



March 2010

Mental Health Intervention Team

Current News

January 2010 marked the date of the final course dedicated to training MHCO's which means that virtually all 80 Local Area Commands have a MHIT trained Duty Officer.

The State-wide roll out to rank and file officers has now begun. February and March courses held in Goulburn were well received. 30 officers up to the rank of Sergeant will now be trained each month.

Officers in these ranks who have a keen interest in mental health are urged to apply through their MHCO Duty Officer to participate on the course.

If you would like to know more about the course please contact the MHIT.

Why MHIT?

Mental Health Intervention Team training is a four day course administered by a range of clinical and operational policing experts. The 4 day course covers 21 seminars. MHIT training aims to ensure course participants work with mentally ill or disordered people in a sensitive, safe and efficient manner.

The MHIT also provides police officers with operational advice in relation to policing and mental health issues.

UP AND COMING COURSES

April 2010

Goulburn Police College.

May 2010

To be held in Sydney.

June 2010

To be held in Sydney.

All remaining courses for 2010 will be held in Sydney.

COPS ENHANCEMENTS

The MHIT are making a submission to enhance the current mental health COPS event.

MHIT Contact Details:

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CSU Final Evaluation Report

December 2009

The stated aims of the MHIT were to:

1. Reduce risk of injury to police and mental health consumers
2. Improve awareness of risks in dealing with mental health consumers
3. Improved collaboration with government and non-government agencies, and
4. Reduce the time spent by police in dealing with mental health related events.

The CSU Report concludes that the MHIT “has successfully achieved each of these...”

Their key findings also included;

- MHIT compares favourably with established best practice
- Valuable relationships have been forged between the NSWPF and NSW Health, NSW Ambulance and the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW.
- MHIT training led to increased use of de-escalation techniques and increased understanding of mental health issues
- An overall reduction in the time spent by police in Emergency Departments

Several recommendations were also made regarding the training, the current Memorandum of Understanding, rural policing issues and reporting frameworks. These have been taken under advisement and will be addressed as necessary.

Staffing and the MHIT

Superintendent Donohue continues as the NSW Police Force Corporate Spokesperson for Mental Health.

Inspector Joel Murchie, is the Commander, MHIT.

The Sergeant's position has now been filled. **Sgt Matt Ireland** has joined the team, taking up the position in early March. Sgt Ireland brings to the team a wide range of knowledge and experience. He has worked in GD's in Sydney, the South Coast and at a single unit police station in the Riverina. He also has an Honours Degree in Psychology where he completed research into stress in police officers. This research was published in a UK academic journal in 2006. We welcome him to the team!!

Darrin Cowan, Clinical Nurse Consultant remains in the NSW Health funded position in the MHIT.

Gina Andrews is the NSW Police Force Mental Health Senior Policy Officer with the MHIT.

Myths about Mental Illness

The first in a four part series on common myths surrounding mental illness. This first installment deals with mental illness and violence.

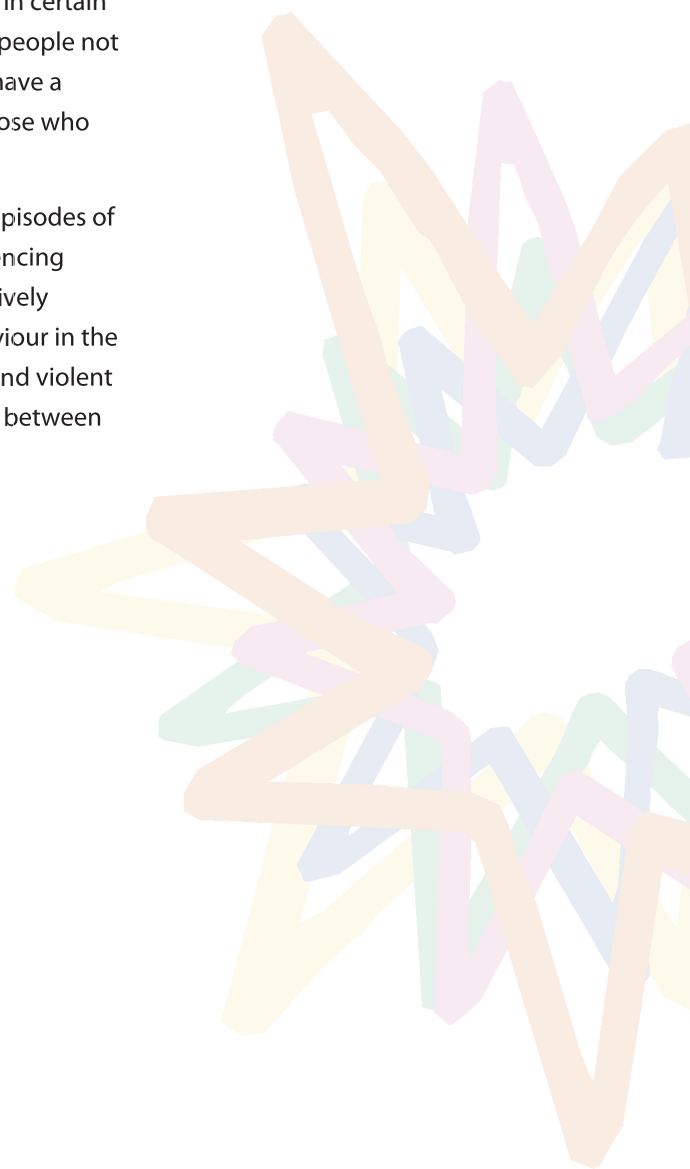
Myth: People who are mentally ill are violent

