

Introduction

York Support Services Network is committed to full inclusion of vulnerable persons. This is reflected in our Mission Statement (*'Communicate. Connect. Collaborate'*) and our Vision Statement (*'A Meaningful Life for All: Relationships, Community, Well-Being'*). YSSN is committed to service and supports which are accessible, customer service that is respectful and helpful, human resources policies which accommodate employees' special needs, technology which supports work from a variety of locations, education which enhances our cultural capacity, and sites which are easy to reach and located within safe neighborhoods.

About York Support Services Network

York Support Service Network operates from seven locations:

- 240 Edward St, Unit 3, Aurora (head office)
- 50 McIntosh Dr, Ste 239, Markham (south office)
- 43 Charles St, Newmarket (Crisis site including 24/7 call centre, safe beds, etc.)
- 580 Bryne Dr, Unit D1, Barrie (DSO satellite site – appointment only)
- 55 Gordon St, Ste 1, Whitby (shared space DSO satellite site)
- Imani's Place, 10 Owens Road, Basement Apt., Alliston (in development)
- 106 Victoria Street West, Room #5, Alliston (shared space with ASYR)

The two office locations are administrative and meeting centres and house YSSN staff, predominantly on a drop-down basis. Prior to the Pandemic, Case Management roles required most of the services be provided within the community, in the homes of individuals served, or at a location of their choosing. Office visits took place for intake interviews, assessment interviews, some individual client visits, case conferences, resource days and group training events. Since the Declaration of the State of Emergency in March 2020, the offices have been closed to the public, and services offered virtually.

Prior to the pandemic, the Aurora and Markham sites were made available to partner organizations where possible. As well, other service providers were welcome to make use of meeting spaces and group rooms when available. With the restrictions currently in place, and the continued uncertainty about the re-opening of services, it is not clear when groups will be able to resume face-to-face meetings, or when the meeting rooms will be considered safe for gatherings.

As a public service provider, YSSN is required to meet the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service within the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act as of January 2012.

YSSN Commitment to Accessibility

YSSN commitment to accessibility for Individuals served, employees and the community includes:

- **Architecture**

- ~ Markham site has elevator access to second-floor offices and has accessible washrooms
- ~ Aurora site is a single level building with considerations for accessibility taken into the design (e.g., sidewalk ramp, accessible washroom with no door barriers, wider hallways)
- ~ Other locations, including satellite sites, are all physically accessible with the exception of Charles St
- ~ Health and Safety concerns are in the process of being assessed to be determined how physical distancing requirements will impact space usage in each location.

- **Attitudes**

- ~ Non-judgmental, unprejudiced, accepting of others regardless of race, language, culture, ability or socio-economic status
- ~ Individualized, strength-based framework for service delivery
- ~ All staff must review AODA materials in Policies & Procedures, upon hire and on an annual basis ongoing
- ~ All employees complete a cultural assessment (CQ) to create further individual awareness in how to work more effectively with ethno-cultural communities

- **Communication**

- ~ All communication materials screened for plain language
- ~ Brochures available in top five languages
- ~ Many information resources available in both French and English
- ~ Programs provide an active offer of French language services in French-speaking designated areas
- ~ Working to establish active offer of French throughout the Central LHIN area
- ~ Many key documents (e.g., SIS tool, Consent, Complaint Process) translated into French
- ~ YSSN, DSO and Streamlined Access website pages re-designed to ensure compliance with AODA Accessibility Standards
- ~ Extensive use of language capacity with YSSN staff group and colleague agencies as needed
- ~ Website has been re-designed to offer most content in both English and French and also has built in addition of Google Translate to provide basic translation of website content into more than 100 languages

- ~ Use of AT&T Language Line at Streamlined Access, Crisis Call Centre and DSO
- ~ Use of MCIS telephone interpretation services for all MH programs
- ~ Access to interpretation services coordinated through the Central LHIN
- ~ TTY line at Crisis Call Centre and DSO
- ~ Capacity for service provision using ASL
- ~ Participation in multicultural service networks for increased outreach to multicultural communities
- ~ From a service delivery perspective, information provided to individuals-served is presented in a manner that is understandable (e.g., use of picture symbol systems, augmentative communication devices, simplified language, etc.)
- ~ French language software for French-speaking staff
- **Community Integration**
 - ~ The goal of service delivery is to assist individuals in developing sustainable community-based supports and services
- **Customer Service**
 - ~ Two office locations have some reception coverage to assist walk-ins and with accommodation needs
 - ~ Appointments available in evenings and on weekends when requested
 - ~ Standardized response time for phone calls and email messages
 - ~ Coverage arrangements put in place for vacations, extended absences
 - ~ Policies created to ensure accommodations such as welcoming support animals at agency sites, active welcome of support individuals at client meetings and case conferences
 - ~ Ongoing consumer satisfaction surveys to collect feedback/suggestions
- **Employment**
 - ~ Business Interruption Plan minimizes service interruptions in case of weather, pandemic, etc.
 - ~ HR policies include Duty to Accommodate
 - ~ Agency committed to diversity in hiring (incorporates into recruitment activities) and making service more accessible to multicultural communities
 - ~ Alternative work arrangements allow staff to organize their work time in balance with their family needs

