

POSTER ABSTRACT

Individual Rights and Safeguards in Canadian Mental Health Legislation: A Comparative Policy Review of Consent, Coercion, and Integrated Care Opportunities

International Conference on Integrated Care (ICIC26), Birmingham, 13-15 April 2026

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Background: Canada's provinces and territories operate under distinct mental health legislation, yet limited comparative evidence exists on how these frameworks promote or hinder integrated, rights-based mental health care. When consent and compulsory treatment provisions diverge, tensions arise between clinical, legal, and ethical imperatives, challenging patient-centered and recovery-oriented care. Without systematic comparison of legislative attributes and implementation outcomes, jurisdictions lack evidence to align patient rights protection with integrated care objectives, perpetuating variation in care quality, continuity, and patient experience.

Approach: This comparative policy analysis maps and compares core provisions of Mental Health Acts in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, focusing on consent, procedural safeguards, and patient rights. We analyze relationships between public policy attributes and indicators of patient experience, service integration, and health outcomes. We document implementation timelines for major reforms, such as rights advisement mechanisms, and identifying policy attributes that enable effective integration across care settings while upholding patient rights.

Results: Preliminary findings reveal significant variation in procedural safeguards, consent frameworks, and community treatment provisions across jurisdictions, with implications for care continuity and patient autonomy.

Implications: This research will inform cross-jurisdictional learning and evidence-based law reform, demonstrating how legislative safeguards and service integration strategies can coexist to support autonomy, safety, and recovery. Findings provide actionable insights for policymakers, health system leaders, and advocates working to harmonize legal frameworks with integrated, person-centered mental health care models.