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THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2023



CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Mental Health Commission (the "MHC" or "Commission") was established in 2014 in accordance with the Mental Health Commission Act, (2024 Revision) (the "Act"). The functions of the Commission are as follows:

- Quasi-judicial hear and determine appeals under various sections of the Act 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 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

Members of the Commission serve in a volunteer capacity, and are appointed in accordance with Section 4(1) of the Act. The constitution of the Commission is as follows:

- two attorneys-at-law;
- two persons who are registered under Schedule 5, 6 or 7 of the *Health Practice Act* (2021 *Revision*) and, in addition, have training or experience in mental health;
- one medical doctor registered under Schedule 4 of the *Health Practice Act* (2021 Revision) who, in addition, has a specialisation in psychiatry;
- one medical doctor registered under Schedule 4 of the *Health Practice Act* (2021 Revision) who, in addition, has training in or experience in mental health; and
- three members of the public, that is, persons who are not registered under the *Health Practice Act* (2021 *Revision*) and have never been members of any of the professions registered under that Act.

Chairperson's Resignation

Dr Marc Lockhart, the inaugural Chair, announced his decision to step down effective 31st December, 2022. In parting, he expressed continued support for mental health issues, and thanked members for their collaboration. The Commission has greatly benefited from his expertise, and appreciated his leadership during his tenure.

Secretary Reassignment

As a result of work-stream reshuffles within the Ministry of Health & Wellness, the Commission was advised by Chief Officer Nellie Pouchie that a new officer, who serves as Policy Advisor in the area of Wellness, would assume secretarial support of the MHC.

The Commission wishes to recognize and express sincere appreciation for the dedicated years of service of former secretary Ms. Janett Flynn, Senior Policy Advisor (Health). She was a long-serving member of the Ministry who was instrumental in the formation of the Commission, and relevant legislation.

Appointments

With effect from 1st January 2023, Cabinet approved reappointments for four members until 31st December 2025. Member Fiona McDougall was appointed to the new capacity of Chair.

Cabinet also approved the first-time appointment of Dr. Omotayo Bernard, as member in accordance with section 4 (c) of the Act with effect from 1st January 2023 until 31st December 2025. A General Psychiatrist practicing at the Health Services Authority (HSA); whose role primarily includes the management of acute, and subacute patients on the Mental Health Inpatient Unit, has proven to be a valuable asset throughout the year.



The full composition of the Mental Health Commission for 2023 is as follows:

Fiona McDougall Chair

Alex Henderson, KC

Cline Glidden, Jr

Deputy Chair

Dr Omotayo Bernard

Dr Enoka Richens

Sutton Burke

Nurse Dympna Carten

Deputy Chair

Member

Member

Member

Cheryl Myles Member (Community Advocate)
Jackie Neil Member (Community Advocate)

Natasha Powell Secretary/Ministry Liaison

3. MEETINGS

In accordance with section 5 (1) of The Act, "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". In 2023, the MHC held nine meetings, including one extraordinary meeting. Sessions were enriched by the contributions of various guests who shared insights and expertise on pertinent topics. These guests contributed significantly to the discussions, helping to shape the Commission's understanding and response to various mental health issues across the Cayman Islands. Their input was vital in informing the Commission's strategies and actions throughout the year.

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 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 Residential Centre, 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 His 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. The anticipated completion of Poinciana aims to significantly bolster long-term care capabilities.

Mental health services are delivered by registered mental health practitioners in the public sector at the Health Services Authority, 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, there remain gaps in the delivery of mental health services. Among which is a need for transitional housing with the aim at getting clients to a state of independence for supported housing outside of the soon to be opened residential mental health facility.



The Commission recognizes the issue of access to care as well as adequate insurance coverage, specifically for outpatient care under the Standard Health Insurance Contract. Throughout the period efforts continued with the MHC and the Ministry of Health, to discuss and agree on proposed suggestions for this key objective.

5. <u>POINCIANA REHABILITATION CENTRE (FORMERLY THE LONG -TERM RESIDENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH</u> FACILITY)

As noted in the 2022 MHC Annual report, with guidance from members of the MHC, three of whom served on the planning steering committee; construction of the 54-bed long term residential mental health facility commenced with an official groundbreaking in late October 2019.

The Commission was advised that there were several delays initially due to supply chain shortages, as a result of the 2020 Pandemic. However, throughout the year 2023 construction delays prevailed, which caused a setback on the expected completion date, and ultimately the return of residents who are in overseas treatment facilities.

Queries were made on the staffing plan, programming and admission policies. The MHC was advised that the management of Poinciana was under the remit of the Ministry as a Department, and there has been no deviation from the original Outline Business Case, and the Ministry has been progressing in that vein. Mid-year 2023, Poinciana's Director was appointed and the Commission engaged in various stakeholder sessions to provide feedback on areas outlined.

The MHC remains vigilant in advocating for Cayman's residents who are overseas, and the opening of the long-awaited facility.

6. TRAINING

The Commission conducts 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 people suffering from mental health issues. Training sessions have been pivotal, with increased participation from law enforcement and healthcare providers. These sessions are crucial for enhancing the competence of personnel who interact with mental health patients, ensuring compassionate and informed care. One training session was delivered over the reporting period, to sixteen new recruits of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service.

Advocacy Sessions:

The MHC discussed the need for more public education and training sessions for advocates, possibly through town hall meetings. The goal is to demonstrate ways to access care and provide health prevention tips, as well as sharing interviews with persons who have lived experiences. It was agreed that a detailed public relations advocacy plan would be part of the MHC's future strategy.



7. <u>DETENTION FORMS</u>

In accordance with the Mental Health Act (2023 Revision), detention forms are forwarded to the Secretary of the Commission for storage and filing. During the period January to December 2023, the MHC received 127 detention forms, a slight decrease over the previous year. Table 7a represents a comparison of the forms received for the period 2020 to 2023:

7a				
TYPE OF FORM	NUMBER OF FORMS RECEIVED			•
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Form 4 - Request for Review	3	21	13	23
Form 2 - Request for an Emergency Detention	2	-	13	6
Order by a Constable				
From 1 - Assessment for the Possible Issuance	49	40	75	52
of an Emergency Detention Order				
Form 3 - Observation Order	21	16	28	22
Form 6 - Assisted Outpatient Treatment Order	29	25	32	21
Form 5 - Treatment Order	-	1	2	3
TOTAL	104	103	163	127

The forms noted in the table were received on behalf of seventy-six (76) persons who were assessed by practitioners at the Cayman Islands Hospital. The most significant increase for the period was in the Request for Review form, which outlines a rise in the need for persons deemed by a next of kin in need of an assessment.

An initial detention is up to 72 hours, where it has been determined by the medical officer that the person is suffering from a serious mental illness or mental impairment. 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 to the detention submissions for the year.

8. WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

The World Mental Health Day is celebrated annually on 10th October. The theme for 2023 focused on "Mental Health is a universal human right," to improve knowledge, raise awareness and drive actions that promote and protect everyone's mental health as a universal human right. Members of the MHC played a key role in local observances.



9. SERVICE PROVIDER DATA COLLECTION

A function of the Commission is to obtain and compile statistics on mental illness. In 2023, ten Mental Health Service facilities voluntarily submitted quarterly data forms, three of which are public facilities, namely, Health Services Authority, Caribbean Haven Residential Centre and His Majesty's Cayman Islands Prison Service. Eight percent accepted health insurance for mental health services.

Findings for 2023:

First Quarter

A total of 3,225 clients accessed services across the ten reporting facilities, a decrease of one percent compared to the same quarter last year.

Clients between the ages of 25-44 years accounted for 33.5% of all treated. Age group 0-18 years made up the second largest cohort of clients served (representing 26% of those treated). Persons aged 45-64 years were the third largest cohort. Overall, in this quarter there was a modest increase, (3%) in persons aged 0 to 64 who sought mental health services and a 25% increase among those ages 65 and over compared to the same quarter last year.

Females made up the greater proportion of those seeking treatment. Of those reporting facilities, 1,835 persons were identified as Caymanians. Noting also, non-Caymanians seeking services amounted to 963 persons, an increase of 10% compared to same quarter last year. Of the ten facilities, two did not report their client's nationality.

There was a modest increase in the number of clients seen for most listed diagnoses compared to the first quarter of 2022. However, clients diagnosed with anxiety and depressive disorder (increased 9% since last quarter of 2022 and decreased 5% compared to 1Q 2022) continue to account for the greatest proportion of those accessing services across the ten reporting facilities. When compared to the first quarter of 2022 suicide attempts decreased 32.4% (notably by 44% compared to the fourth quarter 2022).

The category of "Other" diagnoses included acute stress reaction; intellectual disabilities; development disorder of speech and language; unspecified mood (affective) disorder; and unspecified development disorder of scholastic skills.

Second Quarter

Client numbers stood at 3,480, an increase of eight percent compared to the first quarter of this year.

