



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
British Columbia
Mental health for all

1200-1111 Melville St., Vancouver, V6E 3V6
Tel: (604) 688-3234 or 1-800-555-8222
Fax: (604) 688-3236
www.cmha.bc.ca

NEWS RELEASE

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Police Adoption of Privacy Commissioner's Recommendations on Mental Health & Police Information Checks a Significant Step Forward

Decision to no longer disclose mental health information in police checks will help remove barriers

Vancouver, British Columbia – BC's Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has issued a release describing BC police departments' implementation of their key recommendations for police *not* to release any information about mental health related contacts in police information checks. For example, Vancouver Police Department's new Police Information Check (PIC) policy now states that checks will *not* include any disclosure of apprehensions under s.28 of the BC Mental Health Act and will not include any information about mental health related police contact. This applies to employer requested checks for applicants in both vulnerable and non-vulnerable sectors. The changes were announced by the Ministry of Justice on Dec. 19, 2014 and have been endorsed by all municipal police departments and the BC RCMP.

Sometimes, police respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis and transport them to a hospital or another safe place. *Before* this important policy change, a record of this police contact could show up during a police information check, often to the surprise of the applicant when a check for work, school, or volunteering is required.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division (CMHA BC) has expressed strong concerns about the practice of releasing mental health information, such as suicide attempts and apprehensions under the *Mental Health Act*, in police information checks. CMHA BC believes the decision to no longer release mental health information will have an important and significant impact.

"Personal health information does not belong in police checks," says Bev Gutray, CEO of CMHA BC. "People will no longer have to worry about the impact of this information when applying for school, volunteer or work opportunities, or whether there will be difficulties when crossing an international border. We applaud the police departments that are implementing these important policy changes."

If applicants have had mental health information disclosed in previous Police Information Checks, they are encouraged to request a new one that omits their mental health information.

Note to Editors:

The findings of this report may be a surprise to individuals who have had police contact related to mental health reasons. If possible, please include the following information in a sidebar for readers:

If you are in distress, please call 310-6789. For up-to-date information about mental health, please visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca.

For more information about the Commissioner's report visit <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/>

About the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division

Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division (CMHA) is part of one of Canada's most established national mental health charities. Our vision is mentally healthy people in a healthy society. As the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA helps people access the community resources they need to build resilience and support recovery from mental illness or addiction. We do this by building capacity, influencing policy, providing services and developing resources. Each year, CMHA BC together

with a network of 17 BC branches provides services and supports to over 140,000 British Columbians. Together we promote mental health for all and support the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness or addiction. To learn more visit www.cmha.bc.ca.

To schedule interviews contact:

Jennifer Quan
Marketing and Communications Manager
Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division
604-688-3234 ext. 224 or jennifer.quan@cmha.bc.ca