Ombudsman Report

An Investigation into the Toronto Police Service's Communications About its Vulnerable Persons Registry

September 2024

At Ombudsman Toronto, we know we have a responsibility to uphold and ensure fairness in our local government. We understand that this must be done with a respectful and culturally responsive approach, and we commit to ongoing learning, unlearning, engagement, and relationship-building in order to do so.

Land Acknowledgement

Ombudsman Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and that this land is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. We are here because this land has been colonized, and we recognize the ongoing harm done to Indigenous communities by this colonial system, including the effects of broken treaty covenants.

African Ancestral Acknowledgement

Ombudsman Toronto is committed to continually acting in support of and in solidarity with Black communities seeking freedom and reparative justice in light of the history and ongoing legacy of slavery that continues to impact Black communities in Canada. As part of this commitment, we would also like to acknowledge that not all people came to these lands as migrants and settlers. Specifically, we wish to acknowledge those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

Kwame Addo
Ombudsman

Meredith Gayda
Acting Deputy Ombudsman

Ombudsman's Note: This investigation involved efforts by staff in all parts of our office, including Investigators, Complaints Analysts, Investigations Counsel, as well as research, communications, and operations staff, and was led by Lead Investigator, Meera Persaud.

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Executive Summary

The Vulnerable Persons Registry

The Toronto Police Service ("**Toronto Police**") launched its Vulnerable Persons Registry ("**Registry**") on December 4, 2019. Described by the Toronto Police as a voluntary database, the Registry aims to provide the public with an opportunity to create personalized de-escalation strategies for "vulnerable persons" to help officers better understand and respond to specific behaviours they may encounter when interacting with those persons in crisis.[1]

The Registry stemmed from the Toronto Police's 2012 review of its online reporting software, as well as former Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci's 2014 review[2] of the Toronto Police's encounters with people in crisis in which he recommended that a voluntary registry of this type be created.

The Toronto Police took seven years to launch the Registry and sought input from two dozen agencies, such as Autism Ontario and MedicAlert. The Toronto Police did not solicit any other public input. The Toronto Police also attempted to raise awareness about the Registry during the launch through social media and media outlets. However, it did not release any further communications or promotional campaigns for the Registry after the launch.

One year after the Registry's launch, the Toronto Police began considering transferring ownership and management of the Registry to a third-party as it was not being frequently used and there were challenges with the flow of information from the Registry to officers. The Toronto Police is currently working with a third-party to define the nature and scope of this arrangement. In light of this decision, the Toronto Police decided not to allocate

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[1]   The Toronto Police defines a vulnerable person as "a person who by nature of an emotional, medical, psychological or other physical condition may exhibit patterns of behaviour that pose an increased risk of danger to themselves or others, who may require assistance from emergency services." This definition was obtained from Service Procedure 04-08, located at https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. The Toronto Police's website provides examples of conditions a person may be experiencing and that a member of the public may consider registering if the "condition affects their cognitive ability, their behaviour could be perceived as violent, they may pose a danger to themselves or others or are likely to be reported missing." Reference https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024. References throughout this report to "vulnerable person" are in the context of this Toronto Police definition.

[2]   The Honourable Frank Iacobucci, *Police Encounters with People in Crisis*, p 115. The Chief of Police committed to implementing all of the recommendations in the report, including creating a registry.

further resources to the Registry, including any marketing or promotional efforts. While I recognize that the Toronto Police no longer intends to own and manage the Registry, it still has a duty to the public to communicate clearly, meaningfully, and accurately about the Registry and the information stored in it, whether it is in its current form or managed by a third-party.

Our Investigation

On December 14, 2023, my office launched an investigation into the transparency and adequacy of the Toronto Police's communications about its Registry. Our investigation focused on the clarity and meaningfulness of the Toronto Police's communications to the public about:

- The purpose of the Registry;

- The Registry's registration, verification, and engagement process; and

- The Toronto Police's use of the information in the Registry.

The investigation also reviewed the Toronto Police's internal communications to identify any potential gaps and assess its staff's knowledge about the Registry.

Ombudsman Investigators conducted 28 interviews with Toronto Police and Toronto Police Service Board staff and members of the public. My office also reviewed over 100 documents provided by the Toronto Police and Registry information available on the Toronto Police's website and social media accounts.

What We Found

I acknowledge the Toronto Police's efforts and intentions in creating a Registry to support interactions with vulnerable persons. However, my investigation found gaps in the Toronto Police's communication about the Registry that impact the public's ability to make informed choices about using it.

Specifically, my office found that the Toronto Police does not provide the public with adequate information about the Registry's purpose and processes, or how it stores, accesses, and uses the personal information it collects from registrants. For instance:

- Despite being the main source of information about the Registry for the public, the Toronto Police's website provides insufficient details about the Registry's

purpose. This impacts the public's understanding of why the Registry exists and how de-escalation strategies can be used.

- Details about the registration process are only available in the Toronto Police's procedure document, yet the information provided there does not accurately reflect the current practice. This means the public cannot know what the registration process entails before enrolling.

- Further, the Toronto Police's communication about the registration process lacks important details on the information needed to create a personalized de-escalation strategy, thereby reducing the impact of the Registry.

- The Toronto Police advertise the Registry as a single database when it is in fact made up of four databases. This is significant as it can become difficult for Toronto Police to remove personal information from all databases.

Our Recommendations

I made 13 recommendations to the Toronto Police to improve their communication about the Registry and to help ensure the public can make informed decisions about whether to use it.

As the Toronto Police is actively seeking a third-party to own and manage the Registry, my recommendations address the most immediate communication concerns. However, so long as the Toronto Police offers the Registry as a resource to the public, its communications about the Registry should be transparent and meaningful regardless of who owns and manages it.

My recommendations include that the Toronto Police should:

- Publicize meaningful details about the Registry's goal and purpose.

- Clearly define and publicize the registration process to ensure that the public understands what information is mandatory, what information is required to create a personalized de-escalation strategy, and what supporting documents are accepted.

- Ensure the Registry service procedure document and current practices are aligned.

- Clearly explain when and how the Toronto Police will access and use the Registry information.

The Toronto Police's Response and Follow Up

In response to my report, the Toronto Police has accepted all 13 of my recommendations in full. The Toronto Police has committed to providing my office with updates on the implementation of these recommendations through a report to the Toronto Police Service Board. My office will continue to follow up quarterly with the Toronto Police until we are satisfied that the Toronto Police has implemented our recommendations.

Introduction

About Toronto Police Service and Toronto Police Service Board

1. The Toronto Police Service ("**Toronto Police**") is the primary law enforcement and crime-prevention agency serving the City of Toronto. With 5,127 uniformed officers and 2,563 civilian staff,[3] the Toronto Police is "committed to being a world leader in policing through excellence, innovation, continuous learning, quality leadership, and management."[4] The Toronto Police's objectives, priorities, and policies are set by the Toronto Police Service Board ("**Board**").[5] The Board is an oversight body consisting of seven civilian members (four members of the public and three City Councillors)[6] and is supported by seven Board staff members.

2. The Toronto Police units and pillars[7] relevant to my investigation include:

    - West Field Command

    - East Field Command

    - Communication Services

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[3] Toronto Police Service Board Budget Committee Meeting, November 27, 2023. https://tpsb.ca/jdownloads-categories?task=download.send&id=809:november-27-2023-budget-committee-meeting-minutes&catid=69. Accessed June 5, 2024.

[4] The Toronto Police's Mission Statement. https://www.tps.ca/mission-vision-values/. Accessed June 5, 2024.

[5] The Toronto Police Service Board's description. https://www.tps.ca/toronto-police-board/. Accessed June 5, 2024.

[6] The Toronto Police Service Board's Mandate. https://tpsb.ca/about/board-mandate. The Toronto Police Service Board's Membership. https://tpsb.ca/about/board-members. Accessed June 5, 2024. The Board's oversight does not extend to the Toronto Police's operational decisions and day-to-day operations.

[7] The Toronto Police Service refers to the different sections within each command structure as "pillars."

- Corporate Communications

- Community Partnership and Engagement

- Records Management Services

- Project Management Office

- Information Security and Access

- Toronto Police College

About Ombudsman Toronto

3. Ombudsman Toronto is an independent and impartial accountability office with the authority to review and investigate complaints about the administration of the City of Toronto, its agencies, boards, corporations, and divisions. My focus is on administrative fairness. Specifically, I seek to ensure there is a fair process, fair outcome, and fair treatment in City decisions or processes. At the conclusion of any investigation, I can make recommendations for improvement if I find instances of unfairness in how the City's agencies, boards, corporations, or divisions have addressed a matter.

Our Police Oversight

4. My authority to review the City of Toronto's divisions, agencies, boards, and corporations stems from the *City of Toronto Act, 2006.* However, this is not the case with the Toronto Police and the Board. Rather, my authority in this case stems from a Memorandum of Understanding ("**MOU**") I signed with the Board and the Toronto Police after direction from Toronto City Council.[8]

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[8] The MOU can be found at https://www.ombudsmantoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MOU-Fairness-Investigations-by-Ombudsman-Toronto-of-the-Toronto-Police-Service.pdf. Accessed May 30, 2024.

5.   The MOU gives my office the authority to review the fairness of the procedures, processes, and practices of the Toronto Police and the Board.[9] Under the MOU, I can investigate issues of public interest and where I believe there is the potential to improve the fairness of the services provided to the public.[10]

6.   My authority under the MOU does not extend to receiving or reviewing complaints about the Toronto Police or the Board, including complaints about police conduct or interactions, and employment or labour relations issues. I also cannot review matters that are under the jurisdiction or review of other agencies or bodies, such as the Special Investigations Unit and the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, formerly the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

The Investigation

7.   I notified the Toronto Police and the Board on December 14, 2023, of my intention to investigate the transparency and adequacy of the Toronto Police's communications about its Vulnerable Persons Registry ("**Registry**").

