

York ASD Partnership Spring Communique 2015



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 September 30, 2015.

The York ASD Partnership would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Adriano Cellupica and Trade Graphics By Design for their most generous donation of lamination for the Physician Referral Guide. The Physician Referral Guide is a product of the work of the Physician Support Working Group and will be an essential tool towards achieving the goals of the York ASD Partnership by increasing the capacity of physicians in York Region to respond quickly and efficiently to the needs of individuals with ASD and their families. Lamination of this tool ensured a professional quality and durability that will allow this tool to remain useful and accessible for the physician over the long term. Electronic copies of the Physician Referral Guide are available on our website www.yorkasdpartnership.org.

It is the contributions of community members that have assisted the York ASD Partnership to achieve and maintain lasting systemic change and to continue this very important work.

ONGOING AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN THE YORK ASD PARTNERSHIP

World Autism Awareness Day, April 2, 2015 marked the launch of “The York ASD Partnership Experience: A Guide to Innovative Community Systems Change”. This website documents the history, progress, elements of success, learning and future goals in a dynamic, multi-media website www.yorkasdmodel.org. Our goal is to 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. Susan Taylor Simpson, an external consultant, was hired and work began on the project in late summer. In support of this project, on November 19, 2014 Susan facilitated a day of reflection 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. With the organizational and multi-media skills of Daniel Share-Strom and the web design expertise of Kathleen McBride, Susan has written the story of the York ASD Partnership. The website includes an overview of the York ASD Partnership history, video testimonials, a cache of documents and a plan for the future.

Members of the York ASD Partnership also supported World Autism Awareness Day on April 2, 2015 by participating in flag raising ceremonies in Markham, Georgina, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Aurora.

Neil Walker, project manager, presented on the work of the York ASD Partnership at the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities Conference in April.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

The Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance (CASDA) held their Inaugural Leadership Summit this past March in Ottawa. The overriding goal of the conference was to call for a National Autism Strategy - "One Voice. One Goal." The two day CASDA Summit was packed with ideas and possible solutions shared across provinces, agencies, professions and community representatives. Alana Shields Barker, director of ImprovAbility and a member of the York ASD Partnership Communications Working Group was one of 150 delegates. She has written a comprehensive report on this two day event. This report is available on our website at www.yorkasdpartnership.org.

YORK REGION ASD TRAINING

A strategic goal for the YASDP since its inception has been to ensure that children and adults with ASD and their families are able to obtain the services that they need through the most appropriate service provider regardless of their diagnosis. This means that mental health services are delivered through mental health service providers when the primary issues for the individual and the family are mental health related. A component of this also includes cross-sectoral training and collaboration to ensure that service is evidence based and effective. One of the crucial steps towards achieving this is the expansion of the knowledge base of the various service sectors.

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 Neurodevelopmental Disorders). Lead trainer for this project was Dr. Vicki Rombough with collaborative support from Dr. Wendy Roberts and Dr. Cynthia Goldfarb. Two sessions of a three-day program were offered through the fall of 2014 and early winter of 2015.

This training has significantly increased the knowledge of service providers in the mental health sector regarding ASD and the needs of individuals and their families and will support the YASDP promoting systems change that will support that cross-sectoral training and collaboration.

Subjective evaluation of the training based on observation and discussions indicated that this training was well received by all participants. Many participants made a point of finding members of the oversight group to pass on positive comments and the attendance numbers at the end of each day were very similar to those at the start of the day – participants did not leave part way through the sessions. More objectively, the participant feedback forms have been summarized yielding the following quantitative data.

- 85% of respondents considered that the presentation series surpassed their expectations.
- 78% of respondents reported the information presented as being very or extremely useful to their jobs.
- 91% of respondents found the suggestions provided very or extremely practical
- 53% of respondents reported an increase in their confidence level working with ASD clients after attending the presentations.
- 72% of respondents reported a considerable improvement in their knowledge of ASD after attending the presentation series.
- 97% of respondents were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the presentation series overall.

Components of this training package will be made available as online training modules in the near future. Oversight to this project was 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. 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

The work of the group has been completed. A reminder that both documents produced by the Transition Planning Working Group are available on the York ASD Partnership website www.yorkasdpartnership.org. 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.

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 summer 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. As part of this, a parent survey to assess the impact of the co-ordinated access process implemented in April of 2013 has been developed and is currently being circulated by this group. Access to this survey is available through www.yorkasdpartnership.org.

Professional Development

The Professional Development Working Group provided oversight to the Autism Speaks Family Services Grant 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 in the near future. Currently the working group is developing a protocol to identify and coordinate training across York Region.

Physician Support

The Physician Support Working Group has completed the Referral Guide for Physicians. 5000 laminated copies of this Referral Guide will be distributed to physicians across the region via community partners. As well, the guide is available on the website www.yorkasdpartnership.org. Thanks again to Adriano Cellupica and Trade Graphics By Design for their donation of lamination of the guide. This working group continues to develop more ways to educate and engage physicians in York Region about ASD.

Adults Supports and Services

This group continues to focus 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. Additionally, the need to provide individuals with ASD and their families with accessible and comprehensible information about the adult service system has been identified as an ongoing project for this group. 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 Regional Health Centre. The work of this group began by focusing on working with the York Region Mental Health Collaborative to implement a proposal funded through MCYS related to prevention of youth suicide. The scan of existing crisis and suicide prevention services and an extensive literature review has been completed by Paul Muldoon, an outside consultant. In January 2015, a joint meeting of the York ASD Partnership and the York Region Mental Health Collaborative was held to review the results of the scan and give final input into the resulting report. This report will be available on the York ASD Partnership in the near future. This working group met to develop a work plan with goals to identify the core service providers and mapping the service delivery system including protocols to identify risk, develop safety plans and mitigate risk.

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.

The York ASD Partnership maintains an active social media presence including Facebook and Twitter. Contact Sue Walters via email to york.communications@autismontario.com at the York Region Chapter of Autism Ontario to provide information.