

Accessibility Strategy and Plan

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 the following locations:

- 240 Edward St, Unit 3, Aurora (head office)
- 50 McIntosh Dr, Ste 239, Markham (south office-appointment only)
- 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-appointment only)
- 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 March 2020, services are primarily offered virtually but office appointments are available by appointment and community visits occur when required.

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 continued risk of community transmission, it is not clear whether groups will be able to resume face-to-face meetings throughout the entire fiscal year but YSSN will monitor this as required.

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)
- ~ Workstations designed to accommodate appropriate height for wheelchair accessibility
- ~ Other locations, including satellite sites, are all physically accessible with the exception of Charles Street.

- **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
- ~ Many information resources available in both French and English
- ~ Programs provide an active offer of French language services in French-speaking designated areas
- ~ 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
- ~ Access/use of interpretation services for all programs

- ~ 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.)
- **Community Integration**
 - ~ The goal of service delivery is to assist individuals in developing sustainable community-based supports and services
- **Customer Service**
 - ~ 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
- **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, supporting diversity of thought and considerations in deliberations.

- **Geography**
 - ~ 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
- **Technology**
 - ~ Use of adaptive technology as needed (magnifiers, software for LD on desktop computers)
 - ~ Services offered virtually as an ongoing mode of delivery.

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 2021/22

Barrier	Description/Strategy	Outcome
Physical Accessibility of Crisis Beds, Interior Offices	Develop a physically-accessible bed at Charles St by addressing layout issues.	Funding for renovation approved through Ontario Trillium Foundation in March 2022. Renovation scheduled to occur through 2022-2023 fiscal year.
Access to service during a Pandemic Lock-down	Continue to develop virtual service options for clients, and develop tools for performance measurement and determination of satisfaction	Services offered and being refined through evaluation activities.
Ability to conduct meetings with clients virtually	Launch Microsoft Teams, enabling another option to support private virtual connections with clients	Movement to hosted IT services enabled launch of Microsoft Teams in June 2021. BlueJeans platform also utilized.
Social isolation of clients without access to internet or technology	Continue to seek funding for disposable phones, tablets for lending and free internet access	Devices provided when needed. Cell phones obtained in Youth MHA project to facilitate referrals to service.
Access to vaccination clinics	Develop a strategy with partners to ensure vaccine clinics address the needs of those in community with specialized needs.	Communicated and supported vaccination clinics in community.

Barriers to be addressed in 2022/23

Barrier	Description/Strategy	Timeline	Lead
Physical Accessibility of Crisis Beds	Renovate Charles St. to enable accessible bedrooms and a washroom	February 2023	Director of Operations, Manager of Regional Services
Access to service during periods of high community transmission rates of COVID	<p>Continue to modernize engagement modalities, develop virtual service options and develop tools for performance measurement and determination of satisfaction.</p> <p>Ensure that face to face meetings occur when required to support optimal service delivery using appropriate infection prevention and control measures.</p>	Ongoing	Program Directors and Managers
Access to YSSN services for residents in southern York Region	Ensure access to space when needed for meetings, group events or activities and that these are held in fully accessible locations across the southern part of York Region.	November 2022	Program and Finance Directors, Managers and Supervisors
Lack of clarity in communications with agency re-branding	Develop a clear communication strategy regarding the rebranding, using various outlets to broadcast the change, employing plain language and visuals to reach a broad audience	March 2023	Executive Director, Manager of Communications

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