensure the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable people are met.

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