

## ***POLICY STATEMENT***

**DATE: May 17, 2014**

Today the Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development at the John Howard Society of Ontario (JHSO) released a new research report that highlights the tremendous barriers facing Ontarians who have police records, entitled, "[Help Wanted\\*: Reducing Barriers for Ontario's Youth with Police Records](#)".

In Ontario, the escalating demand for police record checks as a requisite component of employer hiring processes is exacerbating the stigma and exclusion of those with police records from Ontario's labour market. Employment and a stable job market are paramount factors in reducing crime and recidivism. The Report indicates that many employers use police record checks in an effort to minimize liability and to manage organizational risk. In fact, there is no research demonstrating that police record checks are effective risk management screening tools. As the Report states:

"Risk factors as interpreted by employers or other agencies requesting background checks, namely, the existence or nature of convictions or arrests, 'depart markedly from criteria included in commonly accepted and validated assessments of offender risk'. That is, making judgments about a person's 'risk' based on a single static factor like a police record is not consistent with evidence-based practice."

Police record checks should not be required for most positions, and especially not entry level positions that do not work directly with vulnerable populations and/or positions that are not senior or responsible for managing assets, financials or highly sensitive information where no lateral safeguards are in place. In a recommendation targeting employers in Ontario, the Report calls on organizations to:

"Critically review their existing hiring practices and any use of police record checks with a view to the evidence around the utility of record checks and the goal of minimizing the invasion of privacy and discrimination that flows from police record checks...These policies and protocols should be consistent with rights-respecting and evidence-led best practice."

JHSO's mission statement is *effective, just and humane responses to crime and its causes*. Given that we advance our mandate by recommending evidence-led and humane policies and practices, it follows that our own organizational personnel policies be based on sound, rights-respecting practices. As such, JHSO has committed to reviewing our current policy and practices around police record checks to make it consistent with best practice. We strongly encourage all employers in our province to commit to doing the same; our updated policy and protocol, once completed, could serve as a model or framework for other organizations undertaking this exercise in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Paula Osmok, Executive Director

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