

Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition

April 17, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: MEMBERSHIP IN THE MENTAL HEALTH POLICE RECORDS COALITION

In an effort to eradicate the police's discriminatory practice of releasing non-criminal information, particularly mental health information, several stakeholders are working together to form the Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition. The Coalition will be co-chaired by the Ontario Association of Patient Councils, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario and the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office.

Attached please find a copy of the Coalition's mission statement which outlines our principles, goals and members. Please check off one of the following boxes to indicate the degree of your willingness to participate with the Coalition:

I would like to be a member of the Coalition as an individual.

Name: _____

Email: _____

I would like to be a member of the Coalition on behalf of and approved by the organization/group.

Name: _____

Name of Organization: _____

Email: _____

I do not want to be a member of the Coalition but I would like to attend meetings and/or receive information about the work of the Coalition.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Do not hesitate to contact us at (416) 327-7000 or 1-800-578-2343 if you have any questions or comments. Please forward the completed form to Dorothy Bursey via fax at (416) 327-7008 by **May 15, 2007**.

Thank you for your involvement and dedication to this important issue.

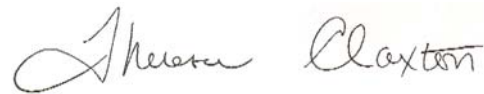
Yours truly,



David Simpson
Director (A)
Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office



Nicole Zahradnik
Community Mental Health Analyst
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario



Theresa Claxton
Chair
Ontario Association of Patient Councils

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Issue

When individuals have non-criminal contact with the police, information about the contact is included in their police file. Consequently, if individuals request a police records check for the purpose of working or volunteering with a vulnerable population, the non-criminal information is disclosed. Many consumers, family members and stakeholders are unaware of this practice and its harmful effects.

The coalition believes that this practice is discriminatory towards individuals with mental illness and disability. Reporting such information erroneously suggests that these individuals did something wrong or committed a criminal activity. The disclosure can negatively impact an individual's wellness, recovery and ability to pursue career, educational, vocational and volunteer aspirations. A process that is more respectful of and sensitive to the needs of individuals with mental illness and disability must be adopted by police services across Ontario.

Principles

The Coalition is guided by the following principles:

- A collaborative approach where we work with stakeholders and the police to effect change.
- To ensure that all individuals with mental illness and disability are treated as equal members of the community.
- To uphold the rights of individuals with mental illness and disability as they should not be subjected to discriminatory practices.
- To address both the discriminatory practice and effects of disclosing non-criminal information as part of the police records check program.
- To raise awareness among consumers, families, stakeholders, the public and police how the process reinforces stigma, fear and discrimination against individuals with mental illness and disability.
- To change current practices to ensure that persons with mental illness and disability are treated with respect.

Goals

The Coalition will work to achieve the following goals:

- To educate consumers, families, stakeholders, agencies and police regarding the practice and impact of the release of non-criminal information.
- To advocate for the development of consistent standards for police records searches across the province.

- To eliminate the discriminatory practice of releasing non-criminal information as part of the police records search process. This is the ultimate goal of the coalition – to advocate for something less implies that people with mental illness and disability are not equal members of society.

Membership

The following organizations and individuals support the principles and goals of the Coalition:

- Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario
- Ontario Association of Patient Councils
- Others to be listed

The Coalition will be co-chaired by the Ontario Association of Patient Councils, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario and the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office. The Coalition always welcomes new members.

Additional Information

More information about the Coalition, including its views and activities, can be found at <http://www.ppaio.gov.on.ca/ser-adv-sys-pol.html>.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

David Simpson
Director (A)
Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office
Tel: 416.327.7004

Nicole Zahradnik
Community Mental Health Analyst
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario
Tel: 416.977.5580 Ext.4123

Theresa Claxton
Chair
Ontario Association of Patient Councils
Tel: 416.633.9420 Ext. 6967

Lisa Romano
Legal Counsel
Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office
Tel: 416.327.7002