



RESOLUTION 2021-06

Response to Mental Health (Non-Public Safety) Calls and Authorities under the *Mental Health Act*

WHEREAS police services are tasked with responding to mental health calls due to the provisions of the *Mental Health Act* because they are often one of the only agencies available 24/7, 365 days-a- year to assist and support mental health calls for service with safety concerns (e.g., threat of violence to others or the person in crisis), and

WHEREAS police services have, through partnerships, created various progressive models where mental health trained individuals or agencies are called upon to assist in the response (whether during the 911 call or in response) but, as such, do not have sustainable funding or the resources to respond 24/7, 365 days-a-year and have created a patchwork response across the province, and

WHEREAS there are other agency/agencies that have the 24/7 availability (for example, but not limited to, Paramedics) or could have the availability and may be better trained and equipped to respond to what is essentially a medical health issue (save and except if the police are required due to an imminent and serious public safety concern to assist) and could be given the powers currently provided to police under the *Mental Health Act* to apprehend and take a person in mental health crisis that is a danger to themselves or others for an assessment at the hospital or mental health support and assistance at another approved institution, and

WHEREAS some mental health calls could be diverted from the requirement for attendance and better mental health support provided if a mental health expert were available and the call was triaged to them for initial assessment, referral, and alternative response.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police calls on the Government of Ontario to make all necessary statutory amendments and funding changes so that:

- a. An existing or created external agency/agencies that is/are available 24/7 are assigned and who may already be the first or more appropriate responders to mental health calls (unless there are imminent and serious public safety issues to the person in the mental health crisis, the public or the responding agency/agencies, in which case, police may be dispatched to assist with that issue);

- b. The agency/agencies are provided the authority and training to assess and, if necessary, apprehend and transport a person under the *Mental Health Act*, including the ability to take the person to a non-emergency institution, approved by the province, if appropriate and in the best interests of the person in mental health crisis;
- c. The agency/agencies and/or any other mental health agencies are provided sufficient funding for the continuation of partnerships that currently involve the police to have secondary mental health support in place; and
- d. Funding is provided to 911 dispatch agencies so that mental health experts are either present in the communications centre or can be patched in, 24/7, to allow for initial assessments, referrals, and alternative response.