

## CMHA Ontario among experts at community safety forum

December 5, 2013

<http://ontario.cmha.ca/news/cmha-ontario-among-experts-at-community-safety-forum>

CMHA Ontario was among more than three dozen participants from many sectors across the province to share knowledge about comprehensive approaches to community safety during a special forum hosted by the Law Commission of Ontario (LCO).

The Nov. 22, 2013 event, Interactive Expert Forum on Integrated Approaches to Community Safety, was attended by 40 experts from education, justice, policing, health and academia. The day was led by Joanna Birenbaum, a research lawyer from LCO, who composed the background paper that was the basis of the small group discussions held throughout the forum. In brief, the paper outlined the purpose of the day, the definition of community safety and provides focus on three themes that were discussed:

- Municipal and provincial structures
- Shifting organizational culture – leadership, governance, accountability and incentives
- Collecting and sharing of information to improve integration

CMHA Ontario brought forth its policy expertise and examples from the ground level to help contextualize discussions throughout the day. For example, when discussing the first theme, reference was made to the structure of the Human Service and Justice Coordinating Committees (HSJCCs). The HSJCCs are an example of an inter-disciplinary group that is working to coordinate resources and services, and plan more effectively at the local, regional and provincial levels, to address the needs of individuals with mental health issues who have come into contact with the law. The ground-level examples of case management at the local HSJCCs were helpful in discussing a potential model or structure for addressing issues around community safety.

Another example that came up was the Prince Albert Hub Model (HUB) which has been successful in Saskatchewan's multi-agency community mobilization movement. The HUB is an interdisciplinary group of individuals working at the frontline who meet twice a week for 1.5 hours to resolve short term (24-48 hour response time) community issues. The HUB resolved more than 100 high-risk and complex need cases in the span of five months.

When discussing the second theme, experts talked about the need for a common language and a balance between provincial and municipal government responsibility in working together towards community safety. CMHA Ontario provided a practical example of our work with the HSJCCs where there is a difference in how the health sector and justice sector do its work. The health sector uses a client centered and therapeutic approach while the justice sector focuses on community safety. One of the key lessons learned from these collaborations is the need to establish common language and a way to work together under a broad mandate.

For more lessons in mental health and justice sector collaborations, read Carolyn S. Dewa's academic paper co-authored by two CMHA branch staff.

For the third and final theme, CMHA Ontario relayed its work with the HSJCC Network on mental health and police collaborations specifically in regard to the collecting and sharing of information. Across Ontario, the HSJCCs use different ways of sharing information with police while continuing to abide by the Personal Health Information and Protection Act legislation. One example of an innovative approach to sharing information is the "Guide to Sharing Information with Police and Dispatchers in Police Communication" developed by COAST Hamilton. This guide provides a clear outline of when Hamilton COAST workers can and cannot share information with Hamilton Police Services. Read the full report "Police & Mental Health: A Critical Review of Joint Police/Mental Health Collaborations in Ontario" on the HSJCC website.

Overall, the forum recognized the need for innovation and came up with some concrete steps for the LCO to proceed. One possible way forward is for the LCO to conduct a review of previous inquests on this issue and to follow up on whether the resulting recommendations have been implemented or still need to be addressed.

View the full LCO background paper "Comprehensive and Integrated Approaches to Community Safety: An Interactive Expert Forum to Identify Law, Policy and Process Gaps", visit on the LCO website.