

## **Mental Health Services of Renfrew County Partners With The Grind Pembroke To Offer ID Clinics For Clients Participating In Court Diversion Program**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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PEMBROKE – Mental Health Services of Renfrew County (MHSRC), a program operated by the Pembroke Regional Hospital, and The Grind Pembroke hope that a successful pilot project to help clients in the criminal justice system acquire important identification documents will pave the way for future opportunities to assist others in similar circumstances.

Currently, MHSRC is supporting approximately 80 individuals in the court justice system. Of those, nearly a quarter need assistance obtaining lost or misplaced ID in order to access healthcare, food banks, housing, employment and programs from other social service partners.

“Many of our clientele who are transitioning back into the community after time spent in prison have either misplaced or lost many of their important ID documents such as their health card, driver’s license or birth certificate,” said MHSRC Director Mireille Delorme.

She said the clients face many barriers to replacing such essential documents. Some may not know where to start or have the level of literacy required to make sense of the various forms. Others might be limited in their ability to use virtual, or online resources to start this process, and many do not have the fixed address required for such document requests, let alone the financial resource to cover the administrative cost of replacement.

“Without ID, one cannot succeed with the next steps to recovery, or even obtaining basic necessities,” Ms. Delorme said. “In partnership with The Grind, we have been able to address many of those barriers.”

As part of eight weekly ID clinics which ended March 31<sup>st</sup>, The Grind assisted the clients in filling out forms and accompanied them to the Service Ontario office to complete the process. The Grind also acted as Guarantor and offered the fixed address required on the application forms. MHSRC financially supported the costs associated with this initiative.

Executive Director Jerry Novack of The Grind called the project a “huge success” and an opportunity to meet the needs of community members by working together.

“We received 25 referrals and were able to assist 17 clients in successfully acquiring their missing government-issued identification. In addition, we were also able to assist with other referrals and community support,” Mr. Novack said.

He added that, for many of them, a major impediment to getting the documents was the cost. Being able to remove that barrier added to the success of the program.

“I’m glad we could partner together to provide this much needed service,” Mr. Novack said.

Both partners hope that if the need for this service continues, they can look to operate the clinic on a quarterly basis.

### **What is the Court Diversion Program offered by Mental Health Services of Renfrew County?**

Court Diversion is a ministry funded program that calls for a partnership between the criminal justice system and MHSRC. This program assists individuals 18 years and older who have a serious mental illness and/or developmental delay and who come in contact with the criminal justice system.

Its purpose is to provide advocacy and support as an alternative to criminal sanctions to people charged with a minor offence and who have a serious mental illness and/or a developmental delay. Participation in the program is voluntary with the goal being to promote access to appropriate and effective short and long term mental health services that will support them in their recovery and community reintegration.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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