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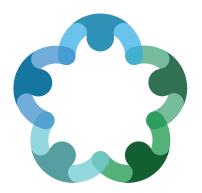
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Ontario Provincial Police Mental Health Strategy:

Our People, Our Communities



Ontario Provincial Police Police provinciale de l'Ontario

About the Strategy

The *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* addresses an important need - to improve responses to the mental health needs of our members and the individuals they serve. The strategy is the result of extensive research along with community and stakeholder consultation and focuses on improving outcomes for people with mental health issues whether they are members of the OPP or members of our communities.

By its design and purposes, the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* is geared to supporting early intervention. It also embeds the OPP's strong commitment to continuous improvement in our planning and operations. Through the establishment of research baselines and on-going evaluation, our approaches will remain evidence-based.

No single strategy can guide an organization to completely eliminate mental health issues when they occur within our workforce or within Ontario's communities. What it can do, however, is ensure that we have strong supports and resources in place for OPP members - active and retired, uniform, civilian and auxiliary - and their families, to access when the need arises. It can also ensure that OPP members are equipped with the appropriate education, training, programs and protocols to most effectively respond to people with mental health issues or those experiencing a mental health crisis.

About the Graphic

The graphic developed for the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* represents the integrated approach within the strategy, using five elements to illustrate that in any given year, one in five people in Canada will experience a mental health problem or illness. It also visually represents that mental health can be understood as a part of a continuum, fluctuating and changing throughout our life, much as our physical health does.



Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities

Table of Contents

- 2 Commissioner's Message
- 3 Shared Values
- 4 Introduction
- 4 One in Five
- 5 Our Commitment, Our Goal and Priorities for Action
- 6 Governance
- 6 Definitions and Language
- 7 Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce
- 8 Supporting Our People: Priorities for Action
- 11 Supporting Our Communities: Police Interactions with People with Mental Health Issues
- 12 Supporting Our Communities: Priorities for Action
- 14 Conclusion
- 15 Acknowledgements

Our Vision

Safe Communities... A Secure Ontario

Our Mission

Committed to public safety, delivering proactive and innovative policing in partnership with our communities





Commissioner's Message

How do you best support a workforce in a high risk profession like policing? How do we encourage our people to be, and remain, resilient? What systems need to be in place to support members - active and retired, and their families?

How can we improve outcomes when police interact with people with mental health issues? What evidence-based approaches should the OPP use to achieve consistency yet provide flexibility for local situations? And finally: How can we help reduce the stigma associated with mental health? Stigma is a common denominator and remains a powerful barrier to positive action and outcomes.

These are just some of the questions addressed in the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities.* At the root of it all is a fundamental principle; in order for our members to be in the best possible position to deliver services to our communities, health and wellness for our people must be a priority.

Evidence shows that putting resources into early intervention is the preferred and most effective approach. While resources are necessary, understanding is even more important. So it is no coincidence that "building awareness, reducing stigma and providing member training and resources" are important priorities in the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities.*

The OPP regularly shares best practices with other police services, mental health service providers, community stakeholders and the general public as part of its commitment to continuous improvement. Since collaborative approaches in policing service delivery are fundamental to implementation of the strategy, it makes sense to share this work as broadly as possible. Collaborating with external partners and fostering internal partnerships form the basis for an integrated model of practice.

As Commissioner, I am encouraged that progress on the strategy is already well underway, with many elements in various stages of implementation. The creation of the OPP Wellness Unit in 2014 including the expansion of resources and programs to support OPP members, retirees and their families, along with extensive community and stakeholder consultation to build the operational and community focus of the strategy, are important milestones.

As the strategy unfolds and implementation continues, the OPP looks forward to supporting both our people and our communities.

