

Report advocates improved police training

August 29 2014, by Anne Craig

A new report released yesterday by the Mental Health Commission of Canada identifies ways to improve the mental health training and education that police personnel receive.

"People with [mental illnesses](#) is a prominent issue for Canada's [police](#) community, and today's report builds on the increasingly collaborative relationship between law enforcement and people with mental illnesses," says Queen's adjunct professor Dorothy Cotton, a forensic psychologist with an interest in the area of police psychology. "This is a gap-analysis tool that police academy and police services can use to improve their education and training."

Dorothy Cotton has released a new report on the police and people with mental illness.

TEMPO: Police Interactions – A report towards improving interactions between police and people living with [mental health](#) problems includes several key recommendations:

- That police learning be designed and delivered by a combination of police personnel, adult educators, [mental health professionals](#), mental health advocacy organizations and people living with mental illness.
- More uniform inclusion of non-physical interventions (verbal communications, interpersonal skills, de-escalation, defusing and calming techniques) in use-of-force training.
- The incorporation of anti-stigma education to challenge the

attitudinal barriers that lead to discriminatory action.

- That provincial governments establish policing standards that include provision for mandatory basic and periodic police training qualification/requalification for interactions with people with mental illness.
- Provision of training on the role of police, mental health professionals, family and community supports in encounters with persons with mental illness.
- That training provides a better understanding of the symptoms of mental illness and the ability to assess the influence a mental illness might be having on a person's behaviour and comprehension.

"The most important part of the [report](#) and what comes after is making sure people living with mental illness are involved in the delivery of training," says Dr. Cotton, who earned a Diamond Jubilee Medal recognizing her work in relation to interactions between police and people with mental illness.

More information: The report was launched at the 109th annual conference of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP).
Read the full TEMPO report

Citation: Report advocates improved police training (2014, August 29) retrieved 11 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-advocates-police.html>

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