8.   The Toronto Police describes the Registry as a voluntary database that provides officers with important information such as de-escalation strategies and communication methods that can assist them in their interactions with vulnerable persons. The Toronto Police defines a vulnerable person as "a person who by nature of an emotional, medical, psychological or other physical condition may exhibit patterns of behaviour that pose an increased risk of danger to themselves or others, who may require assistance from emergency

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[9]   See City Council Item 2021. CC31.1 at https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.CC31.1. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[10] A non-exhaustive list of examples of investigative issues that my office may wish to explore are found in Schedule A of the MOU.

services."[11] References throughout this report to "vulnerable person" are in the context of this Toronto Police definition.

9.   The Toronto Police's main communications about the Registry are on its website. Its website contains some details about the Registry's purpose but lacks any details about the registration process and the Toronto Police's use of the personal information in the Registry. The current communication failure prompted me to launch this investigation.

10. My investigation focused on the clarity and meaningfulness of the Toronto Police's communications to the public about:

- The purpose of the Registry;

- The Registry's registration, verification, and engagement process; and

- The Toronto Police's use of the information in the Registry.

11. My investigation also reviewed the Toronto Police's internal communications to assess staff knowledge about the Registry as they play an important role in communicating information to the public. Such a review could identify any communication failures, as internal and external messaging may differ.

12. The Toronto Police supported my office's decision to launch an investigation into its communication about the Registry and acknowledged the Registry could benefit from my office's review.

13. My investigation of the Registry was limited to the Toronto Police's communications to the public. It did not include a review of the Registry's functionality or operations, or the nature and scope of any future third-party Registry arrangement outside of this context.

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[11]   Definition obtained from Service Procedure 04-08, located at https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. The Toronto Police's website provides examples of conditions a person may be experiencing and that a member of the public may consider registering if the "condition affects their cognitive ability, their behaviour could be perceived as violent, they may pose a danger to themselves or others or are likely to be reported missing." Reference https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

14.   As part of this investigation, Ombudsman Toronto Investigators conducted 28 interviews and reviewed over 100 documents provided by the Toronto Police. My office met with employees at different levels within the Toronto Police and the Board. Investigators also interviewed community groups and organizations that serve vulnerable persons and members of the public who had experience with or insights about the Registry. My office also reviewed information about the Registry available on the Toronto Police's website and social media accounts.

15.   The Toronto Police and Board cooperated fully with my investigation.

Establishing the Registry

The Purpose of the Registry

16.   The Toronto Police's Service Procedure 04-08 ("**Service Procedure**"),[12] outlines the responsibilities of various Toronto Police units and pillars. Additionally, it explains the purpose of the Registry, and the limits on the use of Registry information. The Service Procedure is available on the Toronto Police's website.

17.   The Service Procedure explains that the Registry's goal is to provide officers quickly and effectively with "critical information" about vulnerable persons, to reduce the risk they overlook this information during an emergency response.[13]

18.   The Toronto Police's website explains that information shared through the Registry can help officers understand the behaviours they may encounter and how best to de-escalate the situation.[14] Toronto Police staff[15] explained that the Registry also gives the public an opportunity to voluntarily create a "personalized de-escalation strategy" with the Toronto Police, thereby increasing the likelihood of a positive police interaction.

Creating the Registry

19.   In 2012, the Toronto Police undertook a review of its entire online reporting software. During the course of this review, the Toronto Police noted that other police services in Ontario used their online reporting software to create a registry for vulnerable persons. This led the Toronto Police to consider creating its own Registry.

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[12]   The Records Management Services unit developed a Registry protocol for their unit that outlined how to enter and confirm Registry information.

[13]   Service Procedure, https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[14]   According to the Toronto Police's website, the Registry "provides important information to first responders about the issues that vulnerable members of the community might be coping with." https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed June 5, 2024.

[15]   Throughout this report, I use the term "Toronto Police staff" to refer to a person or persons employed by the Toronto Police, including civilian and uniformed officers of varying ranks and positions.

20.   The need for a Registry gained momentum following former Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci's 2014 review of the Toronto Police's encounters with people in crisis ("**2014 Report**"). It recommended creating a voluntary registry for vulnerable persons to support the Toronto Police's response in the event of a crisis.[16] The Toronto Police continued to assess how the Registry could be integrated within its existing online reporting software.

21.   In 2016, the Ontario government introduced a Regulation under the *Police Services Act* that prohibited carding.[17] Toronto Police staff explained that police databases were heavily scrutinized, and that the public was skeptical about why the Toronto Police would maintain any kind of database that recorded personal information about the public. Toronto Police staff told us that they believed that the Registry would be "painted with the same brush."

22.   Following the introduction of the new Regulation, the Toronto Police consulted with their legal team to ensure it did not violate it or the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*. It also began a Privacy Impact Assessment ("**PIA**") prior to the Registry's launch to review the impact the Registry may have on registrants' privacy and ensure it met legislative requirements.[18] However, as of

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[16]   The Honourable Frank Iacobucci, *Police Encounters with People in Crisis*, p 115. The Chief of Police committed to implementing all of the recommendations in the report, including creating a registry. The recommendation stated the following:

[T]he creation of a voluntary registry for vulnerable persons, complementing the protocol recommended in (a), which would provide permission to healthcare professionals to share healthcare information with the police, only to be accessed by emergency responders in the event of a crisis situation and subject to due consideration to privacy rights.

The 2014 Report defined crisis as "a member of the public whose behaviour brings them into contact with police either because of an apparent need for urgent care within the mental health system, or because they are otherwise experiencing a mental or emotional crisis involving behaviour that is sufficiently erratic, threatening or dangerous that the police are called in order to protect the person or those around them." https://www.tps.ca/media/filer_public/2b/db/2bdb73f0-d271-4d8b-8e68-f59a34816fb6/police_encounters_with_people_in_crisis_2014.pdf. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[17]   Solicitor General, *Ontario Prohibits Carding And Street Checks, Sets Out New Rules For Police Interactions* (March 22, 2016) https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/36238/ontario-prohibits-carding-and-street-checks-sets-out-new-rules-for-police-interactions. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[18]   Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, *Expectations: OPC's Guide to the Privacy Impact Assessment Process*, Section 4. https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-impact-assessments/gd_exp_202003/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

the date of this report, the PIA remains incomplete and Toronto Police staff were unsure about the reason.

23.   The Toronto Police gathered feedback on establishing the Registry from approximately two dozen agencies, including MedicAlert, ChildFind Ontario, the Alzheimer Society of Canada, and Autism Ontario. The Toronto Police also consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario about data collection and possible privacy concerns.

24.   The Disabilities Community Consultative Committee ("**DCCC**"),[19] one of the Toronto Police's 13 Community Consultative Committees, did not provide much input into the creation and promotion of the Registry. Toronto Police staff shared that the DCCC is a large platform of "heavy hitters" such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Autism Speaks. Toronto Police staff said that the DCCC has "amazingly powerful organizations with great reach into the communities" in the City of Toronto, but it was not fully used in promoting the Registry. The DCCC's feedback was limited to a review of the Registry application form.

25.   Throughout this process, the Toronto Police did not publicize its intention to create a Registry or seek public input beyond engaging with the two dozen agencies.

Launching the Registry

26.   The Toronto Police launched the Registry publicly on December 4, 2019, seven years after it initiated its review of its online reporting software. Toronto Police

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[19] The Toronto Police's website explains that its Community Consultative Committees seek to represent specific communities throughout the City of Toronto and provide a voice on policing issues, such as the Registry. The DCCC provides input into the Toronto Police procedures, delivers training, and shares resources with both the Toronto Police and public.

The DCCC is comprised of eight agencies, such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and three Toronto Police staff members. The DCCC is not a public committee. In particular, the meetings and minutes are not available to the public. The membership was selected by the Toronto Police. https://www.tps.ca/organizational-chart/communities-neighbourhoods-command/field-services/community-partnerships-engagement-unit/consultative-committees/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

staff pointed to various reasons for the delay, including a lack of resources, technological issues, and the fact that the Registry was a small part of the Toronto Police's overall review of its online reporting software.

27.   The Toronto Police's Corporate Communications unit prepared a communication plan for the launch of the Registry.[20] Its communications plan indicated a soft launch with ongoing public communications as the preferred strategy to promote the Registry. The Toronto Police was concerned about its capacity to process a large volume of Registry applications. The Toronto Police's communications plan for the launch of the Registry indicated that "it is of value for a slow buy-in to the registry as an immediate influx will leave a backlog of submissions." With that in mind, it opted for a soft launch. According to the Toronto Police, a soft launch would allow the Toronto Police to minimize the Registry's promotion and assess its capacity and address any staffing support concerns. However, Corporate Communication's involvement ended after the launch.

28.   Toronto Police staff explained that the Registry launch had "the fundamentals of a pretty solid launch." Namely, there was a news release, media engagement, a page dedicated to the Registry on the Toronto Police's website, and an announcement on the Toronto Police's website and social media accounts. According to Toronto Police staff, the key difference between a full launch and this soft launch was that it was not tied to an event, such as a news conference. Rather, the Toronto Police intended to plan an event in early 2020 to promote the Registry within the community. However, this did not occur. Toronto Police staff explained that events unfolding in 2020, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, began to take priority.

29.   During the launch, Toronto Police communications explained that the Registry is "geared towards people who have lost cognitive ability or may not be able to communicate with officers, especially in a time of crisis."[21] Its communications during the launch also contained the following:

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[20] The Toronto Police shared the Registry communications plan with my office. The communication plan included media Q&A, key messages, background considerations, and the list of spokespeople for the Registry launch.

