

## Winter 2014/2015 Communique



### PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

The York ASD Partnership continues to be actively engaged in the work that has accomplished so many goals and continues to move us through the next stages in the process. As always, we want to acknowledge the consistent commitment of time, energy and dedication to improving the system of supports for people with ASD and their families in York Region of the partner agencies, and most importantly, the parent representatives that are the driving force behind our many successes.

The York ASD Partnership would also like to extend our ongoing thanks to all the member organizations whose voluntary contributions have supported the expenses for implementation of our strategic plan. Neil Walker continues as Project Manager and Janette Seymour continues as Assistant Project Manager through to March 31, 2015.

In September 2014, all agencies actively involved with the York ASD Partnership renewed their ongoing commitment by signing updated Memorandums of Understanding. The term of these MOU's is three years and they will expire August 31, 2017.

York ASD Partnership continues to maintain a public profile with display tables at the Geneva Centre for Autism Symposium in November 2014. Neil Walker, Project Manager, and Lois Alderson-Wigelius, Co-chair of the Professional Development Working Group will be making a presentation to the Central Region Network of Specialized Care in January 2015. As well, our proposal to present at the OASIS conference in the spring of 2015 has been accepted.

### ONGOING AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN THE YORK ASD PARTNERSHIP

On April 30, 2014 the York ASD Partnership hosted the York Region Autism Spectrum Disorder Summit. This was a sold-out event with over 150 attendees. The day provided a full agenda of educational, inspirational and entertaining information. As part of this event, focus groups were asked a series of questions related to two specific topic areas. The first group of questions related to Adult Supports and Services. Answers to those questions highlighted the need for increased services for adults in York Region, the need for improved access to information about both funded and unfunded services, the need for more streamlined access to services and the need for continuity of services from childhood to adulthood. These responses will inform the revision of the Strategic Plan and the work of the Adult Working Group. The second set of questions related to children's services and asked about the need for collaborative and coordinated service planning and service delivery. Responses to these questions suggested that while access to services for children has improved, the process of service planning and coordination still remains disconnected. This coincides with the Ontario government's Special Needs Strategy which is looking at streamlined and seamless access to services. Member agencies of the York ASD Partnership are actively involved in this process and have committed to ensuring that the voice of the York ASD Partnership is heard.

Requests for presentations on the work of the York ASD Partnership continue to be made regularly by other regions. In April 2014, the York ASD Partnership received a one-time grant from the Ministry of Community Services, a portion of which was designated to fund a documentation of the York ASD Partnership. *"The York ASD Partnership of Model of Community Systems Change"* will formally document the history and processes of the York ASD Partnership and would provide a model for other community agencies to develop sustainable, collaborative partnerships to improve their capacity and increase their flexibility to provide services to individuals with ASD in their

communities. An external consultant, Susan Taylor Simpson, was hired to complete this work in the spring of 2014. Work began on the project in late summer. With the organizational and multi-media skills of Daniel Share-Strom and the web design expertise of Kathleen McBride, Susan has begun to write the York ASD story. On November 19, 2014 Susan facilitated a day of reflection & visioning with past and current members of the York ASD Partnership that solidified the historical information and provided guidance for the future to ensure a meaningful and sustainable York ASD Partnership. The website will include video testimonials, a cache of documents, an overview of the history and a plan for the future. The launch of the website is scheduled for April 2, 2015 which is World Autism Awareness Day.

## YORK REGION ASD TRAINING

In December 2013, the York ASD Partnership was awarded an Autism Speaks Family Service Community Grant to provide intensive training on Autism Spectrum Disorders to front line mental health workers from social service agencies across York Region to enable them to provide effective mental health services to individuals with ASD. The contract to deliver this training was awarded to ISAND (Integrated Services for Autism and Neurologically Disabled). Lead trainer for this project is Dr. Vicky Rombough with collaborative support from Dr. Wendy Roberts and Dr. Cynthia Goldfarb. The first of two sessions of a three-day program were offered October 3, November 7 and December 5, 2014. With capacity for 60 participants, registration filled quickly. Informal feedback was very positive with more formal evaluation to be completed after the winter session. That winter session, scheduled to run January 9, February 6 and March 6, 2015 has an increased capacity of 90 seats. Registration is full and a long waiting list exists. This training will improve the abilities of mental health professionals to meet the needs of individuals with ASD, increase their confidence in providing effective service to individuals with ASD and build capacity through cross-sectoral collaboration between ASD and mental health specialists. Components of this training package will be made available as online training modules once the face-to-face training is complete. Oversight to this project has been provided by the Professional Development Working Group.

## WORKING GROUP UPDATES

### *Mapping and Pathways (Access)*

The access pathway map designed by this group is available on the York ASD Partnership website [www.yorkasdpartnership.org](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org). The York Region searchable 211 ASD database for intake workers is being piloted by each of the gateway agencies and will be launched shortly. Tools and training will be provided when the database becomes active.

### *Transition Planning*

Two documents have been produced by the Transition Planning Working Group. The first is a guide for parents to help them identify the key components of a transition and increase the likelihood of successful transition. The second document identifies the essential components and key timelines for transition from youth to adulthood. This checklist will help ensure that the necessary documents and relevant agencies are contacted at the appropriate times. These documents are available on the York ASD Partnership website [www.yorkasdpartnership.org](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org). This concluded the work of the Transition Planning Working Group.

### *Screening and Assessment*

The Screening and Assessment Working Group has focused on developing a Protocol for Screening and Assessment including a checklist of Red Flags for School Age Children that will highlight the best practices related to screening and assessment for all age groups. This document will be ready for distribution in the winter of 2015.

### *Communications*

The Communications Working Group is focused on maintaining the public profile of the York ASD Partnership. The website, social media, press coverage and parent engagement are all within the purview of this group.

### *Professional Development*

The Professional Development Working Group is providing oversight to the project providing training to Mental Health Professionals in York Region. Additionally the on-line training modules based on the Intake Worker Training have been reviewed and will be posted early in the new year. Additionally, guidelines for reviewing materials and programs with reference to evidence based and evidence informed practice have been developed and are also available on-line. Currently the working group is developing a protocol to coordinate training across York region.

### *Physician Support*

The Physician Support Working Group has modified the access map to create a Referral Guide for Physicians. 5000 laminated copies of this Referral Guide will be distributed to physicians across the region. As well, the guide will be available on the website [www.yorkasdpartnership.org](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org). This working group continues to develop more ways to educate and engage physicians in York Region about ASD.

### *Adults Supports and Services*

This group began its' work in January 2013. Co-chaired by Lynda Beedham, parent representative and Sarah Shaw, Autism Ontario, it is focusing on ensuring the continuum of services through youth to adulthood. In collaboration with DSO-CER, a repository of information about funded and non-funded services is being developed to improve access for parents and self-advocates. In recognition of the immense scope of work needed to improve systems and supports for adults with ASD, plans are in place to provide this group with more specific, strategic direction.

### *Crisis Response*

This group is co-chaired by Chris Simmons-Physick, Kinark and Wendy Leve, Southlake Hospital. The work of this group is focusing on working with the York Region Mental Health Collaborative to implement the proposal funded through MCYS related to prevention of youth suicide. Currently, a scan of existing crisis and suicide prevention services has been conducted by an outside consultant. Mr Paul Muldoon presented his findings to a joint meeting of the York Mental Health Collaborative and the York ASD Partnership in January.

If you are interested in participating in any of the working groups, membership remains open. Please contact Neil Walker, Project Manager via email at [YorkASD@kerrysplace.org](mailto:YorkASD@kerrysplace.org)

### THANK YOU AND GOOD-BYE

Several representatives at the Partnership Table and on various working groups have retired, moved into new and more challenging positions or had to leave us for other reasons. We would like to thank all of our past participants for their hard work and dedication to our vision. Updated Working Group membership lists are available on the Partnership website at [www.yorkasdpartnership.org](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org).