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# THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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### 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Functions**

The Mental Health Commission (the "MHC" or "Commission") was established in 2014 in accordance with the Mental Health Commission Act, 2013 (the "Act"). The functions of the Mental Health Commission are as follows:

- ➤ Quasi-judicial hear and determine appeals under various sections of the Law and conduct reviews where a patient has been detained and released under an emergency detention order three or more times in 30 days.
- Recommendations to the Health Practice Commission and Councils this includes submitting an annual report to the Minister with responsibility for Health, review and advise on scopes of practice and codes of ethics for practitioners, provide policy advice to the relevant registering Councils and advising the Health Practice Commission regarding mental health facilities, medical research, and clinical trials in mental health.
- ➤ **General Functions** include the following:
  - obtain and compile statistics on mental illness;
  - oversee and deliver mental health training and sensitisation sessions for prison officers, constables and any other persons who may, in the performance of their functions, be expected to deal with mental health patients;
  - make recommendations to the Minister regarding mental health research;
  - establish and maintain a programme which provides information to the general public concerning mental illness and co-occurring disorders and related conditions;
  - review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, services and special problems with a view to making recommendations on policy and research to the Minister responsible for mental health;
  - review the progress of patients transferred overseas under section 14 of the Mental Health Act;
  - review and offer advice to the Elections Office regarding the eligibility of mental health patients; and
  - give policy advice to the Minister responsible for health on any aspect of the local mental health system.

# 2. Membership

The members of the Mental Health Commission, who served for 2021, are as follows:

Dr. Marc Lockhart Chair

Cline Glidden, Jr Deputy Chair Hon. Alex Henderson, QC Deputy Chair Sutton Burke Member



Nurse Dympna Carten Member
Fiona McDougall Member
Cheryl Myles Member
Jackie Neil Member
Dr Enoka Richens Member

Janett Flynn Secretary/Ministry's Liaison

# 3. Meetings

In accordance with section 5 (1) of The Mental Health Commission Act, 2013, "the Commission shall meet as often as it thinks necessary for the performance of its functions and shall, without limiting the generality of this provision, meet at least four times in a year". The Commission held ten meetings for the year 2021.

# 4. Overview of the mental health system

The Psychiatry and Behavioural Health Unit (formerly Mental Health Unit) at the Health Services Authority (HSA) is an 11 bed unit (upgraded from 8 to 11 beds in November 2021) that was designed as an adult facility for acute care of patients suffering from serious mental illnesses. There is also a residential facility, Caribbean Haven, providing treatment for patients suffering from alcohol and substance abuse operated by the Department of Counselling Services. Another facility for housing patients with mental illness is Her Majesty's Cayman Islands Prison Service. Although not ideal, there are mental health patients who have committed crimes and will require housing in the prison facility. Currently, there is no inpatient facility for children and adolescents, but if necessary they are admitted to the unit, where they are treated.

Mental health services are delivered in the public sector by the Health Services Authority, local private health care facilities, and mental health care facilities located overseas.

While there is an adequate number of mental health practitioners (psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, counsellors, therapists etc.) employed in the public and private sectors, the distribution of human resources among the three islands is disproportionate as there is no resident psychiatrist, psychologist nor occupational therapist present on the Sister Islands. Conversely, there are three community psychiatric nurses serving the Cayman Islands, two on Grand Cayman and one on the Sister Islands.

# 5. Long –Term Residential Mental Health Facility (LTRMHF)

In July 2017, the Ministry of Health on behalf of the Cayman Islands Government signed a contract with Montgomery Sisam Architects Inc., a Toronto-based company, to conduct the Design and Construction Costs Consultancy Services for the building of a Long-Term Residential Mental Health Facility.

There are three members of the Commission, including the Chairperson, who are also members of the Long-Term Residential Mental Health Facility Steering Committee, who continue to contribute significantly in the design and development of the facility through their clinical expertise and personal encounters with patients and family members.