[21] Toronto Police. *Vulnerable Persons Registry Now Available*. December 4, 2019. https://web.archive.org/web/20220711173210/https://www.tps.ca/media-centre/stories/vulnerable-person-registry-now-available/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

- Case stories where the Registry could have added value;

- Examples of the type of information that can be shared through the Registry and by whom;

- Information letting the public know that Registry details can be updated at anytime; and

- Examples of how Toronto Police's access to Registry information can result in positive outcomes.[22]

30. Toronto Police staff shared that they sought to use neutral and transparent language with respect to the Registry. However, an organization that works with vulnerable youth shared with my office their concern that the language about the Registry on the Toronto Police's website focused more on how the public can help the Toronto Police, rather than highlighting how the Toronto Police will help vulnerable individuals. They shared that the language could be more collaborative in nature.

31. During the launch, the Toronto Police ran a social media campaign from December 4 to December 16.[23] (See **Picture 1: December 4, 2019, Twitter Post about the Registry**).[24]

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[22] Toronto Police. *Vulnerable Persons Registry Now Available*. December 4, 2019. https://web.archive.org/web/20220711173210/https://www.tps.ca/media-centre/stories/vulnerable-person-registry-now-available/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[23] According to the Toronto Police's communication plan, the Registry social media campaign would push users to tps.ca/services and the social media posts reach was: 17,316 Twitter, 21,081 Facebook, 16,092 Instagram, and 4,513 Instagram Story.

[24] Toronto Police Tweet. December 4, 2019. https://x.com/TorontoPolice/status/1202228392566890496. Accessed May 30, 2024.

Picture 1:

32.   The Toronto Police could not provide my office with social media posts or public news releases after 2019. Toronto Police staff told us that they believe the Registry does not require social media posts on an ongoing basis. Rather, Toronto Police staff shared that targeted marketing and promotion within communities would better suit the Registry. They told us that they believed that this approach would effectively promote the Registry to community groups and agencies that are interested in it. However, Toronto Police staff confirmed this did not happen.

33.   For the launch, Corporate Communications also prepared a page about the Registry on the Toronto Police's website. On it, the Toronto Police included a number of Frequently Asked Questions ("**FAQs**") that address questions such as what information is included in the Registry, how long the Toronto Police retains the information, and how to remove it. The Toronto Police has not updated or changed the FAQs since the launch in 2019.

34. Toronto Police staff told us that they believe the Registry soft launch promotion was a success as media outlets responded positively and every major media outlet discussed it at that time.

35. Toronto Police staff said that there were no additional communications or promotional campaigns for the Registry after the launch. They said that a lot of the Toronto Police's communications are "one and done" as in this case. However, other Toronto Police staff told us the public communications should have been long-term, ongoing, and consistently included in all standard Toronto Police communications because "awareness is a very important piece" for the Registry.

36. Some Toronto Police staff believe that Corporate Communications, the Community Partnership and Engagement Unit ("**CPEU**"),[25] as well as the DCCC, should engage with the public to learn more about gaps in the Toronto Police's existing communications abouts its Registry. They told us that the Toronto Police should do a pulse check on the Registry to understand its successes and challenges, as well as any misconceptions the public may have about the Registry. These Toronto Police staff explained that the Toronto Police cannot improve the Registry without reviewing where it stands five years later.

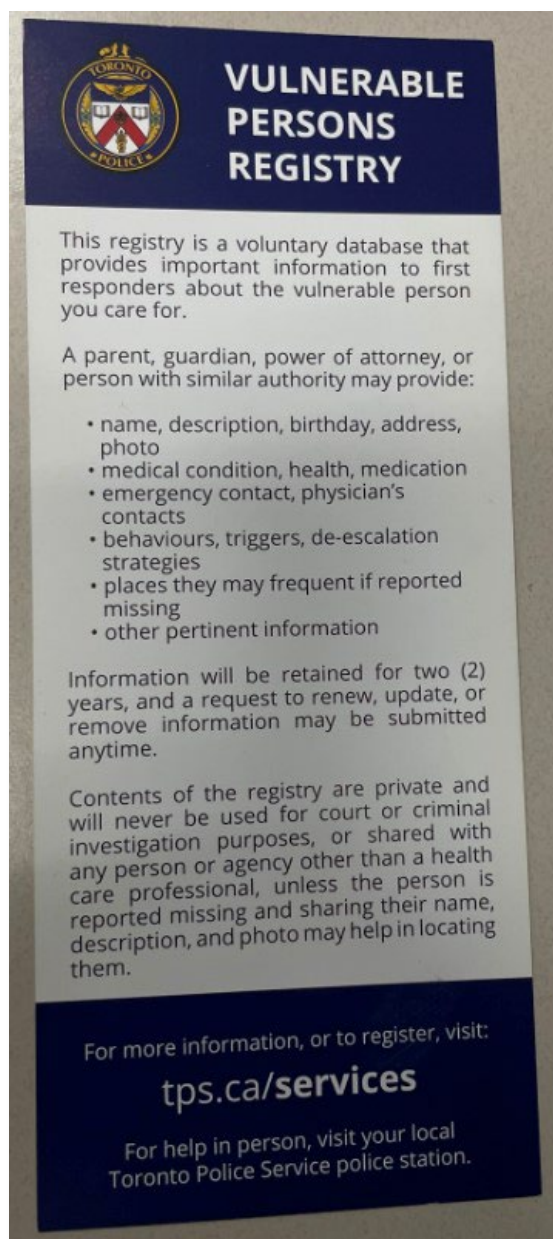# Internal Communications and Promotions

37. The Toronto Police issued various internal communications to promote the launch of the Registry, including:

- An article on the Toronto Police's main Intranet page;

- Routine Orders from the Office of the Chief of Police to all Toronto Police staff;[26] and

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[25] The Toronto Police's website explains that CPEU "is committed to providing an effective, efficient and economical support service to Service members in the practical application of Community Mobilization principles, as well as developing, enhancing and maintaining constructive community partnerships. CPEU continues to include a number of community mobilization functions that support the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) Mobilization & Engagement Model of Community Policing adopted by the Toronto Police Service."

[26] Routine Orders are mandated readings. To date, four Routine Orders were issued since 2019 about the Registry.

- A promotional brochure for divisional staff to share with the public. (See **Picture 2: promotional brochure distributed to divisional staff in 2019 that remains unchanged to-date**.)

Picture 2:

38. The Toronto Police's internal communications generally explained that the Registry is a database that provides first responders with information about a vulnerable person, and that the information will be vetted at the divisional level before dispatchers, police officers, and support personnel can access it. In

addition to providing details about the Registry, these internal communications also encouraged Toronto Police staff to share information about the Registry with members of the public. The communications also identified the Vulnerable Person Coordinator as a point of contact for the Registry.

39.   Toronto Police staff shared that they had not seen any internal communications about the Registry since the launch, and that some officers did not know that information about the Registry was available.

40.   Toronto Police staff told my office that they believe it would be beneficial for the Toronto Police to share an email update to all staff about the Registry. Toronto Police staff told us that the email would share information and build awareness about the Registry.

41.   Board staff shared that they learned about the Registry through the Toronto Police's general reporting to the Board about ongoing initiatives, including the implementation status of the 2014 Report recommendations. The Toronto Police did not independently report to the Board about the launch or ongoing use of the Registry.[27] The Toronto Police stated in an internal email that Board policy does not require the Toronto Police to report anything about the Registry.

42.   Board staff told us that they believed that the Board could help promote the Registry by making community members aware through its website, Board reports, and through its Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Panel.[28]

43.   Toronto Police staff echoed similar sentiments, believing that regular reporting to the Board about the Registry would have held the Toronto Police accountable for the ongoing promotion, improvement, and communication about the

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[27] There were no independent reports solely about the Registry. During the May 2019 Board meeting, the Toronto Police shared that the Registry launch would be delayed as governance and training needed to be completed. However, this information was contained as part of an overall update on The Way Forward Action Plan. https://tpsb.ca/jdownloads-categories/send/54-2019/613-may-30. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[28] This is a Board panel. The Panel consists of members of the Board, members of the Toronto Police, and members from the community. The Panel discusses how it can ensure that community resources are available to the Toronto Police divisions and how to ensure that officers are calling those resources when necessary. Board staff and Toronto Police staff were unaware of any discussion about the Registry at the Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Panel.

Registry. Toronto Police staff said that instead, the creation of the Registry felt more like the Toronto Police had "checked a box."

Registry-Related Training

44.   The Service Procedure requires that the Toronto Police College ("**College**") develop and provide Registry-related training. Toronto Police staff are expected to complete this training.[29]

45.   College staff shared that, while the College initially provided Registry training as part of the mandatory annual in-service training, it stopped after two years. College staff shared that the Registry is currently mentioned in other optional mental health training, but there is no longer any mandatory Registry training provided by the College at this time. Toronto Police staff speculated that new officers would have to learn about the Registry through interactions in the field.[30]

46.   There is also limited training about the Registry within the Toronto Police's units and pillars. For example, the Records Management Services ("**Records**") unit provides one-on-one training for select staff that are responsible for Registry entries. In contrast, the Communications Services unit, which handles emergency and non-emergency calls and dispatch, did not have in-depth training as it was their "understanding that [the Registry] has been decommissioned for quite some time."

The Future of the Registry

47.   Approximately three years ago, the Toronto Police decided not to invest any further resources into the Registry. Senior Toronto Police staff explained that this decision was made because the Registry is not frequently used.[31] Senior staff

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[29]   Reference https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[30]   Examples shared with us of officers learning about the Registry "in the field" include: when the Registry banner appears on their system when responding to a call for service; if officers are entering a general report and see the Registry option exists as a type of report to be entered.