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J.V.N. (Vince) Hawkes Commissioner



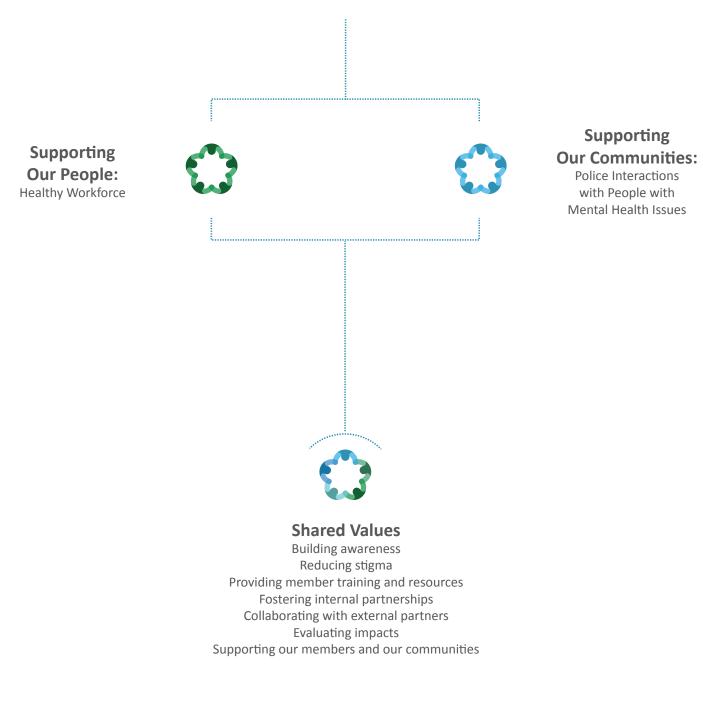


Ontario Provincial Police Mental Health Strategy:

Our People, Our Communities

Mental Health Strategy:

Our People, Our Communities



OPP

Introduction

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is committed to improving its response to the mental health needs of its members and the individuals they serve, in our communities. The OPP recognizes the importance of these issues and is taking a comprehensive and integrated approach in the OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities.

This important strategy contains two distinct but linked components - *Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce* and *Supporting Our Communities: Police Interactions with People with Mental Health Issues.* They share common values and concerns and many of the priority activities of each complement the other.

The OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities recognizes the need to support OPP members with the necessary resources and education so they can: enjoy the best possible physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being; achieve work/life balance; and serve to their full capacity.¹ It also recognizes the importance of supporting these same members with the resources and education necessary to enhance police interactions with people with mental health issues.

The aim is to ensure the OPP's response to mental health is consistent and efficient, mitigating risk and victimization by improving outcomes for our people and our communities. By using a collaborative service-delivery approach, we aim to connect individuals more effectively with the services and supports they need.

It's a simple equation. By taking care of the health and well-being of our members - active and retired, uniform, civilian and auxiliary - and their families, we can improve and enhance our commitment to public safety and individuals with mental health issues.

Above all, the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* is about improved outcomes for people whether they are members of the OPP or members of our communities.

One in Five:



According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, in any given year, one in five people in Canada experiences a mental health problem or illness. It is clear that this is a very important issue, for everyone.

Community safety and well-being is everyone's responsibility.



¹ Spirituality is defined individually, but can be broadly understood as "relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things" (Oxford Dictionary, October 2, 2015).



Ontario Provincial Police Mental Health Strategy:

Our People, Our Communities

Our Commitment

The OPP is committed to improving its response to the mental health needs of its members and the individuals they serve, in our communities.

Our Goal

The overarching aim of the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* is improved outcomes for people with mental health issues whether they are members of the OPP or members of our communities.



Supporting Our People: Priorities for Action

- Expand mental health education and training
- Reduce stigma and build awareness
- Expand programs and resources for all members
- Increase capacity and standardization in the Critical Incident Stress Response/Peer Support Program (CISR/PS)
- Develop strong internal and external communications
- Increase partnerships with internal and external agencies
- Improve overall well-being of members/retirees/families
- Implement continual program evaluation



- Provide leadership at all levels
- Improve data collection
- Conduct ongoing program evaluation
- Support development of transfer of care protocols
- Increase early referrals to mental health services
- Enhance training for frontline responders
- Facilitate development of police/mental health collaborative response models





Ontario Provincial Police **Mental Health Strategy:**

Our People, Our Communities

Governance

The governance approach to the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* is integrated and tiered to encourage and support coordination, collaboration and improved outcomes. An overall Mental Health Governance Committee is providing oversight, leadership and direction on the implementation and ongoing delivery of the strategy's priorities for action. In addition, the committee is regularly scheduled to connect with the chairs of the Healthy Workforce (*Our People*) and Community Mental Health (*Our Communities*) Advisory Committees to share information and discuss issues of mutual concern. Ensuring accountability, the OPP Mental Health Governance Committee also reports on a regular basis to the Commissioner of the OPP.

