



Community Services and Housing

Environmental Scan

Community Services and Housing will address the following issues:

Staff Training

- Provide training to staff to assist with awareness, identification, and solutions for York Region citizens with disabilities.

Information

- Work to remove barriers to information regarding services/programs and to increase and manage information for persons with disabilities

Physical Barriers

- *Work to make specific services/programs more physically accessible to persons with disabilities*

Our Customers

Housing and Residential Services Division

The Housing and Residential Services Division directly manages 1753 social housing units through the operations of Housing York Inc. The Division also administers over 6100 social housing units through independent non-profit and co-operative housing providers. The Division is also responsible for increasing the supply of affordable housing including the creation of new accessible units. The Region supports and funds a range of homelessness and prevention support programs in partnership with community agencies.

The demographics of our customers vary widely. We serve:

- People of all ages, including children, youth and seniors who are elderly and fragile
- People with diverse cultural backgrounds, many who are new to the country and have a mother tongue other than English
- Households in financial need
- Households in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program payments, Old Age Pensions, Disability Pensions, etc.

- People facing a wide range of physical barriers
- Households headed by those who have been victims of domestic violence
- Households who require integrated community support services

The needs of our customers are for housing that is:

- Affordable
- Safe and secure
- Appropriate in size and physical form
- Integrated with community support services

Assistance for our clients with disabilities includes:

- Providing a minimum of 326 accessible housing units throughout the Region
- Incorporating barrier reduced design into new housing development
- Seeking instances where retro fitting of existing properties can accommodate a wider range of clients who face physical barriers in their housing
- Providing information to allow clients to better determine if available housing matches their need for barrier reduced accommodation
- Liaising with community agencies that provide households with community support services

Social Assistance Division

The Social Assistance Division provides financial and employment assistance to approximately 8300 residents annually (including adults and children). This comprises approximately 4300 family units.

The demographics of our customers vary widely. We serve:

- People in financial need, including those who are homeless
- People of all ages, including children, youth and seniors
- People with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds
- Persons in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Persons with a broad range of physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities

The needs of our customers are:

- Financial assistance for food, shelter, and additional expenses
- Employment assistance that supports the participant's shortest route to employment

Financial assistance available for persons with disabilities:

- All Ontario Works recipients receive an Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) card with their monthly social assistance cheque. The ODB card covers the costs of all prescription medications listed on the drug formulary.
- Social assistance and ODSP recipients with disabilities may be eligible to receive assistance with the cost of health-related items such as:
 - Mobility aids (i.e. walkers)
 - Foot orthotics
 - Vision & Dental care
 - Prosthetic devices (i.e. hearing aids)
 - Home repairs or renovations (i.e. addition of ramps, grab bars in the shower)
 - Wheelchair repairs and batteries
 - Other eligible items as defined in policy

Employment Assistance available for persons with disabilities:

- Ontario Works currently maintains a link with a range of agencies to assist persons with disabilities to prepare for employment
- Persons with learning disorders have access to literacy and numeracy programs through Ontario Works referrals to community agencies.
- Volunteer placement and employment based workshops, delivered at local Community Services and Housing offices, are physically accessible for persons with disabilities and those with mobility issues
- One-on-one employment counselling is offered at all local Ontario Works offices to identify and address disabilities and barriers to employment

Family and Children's Services Division

The Family and Children's Services Division provides financial assistance and/or direct developmental programming to approximately 5935 York Region children from birth to 12 years annually and 300 eligible adults residing in domiciliary hostels. This comprises approximately 4344 family units.