[31]   There are currently 305 registrants. The Toronto Police shared this number with my office which is current as of as of March 27, 2024.

also acknowledged there are issues with how the information flows from the Registry to officers.

48.   During the DCCC's town hall in January 2024, the Toronto Police's Chief Information Officer shared that the Toronto Police is looking to enter into an arrangement with a third-party. The arrangement would result in the third-party owning and managing the Registry. However, the specifics of this arrangement are still being explored.

49.   The Toronto Police believes that while the idea of the Registry has merit, the Toronto Police owning and running it does not. Toronto Police staff said that the best place for the Registry to live is not in a "resource strapped emergency service," but in a place that could attend to the needs as the Registry deserves.

50.   Toronto Police staff acknowledged that they did not continue to promote and market the Registry as they were unsure about its future. They explained their hesitancy to promote the Registry was because they did not want to release information about the Registry if it was no longer going to be a Toronto Police "product" in the near future.

51.   The Toronto Police continues to explore the nature and extent of a possible third-party arrangement. It has not consulted the public nor asked for input about the arrangement, except for mentioning it at the DCCC's town hall in January 2024. Additionally, there are currently no public communications about the Toronto Police's decision to stop investing in the Registry.

Analysis and Findings

52.   I recognize the efforts and intention behind the Toronto Police's endeavour to create the Registry with the public's interest in mind. It sought to provide a way for people to create a personalized de-escalation strategy with the Toronto Police that could assist officers in their interactions with vulnerable persons.

53.   The Toronto Police created a voluntary Registry to gather and store information about vulnerable persons during a time of what it said was heightened public distrust and skepticism toward police data collection with limited public input. While I appreciate the difficulty of launching the Registry in light of the public's response to carding, this actually highlighted the need for greater public input into the creation of the Registry. Greater public involvement could have helped the Toronto Police address the community's lack of trust and skepticism.

54. I believe that the Toronto Police's public engagement efforts should have been more extensive. Although the Toronto Police received input from two dozen agencies, they did not gather feedback from the public generally.

55. The Toronto Police should have publicized its intention to create the Registry and should have asked for public input and feedback. My office heard from an organization that works with vulnerable youth that the language used on the Toronto Police's website lacked details about how the Toronto Police would help vulnerable persons. I believe that if the Toronto Police had sought public input, then concerns such as the website's language could have been raised and addressed prior to the Registry's launch.

56. In addition to the lack of public engagement, the Toronto Police did not use one of its greatest resources to its fullest potential: the DCCC. The DCCC is an excellent tool for the Toronto Police and could have provided invaluable insights due to its broad reach in communities in the City of Toronto. Additionally, the DCCC could have promoted the Registry on an ongoing basis within its communities and networks thereby increasing the chance that more people would learn about the Registry.

57. The Toronto Police prepared a communication plan to promote the launch of the Registry. However, its execution was incomplete, and the communications lacked continuity. Specifically, the launch did not follow through on the targeted marketing it had planned for 2020, and the Registry communications were "one and done" instead of following a "continued maintenance" strategy. An important aspect of raising awareness about the Registry is ongoing communications within communities that work with vulnerable persons. The Toronto Police should have followed through on these intentions.

58. The purpose of the Registry was communicated to the public at the time of the launch. The Toronto Police's news release and news story provided context about the purpose and goal of the Registry, including cases and examples of how the Registry could result in positive police interaction. However, these details were released five years ago and are no longer accessible on the Toronto Police's website.

59. While I recognize that the Toronto Police does provide some details about the Registry's purpose on its website, more information is needed. For example, the Toronto Police should share all communications issued during the launch and the details shared with my office, such as the Registry serving as a personalized de-escalation strategy on its website page. These details would add meaning to the communications, explain the Registry's purpose better, and help the public decide if they wish to use this resource. Addressing this communication failure should be a priority for the Toronto Police.

60.   The Toronto Police should have also availed itself of the Board's resources to communicate and promote the Registry. Although the Toronto Police did mention the Registry to the Board, it did not send a specific report to the Board about the Registry's launch or establishment. As a result, details about the Registry were lost in other communications and updates.

61.   Further, Toronto Police staff only received training about the Registry during the first two years after its launch. Despite the fact that the Toronto Police requires staff to be trained on the Registry, as outlined in its Service Procedure, it does not appear that Toronto Police staff currently receive any such training. Without training, it is unclear how new Toronto Police staff are meant to learn about the Registry or understand how to apply the information to their job. It is unreasonable to expect new Toronto Police staff to know about a Registry that they have not learned about, let alone promote it. I believe that Toronto Police staff, especially Communication Services and divisional staff, require training related to the Registry.

62.   In addition to its lack of training for Toronto Police staff, it also appears that the Toronto Police lacked ongoing internal communications about the Registry, which in turn limited staff's awareness of it. As some Toronto Police staff suggested during my investigation, an update to all staff, such as an email update, should be shared in order to build awareness about the Registry. These steps will ensure that all Toronto Police staff are aware of the Registry, understand it, and use it consistently and appropriately.

63.   As it currently stands, it appears that a third-party will eventually own and manage the Registry. However, the Toronto Police has not shared this decision with the public. I believe that the Toronto Police should disclose its intentions regarding the existing Registry and notify the public about the arrangement once its nature and scope are confirmed.

64.   While I understand that the Toronto Police is actively looking for a third-party to own and manage the Registry, it continues to offer the Registry as a resource to the public. Therefore, the Toronto Police has an obligation to ensure that its communications about the Registry are accurate and up to date.

65.   I believe the Toronto Police currently has two options. It can stop accepting Registry applications if it does not intend to continue training staff and communicating about the Registry. Or, if it continues to accept applications, it needs to start training its staff again and communicate about the Registry. The Toronto Police cannot justify a lack of communication about the Registry because of uncertainty about when a third-party may own and manage it. As long as the Registry continues to be available, the Toronto Police has a duty to the public to communicate about it meaningfully, accurately, and clearly. Clear

communications will allow the public to make informed decisions about whether to submit their information to the Registry for the Toronto Police's use.

Recommendations

66.   My office has identified several concerns with the Toronto Police's current communications about the Registry. The following three recommendations and the remaining 10 throughout this report address the most immediate concerns, as the Toronto Police is actively considering transitioning management and ownership of the Registry to a third-party. The 13 recommendations in this report are intended to both address the issues identified during this investigation and inform future communications under any third-party arrangement.

Recommendation 1

Once the third-party arrangement is finalized, the Toronto Police should update its internal and external communication to explain the nature and scope of the arrangement. The communications should include details such as the impact of the arrangement on existing registrants and the difference between the current and new Registry.

Recommendation 2

The Toronto Police should make meaningful details about the Registry's goal and purpose available and accessible on its website.

Recommendation 3

The Toronto Police should train staff about their respective roles and responsibilities regarding the Registry and provide an update to all staff to increase awareness and understanding of the Registry.

The Registration Process

Registry Eligibility

67.   Toronto Police staff said that they often receive questions about who is eligible to apply for the Registry and about how the Toronto Police defines a "vulnerable" individual. Toronto Police staff shared that there is no threshold, eligibility criteria, or limits on who can register. However, the Service Procedure defines a vulnerable person as:

>   [A] person who by nature of an emotional, medical, psychological or other physical condition may exhibit patterns of behaviour that pose an increased risk of danger to themselves or others, who may require assistance from emergency services.[32]

Application Submission Process

68.   Toronto Police staff explained that individuals learn about the registration process as they go through it. There are no public details, videos, or tutorials outlining this process. The Toronto Police does not provide any information about the registration process in its FAQ about the Registry.[33]

69.   Registry applications can be submitted online or in paper form to a division.[34] The application may be submitted by either the vulnerable person, their parent or guardian, or a person with Power of Attorney or similar authority over the individual (collectively referred to herein as "**registrant**").

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[32]   Definition obtained from Service Procedure https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. The Toronto Police's website provides examples of conditions a person may be experiencing and that a member of the public may consider registering if the "condition affects their cognitive ability, their behaviour could be perceived as violent, they may pose a danger to themselves or others or are likely to be reported missing." https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[33]   Reference https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[34]   To date, the Toronto Police primarily receives applications online. At least one divisional staff member confirmed that they redirect people to the online application.

70. Both the paper and online applications contain mandatory and optional information fields. Mandatory details include name, date of birth, gender, and address, while optional details include diagnosis, methods of communication, methods or approaches to avoid, and medication. However, there are no details on the Toronto Police's website about what information is mandatory. Rather, applicants learn what information is mandatory once they begin the registration process.[35]

71. The Toronto Police sends an automated email to the registrant once they submit their application. The email confirms the registrant's submission and outlines the next steps in the registration process, including the approval of the application as well as a request for the registrant to confirm that they have the authority to submit the Registry information. The email also explains that the Registry information will not be available to officers until this confirmation is made.[36] There are no other details in the email or on the Toronto Police's website about the approval requirements.[37]

72. The Toronto Police's Primary Report Intake Management and Entry unit ("**PRIME**") will review and approve the submitted applications.[38] PRIME staff will exercise their discretion to approve applications based on what they believe to be the "totality of information" required to understand the vulnerable person's needs. PRIME staff do not receive training or guidance on what information is needed in a Registry application.

73. Once PRIME staff approve the application, the Records unit will enter the information into the Toronto Police's general system, called Versadex, for verification. The information now exists as a "general occurrence," which is an incident report that is used to log any Toronto Police involvement.[39] The general

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[35] Reference https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[36] The Toronto Police shared a sample of the automated email with my office.