Definitions and Language

Mental health issues are complex. The *OPP's Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* recognizes that people's mental health can be understood as a part of a continuum, fluctuating and changing throughout our life, much as our physical health does.

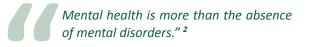
The criminal justice system uses the Criminal Code of Canada term "mental disorder" as a broad term which encompasses, among others, mental illness, developmental disability, addictions, concurrent disorders (mental illness and a substance use problem) and dual diagnosis (mental illness and developmental delay), acquired brain injuries and serious behavioural and anger management issues (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, A Program Framework for: Mental Health Diversion/Court Support Services, February 2006). The less clinical term "mental health issues" and more familiar term "mental illness" have been used throughout this strategy to create an accessible, plain language document.

Operational stress injuries (OSI) can be defined and understood in a variety of ways. The term OSI is used to describe a broad range of issues resulting in any persistent psychological difficulty that police personnel experience as a result of operational duties including but not limited to: depression, anxiety, addictions and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).





Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce



According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the impact of mental health problems and disorders is especially felt in workplaces and among working-aged people.³ Specifically:

- People in their early and prime working years are among the hardest hit by mental health problems and illnesses.
- Approximately 21.4 per cent of the working population in Canada currently experiences mental health problems and illnesses, which can affect their productivity.
- Mental health problems and illnesses account for approximately 30 per cent of short and long-term disability claims and are rated as one of the top three drivers of such claims by more than 80 per cent of Canadian employers.

While it is generally recognized that health promotion, illness prevention, anti-stigma initiatives, management training and employee assistance programs all contribute to healthy workplaces, more work remains to be done.

Following the release of the Ontario Ombudsman's 2012 report *In the Line of Duty,* which addressed operational stress injuries (OSI) affecting the OPP and police in Ontario, the OPP formed a Working Group. The organization engaged in extensive research and broad consultations and took action - all focused toward the goal of better supporting our members, active and retired, uniform, civilian and auxiliary, and their families.

In 2014, the OPP made "Healthy Workforce" one of its top five strategic priorities and, in October of the same year, created a Wellness Unit dedicated to cultivating and sustaining a supportive work culture.

The priorities for action articulated in *Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce* are complementary to those in *Supporting Our Communities: Police Interactions with People with Mental Health Issues*. These priorities are all designed to support a shared goal: to improve outcomes for people with mental health issues whether they are members of the OPP or members of our communities.



² World Health Organization (2001), Strengthening our response, Fact sheet, No. 220.

³ Mental Health Commission of Canada (2010), Making the Case for Investing in Mental Health in Canada.



Supporting Our People: Priorities for Action

Expand mental health education and training

The OPP's programs are founded on sound research, broad consultation and best practices. They are comprehensive, containing both proactive and reactive elements and are structured on the RECOGNIZE – EDUCATE – SUPPORT model.

The OPP is expanding its mental health education and training with the delivery of Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR), an evidence-based mental health training and education program developed by the Department of National Defence Canadian Forces to increase mental health literacy and enhance resilience. The OPP Critical Incident Stress Response/ Peer Support Teams are also fully engaged in supporting education and training efforts.

Reduce stigma and build awareness

The OPP is committed to supporting its workforce and maintaining healthy workplaces. Our organization recognizes that any member - civilian, uniform or auxiliary, active or retired - may become, or may have been involved in critical incidents. As well, members and their families face other stresses at work, and at home. There is help available. The OPP has various internal and external programs and resources that members and their families can access.

Awareness and education are keys to changing attitudes. Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce focuses organizational efforts and resources on the goal of reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues and shifting our concentration to supporting health and well-being and improving health outcomes overall.

