

Addiction Services rebrand reflects growing community presence

Since its inception, Addiction Services for York Region has provided community treatment services, support and assistance to individuals in need throughout York and beyond.

With an established presence in South Simcoe and North York, the Aurora-based organization has outgrown its original name and has now rebranded as Addiction Services Central Ontario.

The new name and a new website with enhanced features for mobile users was announced this past Thursday at their annual general meeting.

The name change announced today reflects an important moment in Addiction Services Central Ontario, said Addiction Services Executive Director Penny Marrett. Throughout our 40-year history, the organization has grown considerably to serve significantly more Ontarians through an expanded number of jurisdictions. As the organization grew and evolved, it became vital to have a name that accurately reflects the geography, the people and the communities we serve.

Part of this broadened scope for Addiction Services came in 2013-2014 when they received funding to establish community opioid treatment centres, including one in northwest Toronto. Two years ago, they established themselves in Alliston and they have only grown from there.

For many, many years we have actually had individuals who come for service who haven't actually lived or worked in York Region, says Ms. Marrett, noting the rebrand is the culmination of a consultation process that lasted more than two years. As we continued to expand our services over the last seven to 10 years, we recognized that our name didn't quite fit with what we did because we were serving more than York Region. We had a consultation, surveys, one-on-one conversations with our staff, conversations with representatives and funders, community partners and community agencies just to get their perspective and hear what they thought. We recognized the need to more accurately reflect the communities and the geography we serve.

The reception to the name change was very positive at last week's AGM, says Ms. Marrett, and members of the organization are looking ahead to addressing the needs of the future.

Right now, we're focused on serving South Simcoe, North York and York Region and, of course, York Region is near and dear to our hearts because that is where our main office is based and the majority of our services are in York Region, she says. At the same time, changes take place in the health system. We also recognize that individuals are seeking service and they come from many other places and they may be seeking services. At times, individuals have asked, 'Do I have to live in York Region to receive the service?' and in doing some analysis of clients, not everybody lives in York Region and we say, 'No, you don't have to live here.' We want to be able to provide the service, but we also recognize that we still will be limited by the services that we have. If there is a desire for more expansion by the government, I am hopeful that they will be able to provide additional resources to help us be able to do that.

The new website, which launched November 1 at helpwithaddictions.ca, could help shine a lens on untapped needs across Central Ontario. For Addiction Services, it was an opportunity to make more resources available to the community, including a blog addressing several issues and other organizations that might be able to lend a hand.

In late August, with our wellness collaborative partners, we launched a day and evening treatment program in North York West, which is one of the new programs we're making available for people and the Provincial government announced a new virtual program to provide support to individuals with substance issues called Breaking Free Online. We're one of the implementation support programs and we support other agencies in implementing the program. That is one of the pieces that is front and centre on our website and that is a program that you can have on your laptop or phone.

For more information on Addiction Services Central Ontario, visit helpwithaddictions.ca or call 1-800-263-2288.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter