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JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF ONTARIO RELEASES NEW REPORT CALLING ON PROVINCE TO ADDRESS HEALTH CARE DEFICIENCIES IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

TORONTO - Currently, health care in Ontario's correctional facilities does not meet the needs of the population it serves, and poses risks and expenses to our communities, says a new report, [\*Fractured Care: Public Health Opportunities in Ontario's Correctional Institutions\*](#), from the [John Howard Society of Ontario](#).

The delivery of health care in Ontario is divided: the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) delivers health care services to the vast majority of Ontarians while the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) is responsible for health care in Ontario's correctional institutions. Embedded in this administrative split are a number of unique challenges underlying the current state of health care in Ontario's correctional institutions.

*Fractured Care* outlines the unique health needs of incarcerated populations. "Research consistently shows that incarcerated populations have significantly higher rates of acute and chronic physical and mental health conditions compared to the general population," says Sunny Dhillon, Researcher at the John Howard Society of Ontario's [Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development](#). The rate of Hepatitis C is 28% among Canadian inmates compared to 0.8% in the general population, and the HIV rate is 7-10 times higher in correctional institutions than the general population. The unique health needs – negatively compounded and perpetuated by the conditions in correctional institutions themselves – presents an urgent call for reform and opportunity to provide effective, equitable, and efficient health care for all Ontarians.

The Report notes that comprehensive and integrated health services in correctional institutions present a unique and invaluable opportunity to protect the health of the public and the health care system. "The vast majority of people in Ontario's correctional institutions will return to our communities. The health care (or lack thereof) that an individual receives in a correctional institution will not only correlate to a person's chances at successful reintegration into the community, but can also have an impact on the health of the community to which they return," says Michelle Keast, Director of the Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development at the John Howard Society of Ontario. "Viewing the health care provided in correctional institutions and health care provided in the wider community as two sides of the same coin is logical and would benefit both populations and provide tangible resource improvements for the province."

The Report illustrates how these challenges have been addressed in other jurisdictions that have integrated health care services in correctional institutions with their respective ministries of health. "The experience of other jurisdictions tells us that you can leverage correctional settings as an environment to address the unique health needs of these populations and promote healthy behaviours that can be carried back into communities," said Keast. "Research shows that integrating health services in correctional facilities with the larger health care system has improved standards of care and service delivery, continuity of care, access to community services, the recruitment and quality of medical staff, and resulted in more effective health policy overall."

*Fractured Care* highlights an opportune moment for the province to consider integrating the delivery of health care provided to people in correctional facilities with the health care of people living outside of

correctional institutions. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care is currently undertaking a [transformational change](#) of health care in Ontario, working to break down barriers and silos between health sectors, in order to provide Ontarians equitable access to care. Including correctional health care within this vision is an opportunity to improve the quality and access to health care in Ontario correctional institutions and better protect and manage the health care of all Ontarians. Disregarding health care in correctional institutions as a key component of the health care system as a whole maintains the silos and fosters indifference for the impact these gaps in services have on communities. The time to explore innovative health policy change for Ontario's correctional institutions is now.

To read the John Howard Society of Ontario's report, *Fractured Care: Public Health Opportunities in Ontario's Correctional Institutions*, please visit [www.johnhoward.on.ca](http://www.johnhoward.on.ca)

***The Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development at the John Howard Society of Ontario engages in non-partisan research, policy analysis, public education and program evaluation in the social and criminal justice sector.***

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