Expand programs and resources for all members

The OPP is taking a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to the expansion of its programs and resources for all members. These include Wellness Checks, Post-Critical Incident Checks, a psychological health and well-being research baseline and the expansion of the internal OPP Safeguard program.⁴ Additionally the OPP has psychometrist services in place to coordinate and administer psychological assessments.⁵

Wellness Checks and utilizing a Patient Health Questionnaire (a screening and diagnostic tool for mental health disorders)will help OPP members identify issues of concern. In addition, the Wellness Check will also be used following critical incidents to measure psychological impact and to provide appropriate support and/or intervention.



⁴The internal OPP Safeguard Program is designed to monitor the psychological wellness of members in units deemed to be high-risk based on the nature of the work performed. The program includes a pre-screening process for potential candidates and continual assessment of members. Results from the psychological well-being baseline will help to inform enhancement of this program.

⁵A psychometrist is an individual with a Master of Arts or Science degree in psychology who can conduct psychological testing and some therapy programs under the supervision of a psychologist.



Supporting Our People: Priorities for Action

Expand programs and resources for all members (continued)

Other programs include: employee and family supports, fitness and lifestyle supports, fitness/wellness liaisons, Physiological Health Sciences coordination, provision of resources to all members throughout the province by the OPP's Eric Silk Library, Managing for a Healthy Workplace Workshops, *Lunch & Learn* presentations, the OPP Chaplains' Program, support to Human Resource Program Advisors on matters of operational stress injuries and complex mental health cases, Occupational Health and Safety support and various local and regional initiatives throughout the province. The Employee & Family Assistance Program, an early intervention tool for short-term services, is available to all members and augmented by OPP-specific resources.⁶

The OPP is supporting the identification of trends, gaps and issues related to wellness and developing proactive approaches to coordinate programs related to OSI and other mental health issues.

Every wellness initiative the OPP undertakes helps improve member well-being and contributes to a supportive work environment, which is a protective factor against suicide.

Where members are in crisis and contemplating suicide, the OPP provides support using suicide intervention principles. The OPP's Critical Incident Stress Response/Peer Support Program (CISR/PS) Teams have a protocol to assist when they encounter a peer, family member or retiree who is in distress. All Team Members receive specific suicide intervention training to guide them when supporting members in crisis.

The OPP continues to take a holistic approach to all issues related to health and well-being and will address this very complicated issue in the development and maintenance of its mental health programs.

Increase capacity and standardization in the Critical Incident Stress Response/Peer Support Program (CISR/PS)

The OPP provides internal support to members through the CISR/PS Teams. These teams are trained in individual/ group crisis intervention and suicide intervention and can respond immediately to a critical incident as well as individual requests for support.⁷ In addition to building capacity within the CISR/PS Program with the introduction of permanent dedicated positions, the program has continued to grow and evolve. This has included the introduction of part-time/volunteer members at all rank levels, including civilian members.

CISR/PS Teams are available in every OPP region. The use of a dedicated part-time/volunteer network has been and will continue to be a priority for the CISR/PS Program. This ensures diversity and allows for true peer involvement by representatives from across the province.

⁷A critical incident is any situation faced by individuals which causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions and has the potential to interfere with their ability to function at the time of the incident or later.



⁶The Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) is a free, confidential, employer-sponsored service. Services available include counselling, programs for help with common life challenges and resources to members, retirees and their families.



Supporting Our People: Priorities for Action

Develop strong internal and external communications

It is well recognized that conversations are needed to build awareness about mental health issues.

The OPP is committed to using a wide variety of internal and external communications, including social media and the web, to reduce stigma and encourage open communication. The OPP also provides multiple access points to relevant resources, programs and supports.

Increase partnerships with internal and external agencies

Partnerships are essential to ensure that the programs and services available within the OPP meet the needs of the workplace, and are based on current best practices.

The OPP continues to consult with other police agencies and stakeholders to research best practices regarding mental, physical and spiritual health and well-being. This includes participating in existing committees, working groups, forums and conferences to maintain awareness about workplace wellness initiatives.