- **Environment**
 - ~ Markham site within a half-block of public transit along Woodbine Ave and within two blocks along Highway 7
 - ~ Aurora and Markham sites have designated accessible parking spots
 - ~ Aurora site within a half-block of public transit along Yonge Street
 - ~ Charles St site within a half-block to public transit on Davis Drive
 - ~ Workstations designed to accommodate appropriate height for wheelchair accessibility
- **Finances**
 - ~ Individual Funding Agreements reviewed with YSSN staff to support clarity of understanding
 - ~ Automatic deposit for payroll and expense claims to avoid delays due to weather, distance
 - ~ Community committees help make decisions for discretionary funding approvals
- **Technology**
 - ~ Use of adaptive technology as needed (magnifiers, software for LD on desktop computers)
- **Transportation**
 - ~ Mileage allowance permits staff to assist individuals as needed
 - ~ Successful advocacy with Region of York for transportation reimbursement for treatment groups
 - ~ Bus tickets accessed through Region of York available to address transportation needs of individuals

Barriers to accessibility are identified by local teams to their supervisors, by the Leadership group, by the Health and Safety Committee through regular inspections, by the Facilities Coordinator, and by the Senior Management group.

Accessibility Goals

- To identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities in all YSSN locations
- To review efforts to remove barriers over the last year
- To identify barriers which will be addressed in the coming year
- To continually improve Customer Service
- To identify how YSSN will make its accessibility plan available to the public

Barriers addressed in 2019/20

Area	Description	Status
Website Accessibility	YSSN website is audited regularly with a view to ensuring it is accessible, current and easy to navigate. This will be an ongoing process to ensure site remains current with updated accessibility features, as well as to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the YSSN Pandemic response.	Ongoing
Accessibility of Common Areas	A review of reception and common areas at YSSN’s two administrative office locations (Aurora and Markham) was carried out to identify enhancements to further improve accessibility	Completed
Accessibility of Crisis Beds site	A renovation plan has been developed for the Crisis location to ensure accessibility for both clients and staff. YSSN has been unable to secure funding to be able to move forward with the plan, pending a decision on the community crisis hub. Given the need to review space usage post-pandemic, coupled with the unlikelihood of large new funding approvals in the near future, the timing is appropriate to revisit the plan and identify possible funding opportunities to help us complete the necessary renovations.	Ongoing
Enhancement of Peer and family Supports	Based on project funding and use of year-end surplus, enhanced family and peer supports were put in place to ensure that the peer and family perspective were highlighted throughout the agency.	Completed
Social Isolation during the Pandemic	To address the impact of social isolation during the pandemic, YSSN participated in an enhanced response through the East York North Durham OHT, collaborating with other MH and CSS agencies to increase assistance with food security, medications and counselling.	Ongoing
Abuse Prevention	To increase rights awareness for developmentally disabled people, an education booklet entitled “say No to Abuse” was developed and circulated.	Completed

Barriers to be addressed in 2020/21

Barrier	Description/Strategy	Timeline	Lead
Physical Accessibility of Crisis Beds, Interior Offices	Develop a funding strategy with Ontario Health for the development of the facility at Charles St to create physically-accessible beds; continue to address layout issues to maximize accessibility	March 2021	ED / Program Director
Access to service during a Pandemic Lock-down	Continue to develop virtual service options for clients, and to develop tools for performance measurement and determination of satisfaction	Ongoing	Program Directors, Managers and Supervisors
Ability to conduct meetings with clients virtually	Research tools that allow secure, private virtual connections with clients	September 2020	Finance Manager with Privacy Officers
Social isolation of clients without access to internet or technology	Continue to seek funding for disposable phones and free internet access	June 2020	Program Directors

Ongoing Communication of the Plan

- The plan will be posted as a PDF document on the agency website
- Large-print versions will be made available on request
- The plan will be posted on in a central location accessible to all staff
- Full-print versions of the plan will be made available on request