[37] Reference https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[38] PRIME provides members of the public with telephone and online responses to non-emergency calls for service. https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[39] If PRIME staff believe the application is incomplete, they will reject it and email the registrant with details about what information is missing. Registrants are invited to resubmit the application with the information.

occurrence is marked as unverified and is sent to the local police division to be verified.[40]

74.   At this stage, a second automated email is sent to the registrant. The email provides a reference number and explains that their application was approved. The email also includes the process required to add, change, or modify their information. However, the email does not provide any details about the verification process. After this email, the Toronto Police does not send any further updates or notifications to registrants.[41]

Verification Process

75.   According to the Service Procedure, the verification process is handled at the divisional level by a Vulnerable Person Liaison Officer ("**Liaison Officer**"). The Liaison Officer is responsible for overseeing the verification process for the Registry at the local division.

76.   The verification process involves the registrant meeting with a Liaison Officer in-person and providing supporting documents, such as a Power of Attorney or birth certificate, to establish their authority to register the vulnerable person.[42]

77.   There are no details on the Toronto Police's website about the verification process. An organization that works with vulnerable youth told us that they were unsure about the process because no information was available.

78.   Registrants learn about the verification process in the first email they receive after submitting their application to the Registry. The email explains that the registrant needs to confirm their authority to submit the information. The email also indicates that documents such as a birth certificate and Power of Attorney

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[40]   The general occurrence is sent to the registrant's local police division based on the address listed in the Registry application.

[41]   The Toronto Police confirmed that they could only source these two notifications.

[42]   Reference https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

will be required, and that failing to verify this authority will result in the application information being deleted.[43]

79. The Service Procedure requires that the registrant and Liaison Officer complete the verification process within seven days. That is, the registrant must submit their supporting documents and a Liaison Officer must review them within seven days.[44]

80. Once the Liaison Officer completes the verification process, the general occurrence is marked as verified and flagged to the Records unit. If the Liaison Officer cannot complete the verification process, the general occurrence will remain unverified. In this case, the unverified general occurrence should be removed from the Toronto Police's system.[45]

81. Toronto Police staff shared concerns about the lack of guidance on the verification process, as well as their belief that training would be beneficial. For example, while the Service Procedure states that a person has the required authority to register a vulnerable person if they are a parent, legal guardian, or Power of Attorney or similar authority, there is no explanation or guidance on what constitutes a "similar authority."

82. Additionally, supporting documents that may establish the requisite authority include a birth certificate, family court documents, a Power of Attorney, or similar documents.[46] However, there is no explanation in the Service Procedure or on the Toronto Police's website about what "similar documents" might include.

83. Toronto Police staff explained that these undefined terms have resulted in inconsistency in how divisions handle the verification process. An organization that serves vulnerable communities also told my office that they have

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[43] The Toronto Police shared a sample of the automated email with my office.

[44] Reference https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[45] The removal requirement came from the direction of the Privacy Commissioner as it said the Toronto Police should not store information if they could not confirm it.

[46] Reference https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

experienced variations across divisions with respect to the accepted "authority" to register a vulnerable person.[47]

84.   The seven-day timeline was arbitrarily chosen to ensure that unverified information did not remain available on the Toronto Police's system for extended time periods. However, divisional staff said that scheduling conflicts and workloads make the seven-day turnaround time to complete the verification process unrealistic. They explained that it generally takes 30 days to review and confirm the documentation.

85.   The Service Procedure states that a Liaison Officer will meet with the registrant in-person to verify their documents. However, the initial email notification sent to registrants indicates that the in-person meeting will be required in some cases, at the officer's discretion.[48]

86.   Toronto Police staff shared that they asked internally for the registration process, such as the verification timeline, to be changed to reflect the current practice. A March 30, 2021, Routine Order[49] indicated that the Toronto Police amended the Service Procedure in consultation with the CPEU to reflect the current practice, such as scanning and attaching notes.[50] However, there was no change to the seven-day turnaround time, and no definitions for terms such as "similar authority" or general guidance on the verification process.[51]

87.   Currently, no one in the Toronto Police is monitoring or reviewing the Registry or serving as the single point of contact for internal inquiries. Toronto Police staff note that this has been frustrating. There is also no point of contact for the public listed on the Toronto Police's website.

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[47]   The organization shared that the legal authority requirements pose as an obstacle for their clients to access the Registry as it can be costly to obtain legal documents such as Power of Attorney. As a result, they have not referred clients to the Registry.

[48]   The Toronto Police shared a sample of the automated email with my office.

[49]   Routine orders are mandated readings.

[50]   Changes to the Service Procedure also included replacing "Vulnerable Person Registry" with the acronym "VPR", stylistic formatting, and removing the address for where the PRIME unit is located.

[51]   Reference https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

88.   Toronto Police staff confirmed that some divisions were unaware that a Liaison Officer was assigned to their division, while others had no idea the role existed. My investigation confirmed the same. Specifically, at least one Toronto Police staff member confirmed that they had contacted four divisions to speak to a Liaison Officer, but no one knew what they were referring to. Furthermore, when my office was scheduling interviews using the list of Liaison Officers provided by the Toronto Police, my office confirmed that at least three divisions did not have or know about this role.

89.   There was also a mistaken belief about who exactly the Liaison Officers are. Some staff believed that the divisional Liaison Officers and the CPEU Vulnerable Person Coordinator roles were the same. However, while the CPEU's Vulnerable Person Coordinator is sometimes referred to as the Vulnerable Person Liaison Officer, this role has different responsibilities. Additionally, at least one division believed that divisional Toronto Police staff played no role in verifying Registry information.

Information Input Process

90.   After the verification process is complete, a Liaison Officer will flag the verified general occurrence to the Records unit, which will input the information into the Toronto Police's Computer-Aided Dispatch system ("**CAD**").[52]

91.   The information in the CAD is then linked to the vulnerable person's address and will be accessed only if there is a call for service to that address. (See **Picture 3: Sample Registry Entry into CAD**).

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[52]   Reference https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

Picture 3:

92.   Generally, Records staff will not add details beyond what is in the general occurrence. The only exception is when information regarding the method of communication, approach, or what to avoid is not provided by the registrant. The Records unit determined that these details should not be blank as it did not "look right." In these cases, Records staff will add generic wording such as

"calm" and "relaxed" for methods of communication.[53] Records staff shared that they do not enter specific details or diagnosis information.

93.   Once the information is entered into the CAD, Records staff will also add an entry into the Record unit's SharePoint log, which is their internal record, to track the CAD entry.

94.   In response to my investigation, Toronto Police staff reviewed the Registry applications data and noted concerning numbers. Specifically, Toronto Police staff told us that there are 136 general occurrences marked as verified that were not added to the CAD because divisional staff did not flag the general occurrences to the Records unit.[54] Toronto Police staff said that this is "very concerning," as the registrant likely believes that their information will be available to officers. However, it is not.

95.   Toronto Police staff noted that these numbers represent a liability issue. Records staff suggested internally that they enter these verified entries into the CAD even though they did not learn about these general occurrences until my investigation. However, they were concerned that it would not correct the underlying issue. Namely, that divisional Toronto Police staff are not consistently flagging the verified general occurrences to the Records unit.

96.   In addition, there are 232 Registry general occurrences marked as unverified that still exist in the Toronto Police's system.[55] According to the Service Procedure and Toronto Police staff, these general occurrences should not continue to exist and be accessible in the Toronto Police's system beyond the seven-day period. However, that is not the case.

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[53]   The procedure provides examples of generic words that can be entered. For example, for methods of communication, the terms "calm" and "relaxed" are listed and for method of approach the terms "calm" and "non-aggressive" are listed.

[54]   The Toronto Police shared this number with my office. It is current as of as January 18, 2024.

[55]   As above.

Understanding the Low Registration Numbers

97.   There are currently 305 registrants on the Registry.[56] Toronto Police staff acknowledged that the number of registrants is low. This is accentuated by the fact that there are 3,025,647 people in the City of Toronto.[57]

98.   Low registration has been an ongoing issue for the Toronto Police. In December 2020, one year after the Registry's launch, CPEU conducted a review of the Registry to better understand the low registration numbers. CPEU concluded that the low registration could be due to the following:

- A lack of public trust in sharing this type of information with the Toronto Police;

- An unclear registration process that may deter people from registering; and

- A lack of promotion and marketing of the Registry.

99.   Senior Toronto Police staff told us that the Toronto Police continues to work on building public trust and repairing relationships within their communities.

100.   The Toronto Police told us that it took steps to resolve some of the issues with the registration process, such as changing the term "incident" in the Registry application to "first name" when referring to the registrant and vulnerable person. However, Toronto Police staff explained that they were unable to resolve all the

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[56]   The Toronto Police shared this number with my office. It is current as of as of March 27, 2024.

[57]   City of Toronto, *Toronto at a Glance* (2023) https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/toronto-at-a-glance/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

issues because of limitations with their online reporting software.[58] They acknowledged that a lack of promotion and marketing also remain an issue for the Registry.

101.   A non-profit organization that works with vulnerable persons and the police shared that they were unaware of the Registry until my office launched this investigation. The DCCC said that the public's lack of awareness could be due to "a failure in communication."

102.   Toronto Police staff believe the Registry needs a point of contact to allow staff and the public to get consistent responses to questions and to promote the Registry.

103.   The Service Procedure indicates that the Vulnerable Person Coordinator at CPEU is responsible for managing the Registry, including engagement and outreach. However, according to CPEU staff, the Vulnerable Person Coordinator is not responsible for managing the Registry and is not the point of contact for public inquiries, engagement, or outreach. CPEU staff said this point is understood within the Toronto Police, but many Toronto Police staff that my office spoke with pointed to CPEU as the lead, owner, and point of contact of the Registry.

104.   Additionally, the Service Procedure indicates that one of the Liaison Officers' responsibilities include promoting the Registry to the community. These promotions include informing local organizations of the existence of the Registry. However, as noted above, a Liaison Officer is not assigned to every division.