The OPP is establishing a Provincial Healthy Workforce Advisory Committee to include representation from various levels of the OPP to provide support and promote wellness initiatives across the province.

Improve overall well-being of members/retirees/families

Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce recognizes that OPP members need the necessary resources and education so they can: enjoy the best possible physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being; achieve work/life balance; and serve to their full capacity.

Core protective factors for mental health include a sense of belonging and the presence of a social network. Establishing a culture of belonging supports the strategic priority of "cultivating and sustaining a healthy workforce" for the OPP.

The OPP will continue to encourage a supportive work culture which includes positive relationships between peers, supervisors, managers, retirees, families and the community. Everyone has a role to play.

Implement continual program evaluation

In order for the OPP's wellness programs and resources to meet the needs of members, retirees and their families, program evaluation is critical. An evidence-based approach supports the OPP's overall commitment to decision-making based on analytics.

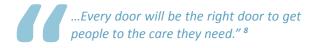
The use of the psychological health and well-being research baseline will help to measure the effectiveness of Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce. The OPP will continue to report on trends and data related to programs and resources.



10



Supporting Our Communities: Police Interactions with People with Mental Health Issues



Police are often called as first responders to non-criminal social disorder situations which arise because of underlying mental health issues. In Canada and many Western countries, police interactions with people who are experiencing mental health issues appear to be increasing. Since 2007, the OPP has seen a steady growth in calls for service related to mental health: 8,682 in 2007 to 12,337 in 2013 (42 per cent increase) with a resulting increase in total officer hours spent responding to these occurrences by 65 per cent.⁹

Police interactions with persons with mental health issues continue to be a topic of some concern for the police, the public and the media. These interactions have been the subject of recent inquests and inquiries into the police-involved deaths of individuals with mental health issues. The challenges for all involved have also received intense discussion at recent meetings of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) and Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP).

The discussions, inquests and inquiries primarily focus on the need to:

- Collect accurate data on police interactions with people with mental health issues
- Increase officer training
- Create policy and protocols relating to crisis intervention to address the issues of transfer of care and transportation of people with mental health issues
- Develop collaborative police/community mental health response models

In order to address these concerns, the OPP established a working group in June of 2014 to prepare a comprehensive, evidence-based mental health strategy governing police interactions with people with mental health issues.

Following extensive research and consultation, the priorities for action articulated in *Supporting Our Communities: Police Interactions with People with Mental Health Issues* are complementary to those in *Supporting Our People: Healthy Workforce*. These priorities are all designed to support a shared goal: to improve outcomes for people with mental health issues whether they are members of the OPP or members of our communities.



⁸Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy: Open Minds, Healthy Minds, 2011, p. 18. ⁹Data Source: Data extracted from BI Cube on Saturday, November 23, 2013.



Supporting Our Communities: Priorities for Action

Provide leadership at all levels

Strong leadership is required at all levels of the OPP to ensure successful implementation of the strategy. Research and consultation also confirmed the need to involve mental health service providers; mental health consumers and people with lived experience, in the oversight and ongoing development of the strategy.

Mental health champions at the provincial, regional and detachment levels of the OPP have been assigned the role and responsibilities of mental health coordinators.

The OPP is establishing a Community Mental Health Advisory Committee including representation from mental service providers, consumers and people with lived experience, to provide input and guidance on issues relating to police response to mental health-related occurrences.

Improve data collection / conduct ongoing program evaluation

Accurate data is required to generate an accurate picture, identify gaps in response, understand business implications, set baseline measures, support ongoing performance measurement and evaluation and rationalize any requests for increased expenditures or resources.

The OPP has introduced the interRAI Brief Mental Health Screener (BMHS) © a standardized, science-based mental health screening form into its operations. The BMHS helps officers clearly articulate their observations to local hospital Emergency Room staff. It is also a powerful mental health data collection tool for the OPP.

Performance measures have been established and the OPP is committed to continuous evaluation of its progress in improving police interactions with people with mental health issues.

