

Waypoint integrates patient input into mental health care services

By listening to those with lived experience, hospital is prioritizing client engagement in mental health services, policy development and research.

PENETANGUISHENE, ONTARIO, CANADA, July 17, 2025

/EINPresswire.com/ -- By listening to the voices of those with lived experience, [Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care](#) is setting a standard for client engagement in mental health services, policy development and research.

Through initiatives such as the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Client Advisory Committee (OSP CAC), the Waypoint Research Institute (WRI) and the Patient/Client and Family Council (PCFC), patients are more than participants — they're partners shaping care.



At Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy program's Client Advisory Committee plays a direct role in guiding changes to services.

Launched in 2021, the OSP CAC brings together five to seven current and former clients of the OSP program who volunteer to share their insights in virtual meetings every two months. Led by two clinicians and a member of the PCFC, committee members receive an honorarium for their time and play a direct role in guiding changes to services.

When big decisions or changes are being contemplated, it's important to be able to engage people who actually went through the program, said OSP Manager Jessie Daniel.

"Any time we do a client-facing change — with our website, with our referral form, or how questions are asked — we run it by our OSP CAC," she said. "We had a demo for our web page, and we went through it with our OSP CAC because they're the ones that are going to be looking at it. So how does it visually look? What else should we include? What should we not include? How does this wording feel for you? If you were referring yourself, does this make sense?"

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Dr. Christopher Canning

This isn't just tokenistic consultation. The committee's suggestions have led to tangible improvements. When the OSP CAC flagged the welcome package as too lengthy and filled with clinical jargon, the OSP team made it more accessible. When members identified a gap in peer connection, the result was a client appreciation event. Even the implementation of a new scheduling system was adjusted based on OSP CAC feedback — specifically, ensuring clients leave their intake appointment with a treatment date in hand.

“We've attempted to implement every suggestion that has

come out, even if it didn't necessarily align with what we thought,” said fellow OSP Manager Melissa Moreau. “You have to come in with an open mind and not have preconceived notions of what you think will work best.”

That collaborative spirit not only improves services, but also boosts trust, engagement and the likelihood that clients will refer others to OSP.

This level of patient involvement extends beyond services into research. Dr. Christopher Canning, Director of the WRI, views experiential expertise as equal in value to academic credentials. “For me, it's not about an invitation in,” he said. “It is about recognizing the multiple forms of expertise that should inform what we do.”

For example, the WRI is working with an advisory group of patients from Waypoint's high-secure forensic programs to co-design guidelines for patient involvement in research. These contributions do more than inform — they offer meaning and purpose to participants and reveal some of the realities of the forensic system to researchers.

“This isn't a new conversation,” said Dr. Canning. “For years, patients have been calling for their voices to shape the mental health care system — from how they're treated to the therapies they receive and the policies that shape their care.”

Dr. Canning credits Waypoint's leadership for fostering an organizational culture where client and family input is not just welcomed, but essential: “It's baked into who we are and what we need to do.”

As an academic and research hospital providing specialized mental health, addiction and geriatric care to some of the most complex and disadvantaged people in Ontario, Waypoint's belief in patient involvement is bolstered by the work of the PCFC — a non-profit organization composed entirely of individuals with lived experience.

“Each patient and client we speak to brings bravery and expertise to the information they share,” said Jodie Erb, the PCFC’s Executive Director. “It’s so important that we as professionals continue to learn and grow based on their expertise.”

The PCFC plays a key role in supporting clients, navigating services, and representing patient voices across committees and working groups. Their guiding philosophy — “nothing about us without us” — echoes throughout Waypoint’s programs and research.

This model illustrates what’s possible when patient voices are treated not as optional, but foundational. Doing so not only delivers better care — it builds a system where clients are seen, heard and respected.

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