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[58]   The Toronto Police met with an advocate that had experience and knowledge about databases such as the Toronto Police's Registry. The person shared that the term "incident" was offensive as it was referring to the name of the vulnerable person. DCCC members also noted that there was tone deafness in the Registry application language as "incident" made persons feel like an object. The Toronto Police incorporated the feedback and made some changes to the Registry application such as changing "incident" when referring to the vulnerable person themselves. The Toronto Police explained that they were unable to make many changes to the online application because of technological limitations with the online reporting software.

Analysis and Findings

105.   The Toronto Police's registration process was well intended. However, it lacks transparent and meaningful communications, both internally and externally.

106.   Internally, Toronto Police staff expressed concerns about the lack of clarity in the verification process. In particular, it was unclear what authority and supporting documents were required to satisfy the criteria for "similar authority." There are no guides, training, procedures, or communications available to provide clarity or definitions to staff during the verification process.

107.   Additionally, current practices do not align with the Service Procedure. For example, the seven-day verification timeline is not followed. The absence of a Liaison Officer at every division is also concerning, especially since the Service Procedure requires the Liaison Officers to verify Registry applications. Toronto Police staff have asked for the Service Procedure to be updated to reflect the actual practice, such as the verification timeline. However, this has not occurred.

108.   Externally, except for the Service Procedure, there is no meaningful information online about the registration process. While the Toronto Police's website outlines the information that will be included in the Registry, it lacks videos, tutorials, or details about the registration process. As a result, individuals must learn about the process as they proceed with registration.

109.   The Toronto Police's website explains who can provide information for the Registry. However, there are no details about who can be registered. Toronto Police staff shared that there is no threshold or eligibility criteria to register an individual, yet there is no way for the public to know this. There is a communication gap here.

110.   Additionally, it is unclear what information is needed and important for the Registry application. Toronto Police staff shared that PRIME may exercise their discretion, without any guidance or training, to determine if a Registry application provides them with sufficient information to understand the needs of the vulnerable person. However, there is no information available to the public about the specifics required to provide a full picture of the vulnerable person's needs. Instead, it appears that certain de-escalation details, which are at the core of what the Registry seeks to provide, are treated as optional on the Registry application. The Records unit will use generic terms where the applicant does not provide these de-escalation details.

111.   It is unreasonable to expect registrants to understand the purpose of the requested details when they have no information about the registration process,

what is needed, and why. As a result, individuals may only provide the mandatory information, which does not lead to the development of a personalized de-escalation strategy. However, the impact of only providing mandatory information is not highlighted in any of the Toronto Police's communications. As a result, registrants remain unaware of the consequences of not sharing optional details. I believe that it is crucial to address this inconsistency.

112.   The Toronto Police's website lacks an explanation of the verification process, which requires applicants to confirm that they have the authority to share information with the Toronto Police. Registrants only learn about this process through the first automatic email, which notifies them that they application has been received. However, the details in this email do not clearly explain what authority or documents would be sufficient to satisfy the verification process. Additionally, the email implies that an in-person verification requirement may not be mandatory, which is inconsistent with the Service Procedure.

113.   The Toronto Police does not notify registrants once the Registry information is input into the CAD. I learned that at least 136 Registry applications were not input into the CAD. These registrants voluntarily shared information with the Toronto Police, successfully completed the registration process, but due to the Toronto Police's error, their information is not being used as intended. I believe that notifications should not end at the Registry application approval process. Instead, registrants should be told when information is verified and added to the CAD. Such notifications will hold the Toronto Police accountable and ensure that registrants understand when the Registry information actually becomes available to officers.

114.   The Registry's low registration is not surprising. I believe there is one common underlying issue for the low registration numbers: a failure for someone or a unit within the service to take responsibility for the Registry. This lack of accountability has created gaps in the Toronto Police's communication and promotion about the Registry. During this investigation, I learned that CPEU is responsible for managing the Registry, but CPEU has denied this. The Toronto Police told my office that Liaison Officers are responsible for promoting the Registry. However, a Liaison Officer is not assigned to each division. As a result, no one is promoting the Registry on an ongoing basis. Additionally, there is no one reviewing how communications can be improved, ensuring Toronto Police staff are fulfilling their roles, or providing a central place where the public and Toronto Police staff can get consistent answers to Registry-related questions.

115.   The absence of clear ownership for the Registry makes it difficult for the public to know whom to contact. This problem is compounded by the fact that the term "Liaison Officer" refers to roles at both the divisional level and the CPEU, which

is confusing. Additionally, there is no information available on how to contact the Toronto Police with Registry-related questions.

116.   Finally, as I noted earlier, the recent decision to transfer ownership and management of the Registry does not absolve the Toronto Police of its obligation to ensure that its practice, process, and communications are updated, accurate and clear.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4

The Toronto Police should clearly define and publicize all the steps and requirements in registration process for the Registry. A clearly defined process would ensure that the public understands what information is mandatory before registering, what information is required to create a personalized de-escalation strategy, who can register, and which supporting documents and authority are acceptable.

Recommendation 5

The Toronto Police should ensure that the Service Procedure and Registry practice are aligned.

Recommendation 6

The Toronto Police should update the Registry page on its website to inform the public about the generic terms that will be used to fill gaps in the Registry application, and when that will be done.

Recommendation 7

The Toronto Police should notify registrants when the Registry information is added to the Registry system and becomes available to officers.

Recommendation 8

The Toronto Police should assign a point of contact to respond to Registry-related questions received from Toronto Police staff members and the public. The information for the Registry contact should be made available on the Toronto Police's website and the Registry application.

Accessing and Using Registry Information

Storing Information

117.   The Toronto Police advertise the Registry is advertised as a database. However, Toronto Police told us that it is not a separate database. Rather, the Registry information exists in four different Toronto Police systems.

118.   The first system where Registry information exists is the Toronto Police's central record management system, Versadex. Versadex is the system that contains all the Toronto Police's general occurrences, including ones for the Registry, homicide, theft, and assault incidents. Toronto Police staff shared that Registry general occurrences do not reside in a separate database.

119.   The second system, the CAD, is used by dispatch staff. The CAD contains the Registry information entered by the Records unit. However, similar to Versadex, the CAD contains information beyond just the Registry.

120.   The third system is the Records unit's SharePoint log. SharePoint is only accessible by the Records unit and is used to track every entry their staff makes into the CAD.[59] SharePoint only contains information about the vulnerable person's name, date of birth, and address. There are no details about the vulnerable person's medical condition or de-escalation strategies.

121.   The fourth system, used by at least one division, is the Push Pin Bulletin ("**Bulletin**"). The Bulletin is a secure network accessible by officers within that division. The division added verified Registry information to its Bulletin as there is no ability to search a database for Registry information. The division only adds Registry information for vulnerable persons that live within their division. This enables officers to search the Bulletin in instances when individuals have wandered off or gone missing, facilitating potential identification through the Registry.

122.   Finally, while not a separate system per se, at least one division shared that they also keep a spreadsheet to track every Registry general occurrence they are assigned to verify, even if the general occurrence is ultimately deleted. The

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[59]   SharePoint is also the central database for the Records unit for operational procedures, policies, and training information. Toronto Police staff said that SharePoint is their "checks and balances" to confirm receipt of the Registry application and entry into the CAD.

spreadsheet contains information about the person's name, contact details, and whether the general occurrence was marked as verified, unverified, or deleted. The spreadsheet is saved on their personal Toronto Police drive for record keeping purposes.

123. Public information regarding the storage of Registry information can be found in the Registry application's privacy policy.[60] The policy states that the information is stored in the Toronto Police's records management software. No communications exist to explain that the Registry is not stored in a single database.[61]

124. Toronto Police staff said that a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) would have reviewed the Registry for legislative compliance, a communication plan, and identified the owner of the Registry. However, as discussed earlier, the Toronto Police has yet to complete the PIA as of the date of this report. Toronto Police staff explained that a PIA would have also identified all the Toronto Police's systems where Registry information exists and would have reviewed issues such as data retention, safeguards, collection, and use. Toronto Police staff explained that a PIA should have been completed and can be done retroactively. They said it was unusual that one was never finalized.

125. Finally, although the Toronto Police is exploring having a third-party own and manage the Registry, it appears that Registry information may still get stored in the Toronto Police's system. For example, an officer would make notations about the information used to assist in responding to a call, including any information shared from a third-party. These notations will be entered and stored on Versadex. This is a police practice. As such, some Registry information may be entered into the Toronto Police's system even if a third-party owns and manages the Registry.

Accessing Information

126.   Registry information is generally first accessed by dispatchers when there is a call for service to a vulnerable person's address. The Registry information will first appear on the CAD and dispatch staff will be alerted that there is a vulnerable person at the address.

127.   Responding officers are also notified that the vulnerable person is on the Registry when there is a call for service. Officers are then prompted by dispatch and a hyperlink on their mobile data terminal[62] to review the Registry information on Versadex.

128.   Toronto Police staff shared concerns about how the information is usually accessed. They explained that the call for service has to be at the address provided in the Registry in order for the information to be accessible during an emergency call. This is because the Registry information is tied to a location in the CAD, and not to the vulnerable person. If the vulnerable person wanders or if the call for service is not to the address listed in the CAD, dispatchers would not be alerted to the Registry information and officers would not know this person is on the Registry.

129.   Toronto Police staff believe that Registry communications should explain that Registry information is not connected to the vulnerable person. Instead, the Registry information is connected only to the person's address listed in the Registry application. However, there is no information available about this limitation.[63]

130.   The Registry information on Versadex is available and can be accessed by all Toronto Police staff. However, Toronto Police staff said that officers should only be accessing the Registry information on Versadex when responding to a call for service.

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[62]   These data terminals are commonly found in police patrol cars.