Support development of transfer of care protocols

OPP frontline officers often spend significant amounts of time in hospital emergency rooms with mental health patients waiting to be assessed until transfer of care can be assumed by the health facility. These extended delays aggravate the stigma associated with mental health issues. They also absorb significant police resources that could be devoted elsewhere.

The OPP also experiences significant pressure from local health facilities to provide security to mental health patients as well as transportation of people from local health facilities to the nearest Schedule One psychiatric facility.¹⁰

Mental health consumers certainly have the right to safe transportation that minimizes interference with their rights, dignity and self-respect. This right must be balanced with the need for safety of all involved. Consistent policy and protocols are required to address the issues of transfer of care and transportation of people with mental health issues.



¹⁰ Under the Mental Health Act, Schedule One lists the facilities that can hold mental health patients against their will.



Supporting Our Communities: Priorities for Action

Support development of transfer of care protocols (continued)

The OPP is working with local hospitals to implement a standard Police-Emergency Department Protocol to address the issues relating to transportation and transfer of care.

In addition, the OPP continues to work with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care on issues related to transfer of care, hospital security and patient transport. We are committed to raising concerns and sharing the identified barriers to service with our government partners.

Increase early referrals to mental health services

By engaging our community partners in the local response to people with mental health issues and by increasing referrals to mental health partners, the OPP can begin to reduce the number of calls related to mental health it receives, reduce the time spent on individual mental health calls and improve the overall service response to individuals in the community with mental health issues.

The OPP will promote and participate in establishing local mental health planning committees. In addition, OPP mental health champions will build awareness and connections with local mental health service providers, to enable early referrals and use of services.

Enhance training on mental health

The OPP is committed to providing mental health training for all its members. Mental health training through the *Our People* and *Our Communities* components of the *OPP Mental Health Strategy* will complement the other. Topics include de-escalation techniques, anti-stigma strategies and awareness of basic mental health disorders, among others.

The OPP is working with mental health experts and people with lived experience to enhance and develop mental health training that will be delivered through a variety of methods.

Facilitate development of police/mental health collaborative response models

Finite resources, combined with the need for a supportive response model that helps to "decriminalize" mental illness, is prompting innovative service delivery models and solutions. An effective response to those experiencing a mental health crisis includes multi-agency cooperation and collaboration.

The OPP is establishing local mental health planning committees. Through these committees, detachment members will work with local community partners to develop, implement and oversee local collaborative response models of service delivery.



Conclusion

The OPP is taking an integrated and coordinated approach to improving our response to mental health issues both for our people and our communities.

We recognize that it will take time and effort to address the stigma associated with mental health issues and operational stress injuries (OSI). Educating and supporting our members are fundamental requirements to encourage change. Sustained effort will be needed to ensure meaningful programs that support wellness at work. While our success as an organization does depend on programs and services; even more important is our culture. It is critical that we work together to achieve improved overall outcomes.

Finite resources, combined with the aim to "decriminalize" mental health, require the development of innovative service-delivery models and solutions within our communities.

The most positive responses to those experiencing a mental health crisis include multi-agency cooperation and collaboration. Ensuring cooperation across health, welfare, community support and emergency services and the provision of professional, timely and safe responses is not the sole responsibility of police; however, the police can play an important role in the community response.

The OPP is committed to improving its response to the mental health needs of its members and the individuals they serve. The *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* provides direction and priorities for action to that end. Our commitment to continuous improvement will ensure that evaluation of supports and programs are used to assess service delivery and measure overall success.

It is through an integrated and coordinated effort that the shared values of: building awareness, reducing stigma, providing member training and resources, fostering internal partnerships, collaborating with external partners, evaluating impacts and supporting our members and our communities will be put into practice.



Acknowledgements

The OPP gratefully acknowledges the contributions and assistance of community partners, mental health service providers, stakeholders, academic and professional partners, police partners, people with lived experience and all others who have provided encouragement and input during the research and consultation phases of the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities.*



15

For more information and resources

For more information about the *OPP Mental Health Strategy: Our People, Our Communities* go to opp.ca or contact the OPP Community Safety Services and/or the OPP Wellness Unit, Career Development Bureau.



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