



York ASD Partnership

Fall/Winter 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 ongoing 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, 2016.

CO-ORDINATED ACCESS PARENT SURVEY

In April of 2013, based on the work of the York ASD Partnership, service providers in York Region launched a new co-ordinated access system for parents of children with ASD who were making their initial requests for service. This new system identified the four gateway agencies for services for individuals with ASD and their families and guaranteed “no wrong door” ensuring warm transfers between all service providers in the region. Based on the recommendations of research professionals at York University, it was determined that the system required a minimum of one year of implementation before evaluation to enhance the validity of the results.

In the spring of 2015, the Communications Working Group of the York ASD Partnership conducted an on-line survey of parents to assess the impact of this new co-ordinated access system. The survey was made available through Survey Monkey throughout the spring of 2015. Requests to complete the survey were electronically distributed through Autism Ontario, Children’s Treatment Network, Kinark Child and Family Services and Kerry’s Place Autism Services. A variety of questions were asked including those that looked at the frequency of warm transfer, the knowledge of ASD demonstrated by the intake workers, and the degree of support and satisfaction that parents felt after this first contact comparing the experience of those parents who made the referral prior to April 2013 to those who made their first contact after April 2013.

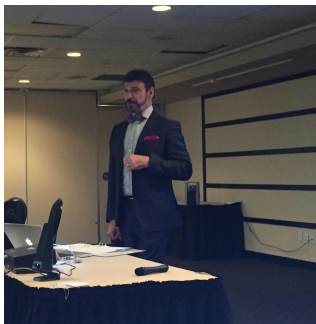
Survey results indicated a consistent, positive change across all aspects of the co-ordinated access system. For example, there was a 10% increase in the number of parents who indicated “yes” when asked if they felt welcomed and supported on their initial call. As well, there was a 9% increase in the number of parents who indicated that the service provider offered a warm transfer. Finally, there was an increase of 18% in the number of parents who felt the intake worker had an understanding of ASD. A complete summary of the results will be available on the York ASD Partnership website at www.yorkasdpartnership.org in January 2016.

The vision of the York ASD Partnership is to improve the service system for people with ASD and their families. One of our first goals was to achieve co-ordinated access meaning that any call to an agency involved in the York ASD Partnership will lead people with ASD and their families to the appropriate resource and action. These results suggest that we are achieving our goals and attaining our vision. Next steps will look at maintaining and sustaining these results.

ONGOING AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN THE YORK ASD PARTNERSHIP

In November 2015, the York Region District School Board hosted their annual Quest for Student Achievement Conference. The theme for this conference was “Deep Learning in a Digital World”. This year, in addition to an information table, members of the York ASD Partnership delivered a presentation called “Breaking Barriers to Learning for Students with ASD”. This presentation focused on the impact that assistive technology has had on learning for students with ASD. Our message was that technology is an essential teaching tool for those with ASD which sparked extensive discussion and exchange of ideas. Two parent representatives from the Communication Working Group, Rahila Chughtai and Alana Shields Barker, took the lead on this project. They completed the application for both the presentation and the information table. They developed and delivered the presentation at three sessions over two days and provided support to the information table. Andrew Barker assisted in the presentation by describing information technology tools that have assisted him in secondary school. Neil Walker and Janette Seymour also participated by orienting the audience to ASD learning styles and the work of the York ASD Partnership. Administrators, Special Education teachers, principals, and teachers as well as parents and trustees were among those in our audiences. Traffic at the York ASD Partnership table was consistently brisk throughout the three days of the conference. Sue Walters, another parent representative from Autism Ontario and Ashley Slater of Kinark shared table duties and spent time talking to attendees from Canada, the Netherlands and other countries about the York ASD Partnership describing its mission and model.

The success of this project is another in a long list of examples of the critical role that parent representation plays in ensuring the work of the York ASD Partnership is successful. These parents volunteer their time to share their expertise, energy, and experiences. It is hard to imagine the York ASD Partnership without the input and support of our parent volunteers.



Neil Walker at Quest 2015



*Alana Shields Barker, Rahila Chughtai,
Janette Seymour, Andrew Barker at Quest 2015*

YORK REGION ASD TRAINING

Part of the work of the Mapping and Pathways Working Group had been to support York Region 211 in developing a database for Intake Workers specific to services for individuals with ASD and their families. This database has been completed and launched. Training to Intake Workers was provided in June 2015. Plans are in place to assess the effectiveness of this database through the Intake Worker Network.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups

[Screening and Assessment](#)

The Screening and Assessment Working Group completed the "[Evidence Based Best Practice Guide for Screening and Assessment](#)". This document has been endorsed by the York ASD Partnership members and is available on our website. This guide outlines the best practices for screening and assessment for preschool aged children, school-aged children and adults. It includes the Red Flags for School Age Children document which will also be available as a stand alone document. Work is occurring with our community partners including Autism Ontario to facilitate distribution of this guide. This completes the work of this group.

[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. The work group will develop an annual plan to this end in January. This group facilitated the information table and presentation by the York ASD Partnership at the Quest for Student Achievement Conference in November 2015 (details above). This working group developed the survey for parents to assess the impact of the co-ordinated access system and facilitated its' distribution. As well, the group is developing plans to support the distribution of the various documents developed by the York ASD Partnership.

[Professional Development](#)

The Professional Development Working Group is providing oversight to the project providing training to Mental Health Professionals in York Region. Guidelines for reviewing materials and programs with reference to evidence based and evidence informed practice have been developed and are also available on our website. Currently the working group is developing a protocol to coordinate professional development training across York Region.

[Physician Support](#)

The Physician Support Working Group has modified the access map to create a [Referral Guide for Physicians](#). This guide is available on our website. 5000 laminated copies of the Referral Guide for Physicians are available and are being distributed to physicians across the region with the support of community partners including Autism Ontario. 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 in January 2013. Co-chaired by Lynda Beedham, parent representative and Sarah Shaw, Autism Ontario, it is focused 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. As well the group has taken on the task of mapping the processes and services accessed through DSO-CER and mapping the supports and services related to employment opportunities. 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 from Kinark Child and Family Services and Wendy Leve from Southlake Hospital. The work of this group is focusing on working with the York Region Mental Health Collaborative to implement the proposals funded through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) related to prevention of youth suicide. The first year of funding in 2014 was used to conduct a scan of existing crisis and suicide prevention services by an outside consultant, Paul Muldoon. His report was presented to the members of the York ASD Partnership and the Mental Health Collaborative in January 2015. The report, entitled [MHC ASD Crisis Intervention Suicide Prevention Report](#) (June 2015) is available on our website.

In 2015, additional grant money was made available to this group and in October, this funding was used to provide "Train the Trainer" ASIST training to staff of various service providers across the region. A third year of grant funding has been received and will be used to adapt/provide resource material to the ASIST program to accommodate child and youth with ASD. An RFP to produce these materials will be released in February 2016. This group continues to develop its work plan to identify and mitigate risk and support safety plans to support child and youth mental health needs across York Region.

[Mapping and Pathways](#) (Access)

The [access pathway map](#) designed by this group is available on the York ASD Partnership website. The York Region searchable 211 ASD database has been launched and training has been provided to Intake Workers across the region.

[Transition Planning](#)

Documents produced by the Transition Planning Working Group are available on the York ASD Partnership website. The "[Transition Guide to Adulthood](#)" 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. The "[Thinking About Transitions](#)" brochure is a guide for parents to help them identify the key components of a transition and increase the likelihood of successful transition.

This concludes the work of the Transition Planning Working Group.

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 the York Region Chapter of Autism Ontario at york.communications@autismontario.com

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.