[63]   Reference https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

Using Information

131.   The Registry information is only to be used for locating or interacting with a vulnerable person. The Registry information cannot be used for court purposes, shared with other agencies except for health care professionals, released through any record disclosure processes, or used to create a wanted person bulletin.[64]

132.   The Toronto Police's website explains that the Registry information will be available to Toronto Police staff and accessible to other police agencies upon request. However, Toronto Police staff provided conflicting information about Registry disclosures. Some Toronto Police staff told us that Registry records would be released to other police agencies, while others indicated that the information would not.

133.   The Registry application privacy policy states that Registry information will be used for emergency purposes only. The privacy policy explains that Registry information may be shared with Toronto Paramedic Services, Fire Services, or other police organizations, and if the person is reported missing the information may be shared with media, public transit, hospitals, or community housing.[65]

134.   The Toronto Police's website states that Registry information will not be shared with prospective employers or other organizations through police records checks, nor will it appear on the Canadian Police Information Centre. However, Toronto Police staff shared that human error may cause Registry information to be unintentionally used or disclosed. Toronto Police staff speculated that it is possible that staff may have made such a mistake, and this continues to be possible as long as they own and manage the Registry.

135.   Toronto Police staff acknowledged that unintentional disclosure or use may happen if officers are unaware that the information first came from the Registry. For example, if an officer includes notations about Registry information that they relied on in responding to a call for service, this will be added to Versadex. Another officer may access the information in Versadex without realizing that it

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[64] Reference https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[65] Reference https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/ and a Toronto Police News Release dated December 4, 2019.

contains Registry information. As a result, the information may be inadvertently shared or disclosed. Such disclosure or use may unfold even if a third-party owns and manages the Registry.

136. An organization that works with vulnerable youth told us that, while the information in the Registry can be helpful, they fear it can also be weaponized. At the time of the Registry's launch, CBC news reported that there are "unanswered questions" about the management, control, and access of the Registry information. The CBC article explained that the issues were not answered in the information shared during the launch.[66]

Removing Information

137. Registry information may be deleted in two instances. A registrant may request a deletion of their information at any time, and the Toronto Police will comply "without question."[67] In the absence of such a request, the information will automatically be deleted from the CAD two years after the registrant submits their application to the Toronto Police.[68] Registrants are not notified of the deletion unless the division emails them to confirm.

138. An organization that works with vulnerable youth explained to my office that the removal process is unclear. The Toronto Police's website indicates that registrants may file a supplementary report to remove the information. However, there is no information provided about what additional details are required to request removal. The Toronto Police's website also does not offer an online option for a "deletion" or "removal" supplemental report.

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[66] Nasser, Shanifa. CBC News, "Toronto police vulnerable persons registry welcome but privacy questions remain, experts say." December 5, 2019. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-police-vulnerable-persons-registry-1.5385008. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[67] Nasser, Shanifa. CBC News, "Toronto police vulnerable persons registry welcome but privacy questions remain, experts say." December 5, 2019. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-police-vulnerable-persons-registry-1.5385008. Accessed May 30, 2024. and at https://www.tps.ca/services/vulnerable-persons-registry/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

[68] Toronto Police News Release dated December 4, 2019.

139.   Additionally, the Toronto Police's website provides inconsistent information about retention periods. The website states that the information will be retained for two years. However, the privacy policy for the Registry application states that the information will be automatically deleted if it is not updated within one year.

140.   A community organization that my office spoke to shared that there are concerns about what data footprints remain on the Toronto Police's systems, despite a removal request or information expiring.

141.   Toronto Police staff told us that they would not be surprised if Registry information is not being removed from the systems after two years, as there is a corporate wide challenge with "getting things deleted and purged." Additionally, during the creation of the Registry, a Toronto Police staff member raised the following concern about information deletion:

> [T]his is a risk for the [Toronto Police] that needs to be addressed. There is no oversight/responsibility with the [Toronto Police] and in fairness to members of the public, having a random anniversary date one year in the future would be very easy to overlook.

142.   When the Registry information is deleted, the information will be removed from the CAD, but continues to exist on Versadex, SharePoint, and at times on the Bulletin. Records staff told my office that previously, information in Versadex would be deleted. However, they determined it was not a good record-keeping practice. Consequently, they now make the general occurrence inactive.[69] However, Toronto Police staff shared with my office that if there is no Registry information in the CAD, then it should also be deleted from every other system where it exists.

143.   The Toronto Police shared a report that they prepared for my office, which stated that there are "severe issues with [the] current process." To date, there are 232 general occurrences marked as unverified, and 104 general occurrences marked as verified, that have exceeded the two-year submission anniversary date but continue to exist on Versadex.[70] The Toronto Police explained that unlike with

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[69] An inactive general occurrence continues to exist on Versadex. The general occurrence continues to be stored in the system's memory, operating in the background like an archive. However, it is not visible in the forefront of the system.

[70] The Toronto Police shared this number with my office which is current as of March 27, 2024.

the CAD, there was no process implemented for the deletion of Registry entries in Versadex. There are also 72 entries on SharePoint that should not exist as they are expired or were requested to be removed.[71]

144.	Information Security and Access staff[72] shared that the 232 general occurrences that are marked as unverified should be locked until the Versadex system is cleaned up, to ensure that the information cannot be used and access to it is limited.

Analysis and Findings

145.	I acknowledge the Toronto Police's attempt to communicate to the public about the access and use of Registry information. Nevertheless, these communications lack clarity, meaningfulness, and accuracy.

146.	The Toronto Police's website indicates that the Registry is a database. My office learned this is not the case. Rather, the Registry is a series of general occurrences on Versadex, entries on the CAD, a list available on SharePoint, and a Bulletin for at least one division. One division also had a tracking spreadsheet. However, the Toronto Police did not explain how the information can be found in all four systems. The Toronto Police's public communications about the Registry as a database are unclear and misleading.

147.	The Toronto Police may not have intended for the information to exist in systems outside of Versadex and the CAD. However, it appears that Toronto Police staff took it upon themselves to use a spreadsheet and tools, such as the Bulletin, to account for the shortcomings in accessing information from the Registry.

148.	Currently, there is no available information that explains that the Registry information is tied to an address and not the vulnerable person. As such, the public is likely unaware that the Registry information is only accessed when there is a call for service to the vulnerable person's address provided in the Registry application. Consequently, people may not appreciate the importance of updating the vulnerable person's address or always referring to the Registry

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[71]	The Toronto Police shared this number with my office which is current as of February 23, 2024.

[72]	Information Security and Access staff are the ones responsible for conducting and completing PIAs.

address in an emergency call regardless of where the call for service is being made from.

149.   The Toronto Police stated that the information in the Registry may be shared with other police agencies and emergency services. While this information is clearly defined on their website, the disclosure practice followed by the Toronto Police is unclear. My office heard varying responses as to whether the information contained in the Registry would be shared with other police agencies. There should not be inconsistencies between the internal disclosure practice and what is communicated publicly.

150.   The removal process is also unclear and as a result, the public information lacks important details. The information on the Toronto Police's website indicates that a supplemental report should be filed. However, it is not clear what additional details are required to request a removal of a registrant's information. Moreover, registrants do not have an option to delete or remove their information on the Toronto Police's website.

151.   Simply put, the information that the Toronto Police has shared about removing Registry information is inaccurate and inadequate. My investigation discovered that the Toronto Police has failed the remove unverified and expired Registry information from its multiple systems. Further, there is a potential that information which has been requested for removal also remains on multiple systems within the Toronto Police. This is wrong. Registry information should not be accessible on any Toronto Police system if the verification process is unsuccessful, the two-year retention period has lapsed, or if a registrant exercised their right to request its removal.

152.   The Toronto Police's communication about where Registry information is stored, when it is accessed, how it will be used, and its removal, is not transparent. Further, this information does not accurately reflect the current practice. This deprives the public of the chance to make an informed decision about whether to submit their information to the Toronto Police.

153.   Based on the concerns noted, I believe that the Toronto Police should not have let the initial Registry PIA remain incomplete. The PIA would have allowed the Toronto Police to review the Registry and identify any issue with accessing, using, storing, and removing information and to provide recommendations on how to address the existing and ongoing concerns.

Recommendations

Recommendation 9

The Toronto Police's communications about the Registry should clearly detail what the Registry is, where the information is stored, and when and how the Toronto Police will access and use the Registry information. These communications should also include details indicating that the Registry information shared with officers responding to a call is address-specific and not connected to the name of the vulnerable person.

Recommendation 10

The Toronto Police should review and publicize the Registry information removal process, including where the information is removed from and when. The Toronto Police should notify registrants any time their information is removed.

Recommendation 11

The Toronto Police should contact all verified and unverified registrants that were not added to the CAD. The Toronto Police should notify these registrants that their information is not accessible during a call for emergency service and confirm whether they wish to be added to or removed from the system.

Recommendation 12

The Toronto Police should ensure that Recommendations 2 through 10 are incorporated in any third-party arrangement to ensure that the current Registry communication gaps do not recur.

Recommendation 13

The Toronto Police should provide Ombudsman Toronto with a status update on the implementation of these recommendations by December 12, 2024, and then on a quarterly basis thereafter.

Conclusion

154.   The Toronto Police undertook to create a Registry that would allow the public to create personalized de-escalation strategies, guiding officers in their interactions with vulnerable individuals. The Toronto Police defines a vulnerable person as "a person who by nature of an emotional, medical, psychological or other physical condition may exhibit patterns of behaviour that pose an increased risk of danger to themselves or others, who may require assistance from emergency services."[73]

155.   The Toronto Police decided to create and launch the Registry. In doing so, I recognize the challenges they faced, particularly during a time of heightened public distrust and skepticism toward police data collection. However, this social climate is all the more reason why the Toronto Police should have requested the input of the DCCC and the public during the creation of the Registry. The Toronto Police's engagement efforts should have gone beyond collaborating with two dozen agencies.

