



York ASD Partnership Fall 2016 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, 2017.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION SEED GRANT

Early in 2016, the York ASD Partnership submitted an application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for a 1-year \$75,000 seed grant. In the spring, we were notified that our application was successful. The primary focus of this project will be the development of a comprehensive, community based strategic plan that will identify enhancements to the current system and map the future of services and supports for youth and adults with ASD in York Region. This will include a needs analysis of adult services in York Region, engagement of all relevant parties in the community planning process, the inclusion of adults with ASD in the planning and needs identification process and the development of outcome evaluation strategies to measure the impact and success of our plan. The plan will address existing challenges such as ensuring that the transition for children and youth into adult supports and services is seamless, ensuring that youth and adults with ASD are participants in planning and implementation, ensuring that supports and services exist to meet the needs of youth and adults with ASD and enhancing the connection between youth and adults with ASD and their communities resulting in a better quality of life.

The York ASD Partnership will continue the emphasis on making improvements in the children's service sector. At the same time, we have recognized the need to broaden our focus to enhancing service systems for adults with ASD and their families, measuring the impact of our work and expanding the reach of our collaborative partnerships. The Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe / York acted as the charitable, not-for-profit host for the application and provides ongoing oversight to the York ASD Partnership finances. The funds and project activities related to this grant will be managed by the York ASD Partnership.

STRATEGIC PLAN

As the first step in the development of this new strategic plan, in August 2016 we posted an RFP to contract a facilitator. This facilitator will help lead the York ASD Partnership through these processes resulting in a fully staged strategic plan. After a comprehensive process of applications, screening and interviews, the contract was offered to Kathryn Everest. Kathryn brings a wealth of public and private sector experience to the table and is the parent of an adult son with ASD. More information about Kathryn can be found on her website kathryneverestconsulting.com. We look forward to an exciting and productive relationship. Welcome Kathryn. At the same time, a posting for a part time contract position for administrative support was posted. Again, after a process of screening and interviews, we were delighted to offer the contract to Brooke Couperthwaite. Brooke also brings extensive experience and is the parent of a young son with ASD. Welcome Brooke.

SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR ASD WORKSHOP AND FREE APP

The Crisis Response Working Group, chaired by Chris Simmons-Physick from Kinark Child and Family Services has been focusing on working with the York Region Mental Health Collaborative to implement a series of proposals funded through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) related to prevention of youth suicide. The first year of funding, 2014, was used to conduct scan of existing crisis and suicide prevention services. This scan was conducted over the summer of 2014 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. This report, available on our website is entitled [MHC ASD Crisis Intervention Suicide Prevention Report \(June 2015\)](#)

In 2015, additional grant money was made available to this group and in October of that year, "Train the Trainer" ASIST training was provided to staff of various service providers across the region.

The third year of grant funding (2016) was targeted to provide resource material and recommend adaptations to suicide prevention and intervention programs to accommodate child and youth with ASD. This resulted in a 3-hour comprehensive training session that was offered to two separate groups in October and November, 2016. The target group for this training were staff from various service provision agencies in the region who had already participated in a formal training program for suicide prevention and intervention such ASIST. Facilitators for this training included Dr. Kevin Stoddard, a renowned expert in ASD and mental health, Kristine Galloway, a consultant from Kerry's Place and Patrick McAthey, an adult with ASD with related life experience and a willingness to share his knowledge and experience. Feedback from this training was overwhelmingly positive with 96% of participants indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with the workshop overall. A detailed report on the workshops and the feedback from participants will be available on our website YorkASDPartnership.org

Additionally, an electronic application (APP) is being developed for first responders trained in suicide prevention and intervention. This APP provides tips and strategies for interacting with children and youth with ASD where there is a risk of suicide. The APP will be available by January 2017.

QUEST CONFERENCE

In November 2016, 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. For a second year in a row, 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 positive impact that assistive technology has 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, Rahila Chughtai, an active member of the Communication Working Group and Alana Shields Barker, retired from the Communication Working Group, again took the lead on this project. With the assistance of Andrew Barker, a young adult with ASD, they developed and delivered the presentation to a full room of interested teachers, administrators and support staff. We also hosted a York ASD Partnership table with the support of staff from various Partner agencies who shared table duties and spent time talking to attendees 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 that 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.

CO-ORDINATED ACCESS PARENT SURVEY

As a reminder, 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. A complete summary of the results is now available on the [York ASD Partnership website](#)

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. The results of this survey suggest that we are achieving our goals and attaining our vision. Next steps will look at maintaining and sustaining these results.

Read more under *Ad Hoc Coordinated Access Working Group* below.

ONGOING AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN THE YORK ASD PARTNERSHIP

Welcome to [Christian Horizons](#), who joined the York ASD Partnership this fall.

YORK REGION ASD TRAINING

Over the past 5 years, the York ASD Partnership has provided a number of training opportunities. In 2011, training was provided to intake workers across York Region to increase their understanding of ASD and provide coordinated access to families seeking services and supports. This training was funded by an Autism Speaks grant. In 2013, training was provided to mental health workers across York Region to increase their understanding of ASD and provide the necessary adaptations to evidence based mental health practices to improve services to children and youth with ASD and mental health concerns. This training was also funded by an Autism Speaks grant. In 2016, as described above, training was provided to staff across York Region with suicide prevention and intervention training in the adaptations and accommodations to support child and youth with ASD at risk for suicide. This training was funded through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. All three of these training programs were videoed and edited into modules to be available as on-line training modules. The Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe/York has graciously agreed to act as host for these training modules on their Community Learning site. Access to these modules will be available to agency staff through their organization. The **Intake Worker Training** and the **Mental Health Worker Training** will be available by January 2017. The **Suicide Prevention and Intervention Training** will be available by March 2017.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

Communications Working Group continues to focus 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. Members facilitated the information table and presentation by the York ASD Partnership at the Quest for Student Achievement Conference in November 2016 (details above). This group continues to develop and implement plans to support the distribution of the various documents developed by the York ASD Partnership including the Co-ordinated Access bookmark, the Physician Referral Guide bookmark, the Indicators for ASD with School Age Children Guide, the Transitions to Adulthood checklist and the Transitions brochure.

Crisis Response Working Group continues to develop its work plan to identify and mitigate risk and to develop safety plans which support children and youth with mental health needs across York Region.

Ad Hoc Coordinated Access Working Group: 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. Results of the Parent Survey conducted by the Communications Working Group survey suggested that while we are achieving our goals and attaining our vision, the degree of change in some areas could be enhanced. Specifically, although the frequency of “warm transfer” for parents has increased, there was room for improvement. As a result, the *Ad Hoc Coordinated Access Working Group* was formed. Members of this working group include representatives from the gateway agencies and the group is being chaired by Neil Walker, Project Manager. Using Results Based Accountability as a framework, the group determined that their first task was to increase the frequency of warm transfers to the appropriate gateway agency for families seeking initial services in York Region. As a first step, the group conducted a survey of intake workers to determine their understanding of “warm transfer” and to explore some of the barriers to consistent implementation of “warm transfer”. Results of this survey have assisted with the development of a work plan that includes a revision of the existing “warm transfer” protocol. The work for this group will continue throughout the winter of 2017.

On temporary hiatus while the new strategic plan is being developed:

- **Professional Development**
- **Adults Supports and Services**

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

Having fulfilled their Terms of Reference, the following Working Groups have disbanded:

- *Mapping and Pathways (Access)*
- *Transition Planning*
- *Screening and Assessment*
- *Physician Support*

SOCIAL MEDIA

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 YorkASDPartnership.org