On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the Cayman Islands Government broke ground on the construction of the Long-Term Residential Mental Health Facility, which is expected to be completed at the end of the second quarter of



2022. This facility will serve residents who have a chronic mental illness and is not for acute care of the mentally ill. The facility, when completed, will form part of the continuum of care of mental health services, accommodating 54 clients in nine cottages, each having six beds.

There remains the need for this facility as many patients have to be kept in the inpatient unit at the hospital which has only 11 beds. The inpatient unit is for acute care and not long-term care. Some families do not want or are reluctant to send their loved ones overseas for care. The inpatient mental health unit at the Health Services Authority has been at an over capacity for most months during 2021.

In June 2021, the Chair was invited to meet with the Ministry's Human Resources Manager to discuss the draft job description for the Director of the LTRMHF. In addition to the recommendations to the draft job description, the members proposed that the Ministry identified a lead person/project manager to oversee the project as well as the establishment of a board to provide oversight of the facility, once completed

The most recent monthly status report (December 2021) of the facility revealed that the cottage works packages are on-going at site; however, the continued delays are an accumulation of delays related to the pandemic, material supply shortages, procurement and inclement weather. The cottages are now expected to be completed in March 2022 and the overall percent completion of the main building and cottage works is approximately 81%.

### 6. Training

As required under the Act, the Commission is required to conduct training and sensitization sessions for prison officers, constables and any other persons who may, in the performance of their functions, be expected to deal with mental health patients. In 2021, two training sessions were delivered; the first to staff of the Custody Suites of RCIPS and the second to new recruits of Her Majesty's Cayman Islands Prison Service.

# 7. Detention Forms

Under the Mental Health Act (2022 Revision), all detention forms must be forwarded to the secretary of the Mental Health Commission for storage and filing. During the period January – December 2021, the Mental Health Commission received 103 detention forms, similar to the number of forms received in 2020. The following table represents a comparison of the forms received for the same periods 2019 to 2021:

TYPE OF FORM	NUMBER OF FORMS RECEIVED			
	2019	2020	2021	
Request for Review	11	3	21	
Request for an	12	2		
Emergency Detention				
Order by a Constable				
Assessment for the	48	49	40	
Possible Issuance of				



an Emergency			
Detention Order			
Observation Order	20	21	16
Assisted Outpatient	25	29	25
Treatment Order			
Treatment Order	2	-	1
TOTAL	118	104	103

These entries, totaling 62 patients, represent the number of patients seen and admitted to the Unit at the hospital for a primary diagnosis of a person suffering from a serious mental illness or mental impairment. Over the same period in 2021, a similar observation was noted. There was a significant increase in the use of the Request for Review form and this may be construed as the increased awareness around the use of this form for families, friends and the wider community, if they suspect a person is in need of mental health services and need assistance. The Request for Review form may be completed by a nearest relative of the patient who is of the opinion that the patient is suffering from a mental illness, mental impairment and may harm him or herself. Once this form is completed and taken to the medical officer an RCIPS officer is deployed to assist with taking the patient into protective custody. If they require hospitalization, an Emergency Detention Order lasting up to 72 hours is issued. The use of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Order detention form continues to be very relevant in the treatment of patients and allows the treating psychiatrist to provide treatment, with or without the patient's consent.

The forms are reviewed by the secretary to the Commission to determine whether the members need to be notified of any outstanding issues or observations. There were no appeals received by the Commission for the year 2021.

# 8. World Mental Health Day

This day is celebrated annually on 10<sup>th</sup> October. The theme for 2021 "Mental Health in an Unequal World". The theme was decided upon to raise the awareness of the inequality in access to mental health care, both locally and globally, particularly for those persons who are marginalised.

# 9. Data Collection Form

For the year 2021, quarterly submission of data collection forms were received from nine facilities, two of which are public facilities. The first data collection form was developed and circulated in June 2018 for the collection of data from health care facilities. The highlights of the findings for 2021 are as follows:

 90 percent of the nine facilities that responded receive/accept health insurance for mental illness; however, what is unknown is whether the coverage is adequate for the treatment provided. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the amount allocated for mental illness under the Standard Health Insurance Contract (SHIC) is inadequate and is used only for inpatient admission. Many of the mental health diagnoses are lifelong illnesses requiring sustained and continuous treatment and care.