156.   The Toronto Police's communication plan for the Registry's launch was intended to promote and build awareness both inside and outside the Toronto Police; however, issues with its execution and continuity have hindered public awareness of the Registry.

157.   Notably, the Toronto Police's communications about the Registry should not have been a one-time effort. It should have engaged in targeted marketing, using resources such as the DCCC and the Board to build awareness about the Registry.

158.   Additionally, while its communications during the launch clarified the Registry's purpose, the information was not made accessible on the Toronto Police's website post-launch, which hinders public understanding. The Toronto Police should provide the public with more details about the Registry's purpose, including case examples and its value in personalized de-escalation in order to better inform their decision to use this resource.

159.   The registration process on the Toronto Police's website lacks detail, leaving the public uncertain about the required information, documents, and verification process before applying to the Registry.

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[73] Definition obtained from Service Procedure 04-08, located at https://www.tps.ca/service-procedures/. Accessed May 30, 2024.

160. The lack of information about the registration process can result in members of the public not providing sufficient details in their application. As a result, the Records unit resorts to using generic terms when entering information in the CAD, which is inconsistent with the Registry's purpose to create a personalized de-escalation strategy for the vulnerable person.

161. Publicly available information in the Service Procedure[74] does not align with the Toronto Police's current practice, leading to misunderstandings amongst Toronto Police staff. Examples of discrepancies between documented procedures and actual operations include the absence of a Liaison Officer in each division and not adhering to the seven-day verification timeline.

162. The Toronto Police has acknowledged that the Registry has a low number of registrants. I believe that inconsistencies in the registration process have directly impacted the number of registrants. While I recognize that the idea of the Registry was commendable, the execution was lacking.

163. However, the Toronto Police's largest communication gap is related to the storage, access, use, and removal of registrants' information. These communications are unclear, lack meaningful content, and are inaccurate. The Toronto Police's current communications do not give the public an opportunity to make an informed decision on whether to supply personal information through the Registry.

164. The Toronto Police only provides the public with minimal details about the storage, access, use, and removal of the Registry information. Essential information is missing including that the Registry is not truly a database but lives on four of the Toronto Police's systems. Additionally, information remains accessible on the Toronto Police's systems beyond the two-year retention period, including unverified information.

165. Currently, no information explains that Registry information is tied to the vulnerable person's address. The public is unaware that this personal data is only available to officers when there is a call for service to the address provided in the Registry application. The vulnerable person has a mistaken belief that their personalized de-escalation strategy is available to the Toronto Police.

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[74] The Toronto Police's Service Procedure outlines the responsibilities of various Toronto Police units and pillars. Additionally, it explains the purpose of the Registry, and the limits on the use of Registry information.

Consequently, there may be instances where the Toronto Police responds to a crisis involving a vulnerable person but is unaware that they are on the Registry. The Toronto Police's failure to provide this important detail also means the public is unaware of the importance of updating changes to the registrant's address in the Registry.

166.   The Toronto Police's process for removing Registry information is unclear and misleading and does not include an option on its website for people to delete any information. Furthermore, while the Toronto Police indicates that personal information will be removed from its system, my investigation confirmed that unverified, expired, and quite possibly information requested for removal continues to exist on multiple systems within the Toronto Police. This contradicts the Toronto Police's public communications and raises concerns about data retention.

167.   I believe that many of these storage and retention issues could have been identified if the Toronto Police had completed a PIA prior to the Registry's launch. If the Toronto Police completed a PIA, it would have had the opportunity to assess its data management practices and identify any areas for improvement.

168.   After learning about the Toronto Police's lack of ongoing communication and promotion of the Registry and the absence of public input in creating the Registry, I am not surprised by the low number of Registry registrants. The Toronto Police clearly lacks proper ownership for the Registry and Toronto Police staff do not know who is responsible for managing, promoting, and communicating about the Registry. As a result, the public's awareness and understanding of the Registry is low.

169.   My investigation has identified multiple areas for the Toronto Police to improve its public communications. While its discussion with a third-party regarding a future arrangement continue, the Toronto Police will need to explore how it will balance this potential third-party arrangement while continuing to offer the Registry to the public.

170.   As long as the Toronto Police continues to offer the Registry, it needs to communicate clearly and meaningfully about it. The Toronto Police must continue to ensure the information it shares is transparent, meaningful, and accurate. By addressing the communications failures identified in this report, the public will be better informed about the Registry's purpose, processes, and how the information submitted will be use, thus allowing individuals to make informed decisions about the Registry.

Recommendations

171.   My office has identified several concerns with the Toronto Police's current communications about the Registry. The recommendations in my report address the most immediate concerns, as the Toronto Police is actively considering transitioning management and ownership of the Registry to a third-party. The report's recommendations are intended to address the issues identified during this investigation and inform future communications under any third-party arrangement.

The Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Once the third-party arrangement is finalized, the Toronto Police should update its internal and external communication to explain the nature and scope of the arrangement. The communications should include details such as the impact of the arrangement on existing registrants and the difference between the current and new Registry.

Recommendation 2

The Toronto Police should make meaningful details about the Registry's goal and purpose available and accessible on its website.

Recommendation 3

The Toronto Police should train staff about their respective roles and responsibilities regarding the Registry and provide an update to all staff to increase awareness and understanding of the Registry.

Recommendation 4

The Toronto Police should clearly define and publicize all the steps and requirements in registration process for the Registry. A clearly defined process would ensure that the public understands what information is mandatory before registering, what information is required to create a personalized de-escalation strategy, who can register, and which supporting documents and authority are acceptable.

Recommendation 5

The Toronto Police should ensure that the Service Procedure and Registry practice are aligned.

Recommendation 6

The Toronto Police should update the Registry page on its website to inform the public about the generic terms that will be used to fill gaps in the Registry application, and when that will be done.

Recommendation 7

The Toronto Police should notify registrants when the Registry information is added to the Registry system and becomes available to officers.

Recommendation 8

The Toronto Police should assign a point of contact to respond to Registry-related questions received from Toronto Police staff members and the public. The information for the Registry contact should be made available on the Toronto Police's website and the Registry application.

Recommendation 9

The Toronto Police's communications about the Registry should clearly detail what the Registry is, where the information is stored, and when and how the Toronto Police will access and use the Registry information. These communications should also include details indicating that the Registry information shared with officers responding to a call is address-specific and not connected to the name of the vulnerable person.

Recommendation 10

The Toronto Police should review and publicize the Registry information removal process, including where the information is removed from and when. The Toronto Police should notify registrants any time their information is removed.

Recommendation 11

The Toronto Police should contact all verified and unverified registrants that were not added to the CAD. The Toronto Police should notify these registrants that their information is not accessible during a call for emergency service and confirm whether they wish to be added to or removed from the system.

Recommendation 12

The Toronto Police should ensure that recommendations 2 through 10 are incorporated in any third-party arrangement to ensure that the current Registry communication gaps do not recur.

Recommendation 13

The Toronto Police should provide Ombudsman Toronto with a status update on the implementation of these recommendations by December 12, 2024, and then on a quarterly basis thereafter.

Response and Follow-up

The Service and Board's Response to our Recommendations

172. The Toronto Police's formal response to my report indicates that they have accepted all 13 of my recommendations in full. The Toronto Police explains that it intends to incorporate the spirit and intent of our recommendations as they work with their communities to change the current Registry program and plan for the future.

173. The Toronto Police has committed to providing my office with updates on the implementation of these recommendations through a report to the Toronto Police Service Board. The Toronto Police will provide its first update by December 12, 2024.

174. The Toronto Police's formal response dated August 16, 2024, is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Ombudsman Toronto Follow-up

175. My office will follow up with the Toronto Police on a quarterly basis until we are satisfied that the implementation of my recommendations is complete.

Appendix

Toronto Police Service

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Website: www.TorontoPolice.on.ca

Office of the Chief of Police

File Number: _____

August 16, 2024

Sent via email

Kwame Addo
Ombudsman Toronto
375 University Avenue, Suite 203
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2J5

Dear Ombudsman Addo,

<u>RE: Ombudsman Toronto's Preliminary Investigation Report Titled "An Investigation into the Toronto Police Service's Communications About its Vulnerable Person Registry"</u>

The Toronto Police Service (Service) has reviewed a draft of your preliminary investigation report, including the 13 recommendations identified to address concerns with current communications about our Vulnerable Person Registry (VPR). Improving our VPR database, business processes and related communications is an endeavour that aligns with our Service's goals to:

1. Improve trust in and within the Service;
2. Accelerate reform and professionalization; and
3. Support safer communities.

Your investigation has clearly identified areas for improvement not only in our internal and external communications about the VPR, but also in the overall management of it. Importantly, your recommendations align well with our Service's broader efforts to find ways to best serve those dealing with mental health challenges. As such, we commit to implementing your recommendations in full.

As your report indicates, we are currently exploring transitioning to a third party administer for the VPR. As this transition cannot happen immediately, we will ensure that enhanced communication about the VPR in its current form will be included in our work to implement your recommendations.

To Serve and Protect - Working with the Community

The Service will provide an update via a report to the Toronto Police Service Board (Board) that we will ask the Board to forward to your office. To keep with your recommended timeline for updates, we will ensure our update report is included on the agenda for the Board's meeting on December 12, 2024. We thank you for your investigation and commit to working with our Board to ensure we are sufficiently resourced to undertake the reform initiatives we are currently engaged in including these 13 recommendations. That said we intend to ensure the spirit and intent of your recommendation are incorporated as we work with our communities in co-developing the changes to the current program and that which we plan for the future.

Sincerely,

Myron Demkiw
Chief of Police