



MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mental health problems and illnesses are substantially higher among persons involved with the criminal justice system than in the general population and are increasing over time.

Without adequate support and services in the community, many persons with mental illness continue to cycle through the prisons, hospitals, and shelters—at great cost to persons with mental illness, their caregivers and society.

What we are doing

The MHCC has been engaging with mental health and criminal justice professionals, service providers and people with lived experience. Our conversations have revealed a few key service and system needs:

- **Early intervention and prevention** supports and services prior to incarceration
- **Independence** in the oversight and provision of health and mental health services in corrections
- **Improved quality** of standards for mental health supports and services in corrections
- **Better continuity** of care from the community to correctional facilities and vice versa
- **Discharge planning and access** to meaningful supports upon release

Quick Facts

- ✓ Persons living with a mental health problem or illness are **more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators** of it.
- ✓ Mental illness rates for persons incarcerated in the federal system are **3x as high** as in the general population.
- ✓ Suicide rates for persons in federal custody are nearly **7x as high** and about **4x as high** for persons in provincial custody as in the general population.

We are continuing to explore this important area of work.

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