- Research indicates that people receiving treatment for a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than the general population.¹
- People living with a mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence, especially self-harm. It has been calculated that the lifetime risk of someone with an illness such as schizophrenia seriously harming or killing another person is just .005%, while the risk of that person killing themselves is nearly 10%.²
- There appears to be a weak statistical association between mental illness and violence. This seems to be concentrated in certain subgroups, for example – people not receiving treatment who have a history of violence, and those who abuse drugs or alcohol.
- The correlation between episodes of violence in people experiencing mental illness is comparatively weaker than violent behaviour in the context of alcohol abuse and violent behaviour in young males between the ages of 15 and 25.³

1 New South Wales Mental Health Sentinel Review Committee. (2003). *Tracking Tragedy: A systemic look at suicides and homicides amongst mental health inpatients*. NSW: Centre for Mental Health, Department of Health.

2 Sane Australia (2003). *Factsheet 5. Violence and mental illness*

3 Brennan, P. A., Mednick, S. A., & Hodgins, S. (2000). Major mental disorders and criminal violence in a Danish birth cohort. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 57, 494-500



Mental Health Policy update for Jan - March 2010

■ **Mental Health Memorandum of Understanding news.**

The Mental Health Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) has begun updating the 2007 MOU. The rationale for the review is primarily to bring the existing MOU in-line with the Mental Health Act 2007. This review will also give the IDC opportunity offer better written policy advice on the following areas: recently gazette Declared Mental Health Facilities, revised MOU key performance indicators, the NSW Police Force Interhospital Transportation Guidelines, interagency information exchange.

It is anticipated that the revised MOU will be launched at the end of the first quarter of 2010. The MHIT will hold internal consultation opportunities with Mental Health Contact Officers, predominately via their Mental Health Contact Officer Region Representatives, June - Dec 2010. Any comments concerning the MOU #MHIT@police.nsw.gov.au

In the interim, it is important to note that the existing MOU still applies.

■ **The NSW Police Force & NSW Health Interhospital Transportation Guidelines.**

NSW Police Force has sent correspondence to NSW Health outlining our NSWPF policy position: police are to only be involved in agreed high risk transports – when NSW Health has exhausted other reasonable alternatives available (i.e. sedation, waiting until relevant NSW Health resources are available) and the clinician and police involve agree that it is a high risk situation necessitating police involvement . Police vehicles are NOT to be used in interhospital transports. This policy position will be integrated into the revised MOU.

■ **Legal clarification on parameters of police interagency information exchange on mental health consumers in acute and non acute situations.**

The MHIT has finalised an internal NSWPF fact sheet 'Legality of police interagency information exchange on mental health consumers 2010' for MHCOs and operational police. The fact sheet will be issued by Supt Donohue, Corporate Spokesperson - Mental Health in early April 2010.

At an interagency level, in February we met with NSW Health legal services seeking legal and policy advice on the issue of legal parameters concerning information exchange between MOU agencies regarding consumers (e.g. mental health frequent presenters). An additional meeting will be held with NSW Health in April, and it is expected that the agreements from these meetings will be featured as agreed policy in the MOU.

■ **Declared Mental Health Facilities (DMHF).**

On 13 November 2009 the first round of DMHF were gazetted under the Mental Health Act 2007. This first round saw the declaring of certain emergency departments to be declared mental health facilities in the "mental health emergency assessment" class under section 109 of the Mental Health Act 2007. NSW Health intends there to be a second and a third round of DMHF to be gazetted. NSW Police has written to NSW Health requesting that additional mental health facilities be added to the DMHF list (anticipating that this will alleviate the transportation issues in regional NSW).

The MHIT will continue to work with MHCOs to gather relevant data to substantiate our requests for additional DMHF. We encourage you to keep quality data (numbers of MH incidents attended and time involved in transport) if you are a LAC affected by not having a DMHF in your catchment.

■ Identifying mental health frequent presenters to NSW Police Force, Ambulance Services NSW and NSW Health Research Project.

The goal of the project is: To describe the group of persons with mental health disorders who are frequent presenters to emergency services (police, ambulance and health) in order to inform the development of appropriate service models for this group. The scope of the project has been expanded to include persons who present with mental health, alcohol and drug problems. The project has two stages: data accrual, development of an agreed definition and the development of a data dictionary. The second stage (dependent on the outcome of the first) may involve the trial of an intervention with this population group.

This research project has commenced. NSW Health are the project managers, and the year long project has been awarded to the University of NSW. Two MHIT representatives are represented on the Project's Steering Committee.

■ Section 33, Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act

Earlier this year NSW Police Force made a submission to the Department of Premier's and Cabinet to give the full effect to the Government's intention to transfer the custodial and transport functions for defendants subject to s 33 orders from police to include other more appropriate agencies such as Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice. NSW Police Force have requested legislative amendment to include: explicit power to detain the defendant; clear power for personnel from all authorized agencies to use reasonable force to compel compliance with the order; a capacity for transfer of a defendant from Police to the custody of another authorized agency for the purposes of the order; a declaration that the transportation and detention of the defendants subject of a s 33 order is not the primary function of the police. We will update you regarding changes.



NSW Police Force
www.police.nsw.gov.au