As with the first quarter the age distribution, clients between the ages of 25-44 years accounted for the majority with 34.8% of all clients treated. People aged 0-18 years made up the second largest cohort of clients served (representing 23% of those treated). Persons aged 45-64 years were the third largest cohort, accessing services across the ten reporting facilities. Overall, in this quarter there was a modest increase (9%) in persons aged 19 to 24 who sought mental health services and a 13% increase among those ages 65 and over compared to the same quarter last year. The cohort aged 85 years and over who sought services decreased 17.7 percent since last quarter.



Females comprised the greater proportion of those seeking services during this quarter. Of those reporting facilities, 1,924 persons were identified as Caymanians. Noting also, non-Caymanians seeking services amounted to 1,116 persons, an increase of 14% compared to first quarter of this year.

Of the facilities that differentiated clients by residing districts, most clients seeking treatment and care were from the district of George Town and increased by 13.5% compared to the first quarter, followed by West Bay, then Bodden Town. Two people listed their abode as Little Cayman, remaining unchanged since last quarter.

Three of the larger healthcare providers for mental health services did not report on districts. In reporting on the homeless population seeking treatment and care, they numbered eight (a decrease of 20% compared to the first quarter) and for the purposes of this report were all clients of Caribbean Haven Residential Centre.

Third Quarter

A similar number of clients as with the previous quarter clients accessed services, (3,491).

With regards to age distribution, clients between the ages of 25-44 years accounted for 26.8% of all clients treated. People aged 0-18 years made up the second largest cohort of clients served (representing 24.5% of those treated). Persons aged 65-84 years, was the third largest cohort accessing services and increased 78.6% compared to the last quarter. Overall, in this quarter there was a 38% increase in persons aged 19 to 24 who sought mental health services while those aged 45-64 decreased 26% compared to last quarter. The cohort aged 85 years and over who sought services since last quarter increased by a modest 8%.

Females continue to make up the greater proportion of those seeking mental health services. Although, male and female patients seeking services decreased compared to the last quarter. Of those reporting facilities, 1,945 persons were identified as Caymanians. Noting also, non-Caymanians seeking services amounted to 1,125 persons, increasing less than 1% (9 persons more than last quarter).

There was a modest (four percent) increase in the number of clients seen for most listed diagnoses compared to the last quarter. However, clients diagnosed with anxiety increased 3.3% since last quarter and continues to account for the greatest proportion of those accessing services across the ten reporting facilities. Notably, diagnosis for dementia increased 29% and suicide attempt decreased 30% since the last quarter. The category of "Other" diagnoses included acute stress reaction; intellectual disabilities; development disorder of speech and language; unspecified mood (affective) disorder; and unspecified development disorder of scholastic skills.



Fourth Quarter

In the fourth quarter, there was a negligible increase in the total of 3,545 clients compared to the last quarter. However, compared to the fourth quarter of 2022, clients accessing services increased by 15%. With regards to age distribution, clients between the ages of 25-44 years accounted for 34% of all clients treated. People aged 0-18 years made up the second largest cohort of clients served (representing 26% of those treated). Persons aged 45-64 years were the third largest cohort accessing services, an increase of 29% compared to the last quarter, a shift back from the cohort aged 65-84 years which spiked last quarter and now decreased by some 51% or to 297 persons (compared to 606 persons who accessed services in the third quarter). Also, in this quarter there was a notable decrease of 36% among persons aged 19 to 24 who sought mental health services. The cohort aged 85 years and over who sought services in this quarter increased by 10 persons or 12.5%, respectively.

Overall, in this quarter clients diagnosed with anxiety increased 3.3% since last quarter and continue to account for the greatest proportion of those accessing services across the ten reporting facilities. Notably, diagnosis for Oppositional Defiant Disorder increased 67% and Personality Disorder 59% since last quarter. Included in the category "Other" diagnoses, are acute stress reaction; severe intellectual disabilities; unspecified depression and intellectual disabilities; mixed receptive-expressive language disorder and mathematics disorder.

10. CONCLUSION

The Commission completed ten years of work with members who are committed and dedicated to the topic of mental health and those affected. Over the past ten years, with the support from the Ministry and community partners, such as Alex Panton Foundation and Loud Silent Voices, the level of awareness surrounding mental health issues continues to increase. Mental health has no face, colour nor gender and must be considered equally important as our physical health.

The mental health helpline, now rebranded as CAYMIND, continues to be a great resource for the community.

Mental health care and services must be central to our policies with the objective of, prevention of illness, and promotion of mental health and mental well-being, and a focus on recovery. Mental health services are essential health services 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.



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

Thank you.

Fiona McDougall

Chair, Mental Health Commission 2023