

PRESS RELEASE

New report highlights the burden of a police record on finding employment, and opportunities for change.

(February 21, 2018). John Howard Society of Ontario (JHSO), through support from the Metcalf Foundation's Inclusive Local Economies Program, has released a new research report. [The Invisible Burden: Police Records and the Barriers to Employment in Toronto](#) includes results from surveys and interviews with employers, focus groups with people with lived experience, and a comprehensive literature review and jurisdictional scan, that scopes the issue in Ontario, and provides tangible reform ideas.

"The findings point to opportunities to effect changes that will benefit employers, people with records and ultimately communities" says Michelle Keast, Director of the Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development at JHSO. **The Invisible Burden** builds on JHSO's previous independent research into this area, this time examining hiring practices in Canada's most populous, racially diverse city.

The release of the report is also timed with the launch of JHSO's new "[Police Records Hub](#)" – a website compiling up to date resources for employers, service providers, and people with various types of records. The Hub is a "one-stop" site full of resources that will continuously be updated with relevant, accessible materials. "The purpose is to continue work with our partners, create content, build relationships, and share knowledge" says Keast.

The report's recommendations include amendments to the *Human Rights Code*, reforming Canada's record suspension system, and bringing the *Police Records Check Reform Act* into force.

QUOTES

"For years we have been hearing from JHS clients about the barriers faced as a result of their criminal records, writing reports and making recommendations for reform. In 2015, we saw some important government recognition of this issue, with passage of the *Police Records Check Reform Act*. More than two years later, that legislation is still not in force. It seems an opportune time to make systemic changes. We hope that Invisible Burden will help propel reforms – both old and new."

Paula Osmok, Executive Director, John Howard Society of Ontario

"One of the most useful things we can do for the social and economic health of our society is to create pathways to employment for people emerging from our criminal justice system. We too often emphasize punishment over the long-term health of our society. Stigmatizing people caught up in the system not only creates barriers for them, it wastes talent and impairs Canada's economic and social performance. Compassionate and practical approaches that make reintegration easier will restore social balance and reclaim lost human potential." ***Councillor Michael Thompson, Toronto***

“A police record is ruinous for far too many who don’t deserve to be unemployable for life. The John Howard Society of Ontario’s new report and Hub are great resources that can help foster rights-respecting, inclusive hiring practices.” **Michael Bryant, Executive Director and General Counsel, Canadian Civil Liberties Association**

“A criminal record tells you very little about an individual. But that stigma of a record is very real, and has very real consequences. It’s important for employers and politicians to listen to people who live with that obstacle, and do what they can to help.” **Zoe, Vice President of Business Management, Klink Coffee**

“Mental health police records are not criminal records and should not be treated as such. The John Howard Society of Ontario’s new report calls important attention to the status of the *Police Records Check Reform Act*. This law, once in force, will help minimize the disclosure of information that creates barriers for individuals living with a mental health issue.” **Camille Quenneville, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario**