

## Breaking the Cycle Solutions Network Workshop Series 2023

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The **PURPOSE** of the workshop series was to revitalize our vision to support people with ABI/TBI to manage the challenges of community supervision and re-entry. The workshops focused on: (1) systemic challenges to solutions and implementation; and (2) potential solutions and design considerations.

We met with 31 network members, including:

- ⊕ People with lived expertise
- ⊕ Individuals working in or associated with the criminal justice system
- ⊕ Community support agencies that specialize in mental health and addictions, youth, and acquired brain injury / traumatic brain injury (ABI/TBI) services

Over the course of the two workshops, the members identified challenges inherent in criminal justice processes in Ontario that impede client and reentry success. These include broader system challenges, specific challenges related to discharge planning and release, and failures of court-mandated conditions of release. The discussions also centered on system improvement and suggestions of viable solutions that the network could implement to support client health and wellbeing. This document is a summary of the discussions.

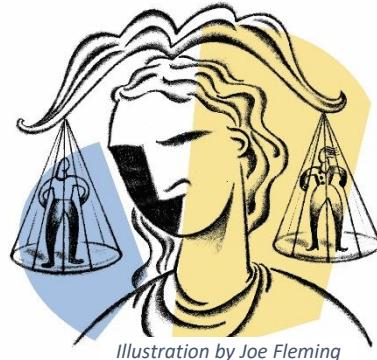


Illustration by Joe Fleming  
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## SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES TO SOLUTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

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### System Challenges

- Continuity of care (e.g., access to services and referrals) is interrupted when supervision officers are not assigned to clients until after release
- Community-based service providers face challenges coordinating between the justice and social/human services systems
- Virtual court (emerged during COVID-19) is confusing and complex for clients who require access to phones/internet and may lack the ability to use technology effectively (e.g. attending virtual court requires new skills)
- Limited funding impacts the ability to hire more staff to operate 24-hour services
- Without designated court support, community-based service providers become de facto advocates for clients to meet conditions of release (e.g. coordinate meetings with the probation/parole officer, provide transportation)
- Youth have unique needs that are largely unmet within the criminal justice system, creating greater risk of re-involvement with the system

### Discharge Planning and Release-Specific Challenges

- Poor release planning across Ontario
- Service deserts leave people without support at time of release (e.g., challenges obtaining identification)
- Night releases are a safety concern when people are stranded without access to transportation

## Challenges of Supervision Conditions and to Compliance

- Conditions tend to be burdensome, abstract, and vague
- Conditions are set without consideration of the needs of individuals with ABI/TBI (e.g., trouble with reading, thinking, memory)
- Conditions are set without consideration of other social and health concerns such as housing, access to and ability to pay for transportation, and access to health and social services
- Conditions documents have gotten longer over time and include complex legal language
- Conditions are difficult for people to recall
- Missed appointments is a central concern for people with ABI/TBI during supervision
- Geographic boundaries are hard for people to visualize
- Conflicting/competing conditions make compliance difficult (e.g., obtaining employment/meeting job requirements can conflict with reporting requirements and/or curfews)
- Being a surety puts undue burden/responsibility on families/friends
- ABI/TBI is not part of the referral/eligibility criteria for mental health courts in Ontario

## CONSIDERATIONS TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEM AND SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH ABI/TBI

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- Build **NAVIGATORS** into the system to support people within justice system processes (e.g., people who provide accessibility accommodations such as [Communication Intermediaries](#) from [Communication Disabilities Access Canada](#) who support people who have communication disabilities throughout the court procedure)
- Explore options for people with lived expertise to engage in **PEER SUPPORT** work with clients who are under orders not to associate with people with criminal histories
- Consider **SITUATIONAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXTS AND COMPLEX NEEDS** (e.g., mental illness, substance use, homelessness, chronic medical needs, trauma, unmet needs)
- Recognize the role of **RACISM, UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, AND STIGMA IN THE HEALTH AND JUSTICE SYSTEM**
- **SCREEN FOR ABI/TBI IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM** to ensure individuals are diagnosed and connected to appropriate care; jumpstart the referral process to increase people's chances of eligibility to receive services. (Note that Health Services Division, Ministry of Solicitor General is integrating the [HELPS](#) Screener into their Electronic Medical Record)
- **TRAIN THOSE WORKING IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM** to improve awareness of both ABI and TBI
- **IDENTIFY THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR BREACHES** of conditions to develop targeted interventions
- **INCREASE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE SERVICES** upon release (e.g., supportive housing for mental health and substance use)
- **APPLY HEALTH SERVICE STANDARDS** to care while in custody
- **PROVIDE IN-PERSON** court services (e.g., duty counsel and crowns should conduct their work in-person, not virtually, as virtual services are becoming more common)

## POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

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**Virtual Mobile Case File:** *A centralized, secure, web-based portal for justice-involved clients*

- Secure place to store vital documents (e.g., Social Insurance Number, Birth Certificate, conditions or release document, Ontario Health Insurance Number, Ontario Works/Ontario Disability Support Program information)
- Interface between service providers/probation officers and clients to send/receive documents
- Integrated calendar with dual access between clients and service providers/probation officers
- Appointment reminders via text and/or email
- Chat feature to support communication between service providers and clients
- Transit map
- Customizable map of important locations (e.g., probation office, treatment center, etc.)
- An accessible-responsive design which includes plain language, easy navigation, and dictation features to support people with auditory, cognitive, neurological, physical, and speech impairments