- Under the Health Insurance Regulations (2017 Revision), the inpatient benefit for mental health is CI\$25,000 per lifetime.
- There is a continuous upward trend of an increase in the number of persons who seek treatment for a mental illness. This is a positive step which may suggest that the stigma associated with a mental illness is decreasing, persons are taking care of themselves as well as education and prevention programmes and resources are more accessible.
- A large percentage of clients seen is between 25 and 64 years, followed by the 0-18 years age group. This confirms that many of our children and adolescents seek care and treatment for mental illness.
- More females than males are clients.
- The number of visits/encounters for outpatient services during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to increase over the same period for the previous year.
- For the Caribbean Haven Residential Centre facility more males than females use the inpatient facility, where the average length of stay for residents was 50 days, more than a 50 percent increase over the previous year. For the Health Services Authority, the average length of hospital stay was 11 days.
- The employee category of counsellor/therapist makes up a large number of mental health employees employed by the facilities, followed by psychologists.
- Also included in offering treatment and care for mental health services are registered behavior technicians, applied behavior analysts and a psychometrist. These professions provide added value to the scope of care available in the Islands.
- The top three diagnoses were grouped under anxiety, depression, and other, where other included, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorder etc.

Please find attached as Appendix 1 an overview of trends for the years 2019 to 2021.

# 10. Other Matters

During the year 2021, the Commission continued its collaboration with various partners to help to raise the awareness through community outreach, and to fulfil its mandate in accordance with the Mental Health Commission Act, 2013.

In accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code (2021 Revision), a prisoner was released and placed on the Psychiatry and Behavioural unit due to being found guilty by reason of insanity.

### Honourable Minister Turner meets with the Commission

In June 2021, Honourable Minster Turner, shortly after her appointment as Minister of Health & Wellness met with the members of the Commission to thank them for their hard work and dedication. The Minister was later invited to another meeting to hear the concerns of the Commission regarding the Long-Term Residential Mental Health Facility and its progress towards the completion and opening.

# Adolescent Mental Health Hub

The Commission met with Dr Arline McGill, Consultant Psychiatrist, H.S.A to get an update on the proposed Adolescent Mental Health Hub. The latest information received is that the Hub is scheduled to be opened in the summer of 2022.



### **Data Protection Act**

The Commission received a presentation on the principles of the Data Protection Act from the Information Rights Coordination Unit.

# <u>Alex Panton Foundation – Non- Profit Organisation</u>

Members of the Commission attended and participated in the fourth annual youth symposium of the Alex Panton Foundation (APF) in February 2021. Other working relationships with the Foundation are the establishment of an Adolescent Mental Health Hub in partnership with the Ministry and the Health Services Authority to be completed in the summer of 2022.

# National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) – Mental Health Helpline

Nurse Dympna Carten, a member of the Commission and the NEOC as the Mental Health Support – Human Concerns Cluster, was instrumental in the establishment of the Mental Health Helpline, with the assistance of the Department of Counselling Services and other agencies. The helpline has proven extremely useful to members of the community and continues to be a valuable resource and support. Nurse Carten is currently working with a comprehensive team of professionals to rebrand the Mental Health Helpline with the longer-term goal of appropriately trained volunteers to man the line in the future and extend the hours.

# Loud, Silent, Voices - NGO

The local support group, Loud, Silent Voices, had its grand opening of the group home for the mentally ill in the district of West Bay in July 2021. The home can accommodate four males and four females and continues to provide a necessary community service.

# **Health Insurance Standing Committee (HISC)**

The Chair met with the membership of the HISC to discuss ways to improve coverage for persons suffering and diagnosed with a mental illness. This necessitated reviewing the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) codes to determine the most appropriate ones to be included as part of the Standard Health Insurance Fees schedule.

### Mental Health Client Intake Form

It was brought to the attention of the Commission by several registered practitioners offering mental health services of the delay in the referral process resulting in delay of care for persons affected.

