

Great Learning and Networking at Durham Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee Event

The Durham Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee (HSJCC) hosted a full day event on March 25, 2015 in Oshawa and welcomed participants from community agencies, legal services, justice system, hospitals, healthcare and various Durham Region services.

The Durham HSJCC is 1 of 14 provincially-mandated committees established to coordinate communication and service integration planning between health, criminal justice, and developmental service organizations within specific regions. This Regional committee, in Durham, stemmed due to the Central East LHIN's priority on Aboriginal engagement.

"I was honoured to attend this event on behalf the Central East LHIN. It was wonderful to see such a diverse group of Service Providers from Mental Health and Addictions, Child and Youth and Justice Sectors come together to learn more about Indigenous Peoples that they serve and sharing their experiences. We can all take an active role in improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples by honouring and responding to their stories, and events such as these are a great way to begin to do this." stated Jai Mills, Lead Aboriginal Strategy Consultant Sr. for CE LHIN.

The speakers provided presentations relating to the history of Aboriginal cultures, mental health and challenges within the criminal justice system. Kelly Brownbill an Aboriginal Educator, Facilitator and Consultant affirmed messages of 'balance' and 'relationship' as common threads throughout her presentation as she energetically conveyed the importance of service providers gaining client perspective. She explained Aboriginal people are the product of inter-generational trauma brought about by the impact of successive government policies designed to eradicate Aboriginal people as a people in Canada.

"It is important for service providers to have consideration of historical issues when addressing the complexities of Aboriginal health and wellness," says Brownbill.

Following lunch, Jonathan Rudin Program Director from Aboriginal Legal Services Toronto spoke on issues of Aboriginal justice utilizing stories of clients he has worked with emphasizing to participants that every individual's experience, understanding and even admittance of their culture uniquely differs.

"Clients do not always willingly self-identify as being Aboriginal," stated Rudin *"often due to intergenerational trauma. It is important for people to be able to tell their story. Trauma for Aboriginal people is what happened to 'their people', not just 'their own' individual experience."*

1 in 4 adults in jail are Aboriginal and 1 in 3 youth in jail are Aboriginal. As well, there are more Aboriginal people in Ontario than in any other Province in Canada.

Rudin helped establish the Community Council – the first urban Aboriginal justice program in Canada and helped establish the Gladue (Aboriginal Persons) Court at the Old City Hall Courts in Toronto. It was explained to participants that the Gladue reports can be extremely useful when it comes to serving Aboriginal people in the justice system.

“Providing educational events like this for service providers helps to strengthen the system as a whole, and enhances services provided to people in need. This kind of collaboration is important to us.” states Rob Adams, Executive Director of DMHS and Chair for Durham HSJCC.

Attendees of the event were given a great deal to consider, as well as tools to use, when moving forward in a culturally sensitive way providing the best possible services for the clientele they serve.

Written by Christina Morino, PR and Communications Consultant for DMHS

Background Information:

Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee

The goal of the Provincial HSJCC is to provide a provincial leadership mechanism to support the implementation of the Ontario government’s policy framework (1997) for people who come into contact with the justice system and who have needs which can be met by one or more of the provincial human service systems. One of the main objectives is to support the individual and collective efforts of regional and local committees. For more information, visit www.hsjcc.on.ca

The Durham HSJCC is 1 of 14 provincially-mandated regional committees. For more information, contact Rob Adams, Executive Director of DMHS and Chair for the Durham HSJCC, radams@dmhs.ca

Durham Mental Health Services

DMHS has been serving Durham Region for over 25 years, and offers a range of programs to help individuals and families manage the impact of mental illness and work towards recovery. Services include immediate crisis support, longer term supportive housing, case management, mental health court support, consumer survivor initiatives and specialized services for families. DMHS works in partnership with local healthcare and human service providers to deliver accessible, coordinated, and person-centred care.

For more information, visit www.dmhs.ca