**System/Navigation Program:** *A peer-based solution to support clients as they navigate community re-integration*

- Peer navigators work with individuals during the court process (bail, sentencing) and community re-entry (probation/parole)
- Potential to partner with educational institutions (e.g., Universities and Colleges offering Master of Public Health or Master of Social Work with practicum placements)
- Referrals to resources and court support, similar to an accessibility coordinator granted to clients in court
- Provide weekly check-ins through phone calls to discuss goals, receive emotional support, and provide reminders
- Example navigation pathway model: [tSCI Care Pathway model](#) (traumatic Spinal Cord Injury)

**App:** *A web-based or mobile phone app designed to address TBI-related challenges for people released from custody*

- Screening features to provide ABI/TBI diagnostic tools
- Memory features to record and prompt important appointments, tasks, and responsibilities
- Calendar reminders (e.g., appointments with service providers, probation/parole officers, curfews)
- Navigation features to identify important service locations, restricted areas, and transportation services
- Communication features to facilitate information seeking and sharing and everyday accessibility across a range of settings (e.g., text-to-speech feature)
- Self-management features for monitoring and regulating thoughts, feelings, and actions
- Social support features to connect users with people who can help them navigate difficult situations, make informed decisions, and achieve greater community integration
- Secure storage to upload important document

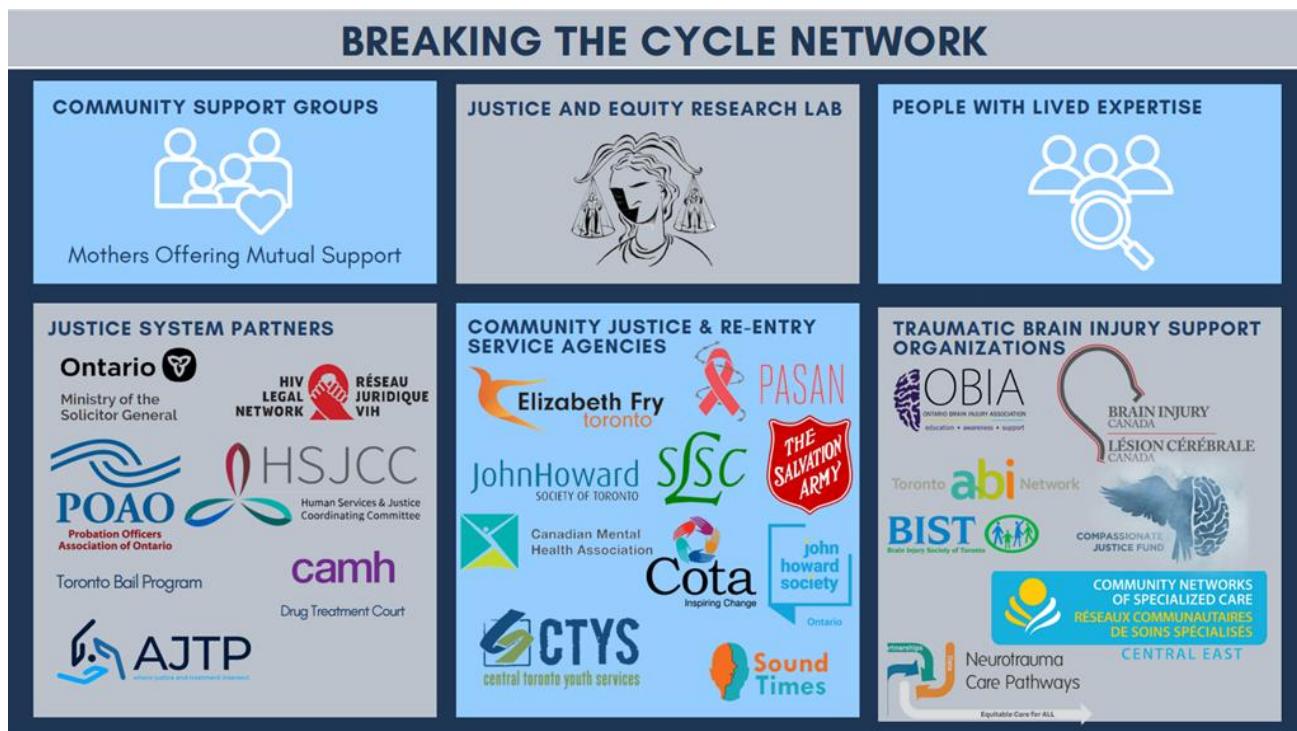
- Visual version of supervision conditions
- Example: [QCard](#) (reminder app for people living with brain injuries)  
Note: includes information from the 2020 Symposium Workshops

**Visualized Version of Conditions Sheet:** *A simplified version of court-mandated conditions of release, including visual aids*

- Customized/personalized plain language document of supervision conditions
- Visualizations of each condition (e.g., visual aid/map which shows geographic boundary restrictions related to supervision conditions)

**Post-Court Plain Language Document:** *A plain language summary of the court decision and after-court procedures*

- Documents the outcome of the court decision and the steps to follow after their court appearance in plain language (e.g., who to see in the courthouse, important documents and dates, important contacts)
- Provide resources for English as a Second Language/Interpretation services



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