The form was discussed with the Senior Management of the H.S.A but at the close of 2021 the matter remained unresolved.

# Meeting with Officer Jonathan Kern

The Commissioner of Police appointed Officer Jonathan Kern as the liaison officer for mental health. In his role, Officer Kern is the contact for dealing with requests from the Psychiatry and Behavioural Health Unit and other mental health concerns in the community. Officer Kern meets with the Commission frequently to update and share any issues or ideas with members, and the need for continuous training of the officers.

Officer Kern reported that 15 officers are assigned to the community policing department although some of the officers do not feel confident in the powers delegated to them under the Mental Health Act. He confirmed that there has been a steady increase in the number of calls received from the community from people seeking help for a mental health episode.



# Community Group Home – Jamaica & USA

At the time of writing this report, there are four females and eight males residing at the group home in Jamaica. The youngest person is age 24 years and the oldest, age 62 years. One person has been residing at the group home for over 23 years. There are also four persons residing in homes in the United States of America.

# Caribbean Haven Residential Centre (CHRC)

The Commission requested a tour of CHRC and visited in July 2021. The members received an update on the purpose of the facility and a tour after the discussion. Many of the residents of this facility are dual-diagnosed with a substance abuse problem and a mental health diagnosis.

# Elections Act (2022 Revision)

Under the Elections Act (2022 Revision) there is a provision for the Mental Health Commission to forward to the Supervisor of Elections, the name, street address, date of birth and occupation of any person who has been certified as having a mental impairment or serious mental illness under the Mental Health Act.

At the same time the Commission expressed that the Supervisor of Elections should not have the final say/making the assumption that the person is unable to vote. The Commission intends to address this matter with the Supervisor of Elections in 2022.

# **Community Meetings**

Two community meetings were held in 2021; the first in the district of West Bay in January. The meeting was a great success with over 45 persons in attendance to support the Commission and to interact and receive updates on the role and functions of the Commission.

The second meeting was held in the district of George Town in May 2021 with a good attendance followed by a Q&A session. The meetings were well supported both by the community and the members of the Commission.

Another community was planned for the Eastern District, but unfortunately due to the community outbreak of COVID-19 it was postponed until 2022.

# Output for Mental Health Emergency Response System Upgrade

A draft proposal was prepared by the Chair along with submissions from the members to present to the Minister of Health & Wellness for review and consideration. The proposal requires funding, and if approved by Caucus/Cabinet will strengthen the response to mental challenges in the community with a variety of mental health professionals available and on-call. These would include psychologists, therapists, counsellors, community psychiatric nurses, mental health registered nurses and psychiatrists.

The proposal will be pursued further with the Minister to arrive at a time for implementation.

# Suicide and health insurance coverage

With the decriminalisation of suicide in December 2020, this helped to remove some of the stigma often associated with mental illness. However, the concern still remains whether approved health insurers cover medical expenses as a result of an attempt or act of self-harm. The Commission hopes to have further discussion with the members of the Health Insurance Standing Committee regarding this matter.



# 11. Conclusion

The Commission completed eight years of work with members who are committed and dedicated to the topic of mental health and those affected. Over the past eight years, with the support from the Ministry and community partners the level of awareness surrounding mental health continues to increase. Mental health has no face, colour nor gender and must be considered equally important as our physical health. Our mental health affects the way we think, feel and act.

The arrival of the pandemic did not deter the work of the Commission but afforded us the opportunity to highlight many of the challenges faced during a pandemic, how to cope and the resources available.

The work continues as we await the completion, staffing and opening of the Long-Term Residential Mental Health Facility to be able to bring our loved ones home and to offer them the care and support needed in a holistic environment.

Mental health care and services must be central to our policies with the objective of prevention and promotion of mental health and mental well-being, and a focus on recovery. Mental health service is an essential health service that must be continued and strengthened. The need to scale up mental health services and psychosocial support is an integral component of universal health coverage, through adequate financing and the implementation of a primary health care system that addresses your physical and mental health issues collectively.

In closing, the Commission encourages all of us to look after our physical and mental health – after all, they are not independent of one another.

Thank you.