The demographics of our customers vary widely. We serve:

- Children from birth to 12 years of age
- Families with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds
- Families with an assessed financial need
- Eligible adults residing in domiciliary hostels
- Children with a broad range of diagnosed and undiagnosed physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities

- Licensed child care centres with children with special needs enrolled
- Agencies delivering programs for children and families under the *Day Nurseries Act*, the *Child and Family Services Act*, the *Ontario Works Act*, and the *Lodging House By-law*

The needs of our customers are:

- Financial assistance for child care and recreational costs, and enhanced inclusion support for children with exceptional special needs.
- Developmental programming to assist in the development of children with special needs and their inclusion into licensed child care centres and community settings
- Information, intake, and access to programs and services in York Region
- Financial assistance for domiciliary hostel costs

Information, Intake and Access to Family and Children's Services Division

All requests for information, intake, and access for the following programs are accessed by calling the toll free 1-888-703-KIDS (5437) line:

- Child Care Fee Assistance
- Early Intervention Programs
- Preschool Speech and Language Program
- Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program
- Child Care Support Line including a Child Care Translation Language telephone line
- Summer Camp Fee Assistance

The Division administers:

- Child care fee assistance for families with an assessed financial need with children enrolled in licensed child care, including those with special needs.
- Wage subsidy to enhance staff salaries within licensed child care programs
- Enhanced funding to provide inclusion supports to children with exceptional special needs in licensed child care programs

The Division provides direct service delivery for developmental programming:

- Early Intervention Services (EIS) provides:
 - Developmental programming consultative supports for children with special needs in their homes, child care centres, community settings, and EIS offices.
 - Occupational and Physio-therapy consultative services

The Division manages the funding and program relationships with:

- Speech Language Pathology services through a contract with Markham Stouffville Hospital
- In-home mobility, orientation, and developmental supports through a contract with Ontario Foundation for Visually Impaired Children

- Seating clinic equipment support for children with physical disabilities through a contract with Southlake Regional Hospital
- All Our Kids (AOK) Early Child Development and Parenting Programs

The Division administers per diem agreements with domiciliary hostel operators for domiciliary hostel beds. The Division has responsibility to license domiciliary hostels under the Lodging House By-law and to monitor compliance under the By-law and per diem agreements.

Business Services Division

The Business Services Division ensures fiscal and administrative integrity within the Department. The Division co-ordinates the development of budgets and financial reporting, expenditure control and statistical reporting. Business Services manages its revenues and disbursements, directs quality assurance reviews for its programs, delivers staff training, and conducts program reviews.

The Division also manages the Department's administrative practices and provides program technology support to its three principal data management systems.

Our customers are Community Services and Housing Department employees, service providers, vendors, and department clients.

Policy and Program Support Services Division

The Policy and Program Support Services Division provides support to the Department, the corporation, and Regional Council through the provision of strategic policy analysis and program development services. The Division also manages departmental emergency preparedness and business continuity planning; provides program communications services; produces YorkLink; co-ordinates the Region's ODA accessibility planning process and manages community investment, planning and program evaluation activities.

Our customers are primarily the Community Services and Housing Department, the corporation, and community service agencies.

Accessibility Statement

The Community Services and Housing Department will continue to move toward accessible programs, training, and information. The first step was the preparation of the 2004 plan. Implementation is the main focus of the 2005 plan.

Accessibility Achievements – 2003 / 2004

Barrier Identified¹	Barrier Type²	Disability Type³	How the barrier was addressed⁴
A review of staff training needs in relation to sensitivity training in providing services and information to people with disabilities revealed areas where training is required	Communicational	All	Training needs for disability sensitivity training have been identified and some training has been provided. Social Assistance staff has received training on mental health, sleep disorders, using TTY technology and learning disabilities. Early Intervention Services Staff have received training on hearing impairment, autism, and infant mental health. Sensitivity to seniors training is provided to Housing and Residential Services staff. A survey was conducted to determine training priorities for CS&H staff in 2005.
Review selected practices, policies, and documents to identify communication barriers including a review of: • Ontario Works application process • Child care fee assistance application process • Communication needs of Kids Line callers • Communications needs of Contact Centre callers • New or updated communication products for	Communicational	All	As an outcome of an initial review of application and ongoing service, Social Assistance staff reviewed existing agencies and contacts in York Region, identifying accessible programs and/or services. This information will be compiled into a staff tool to be used for employment planning with persons with disabilities. The Social Assistance Division has centralized a number of functions in the Georgina office. Centralization of ODSP-related cases in the Georgina office provides a single point of contact for ODSP and ODSP-pending clients, and for community agencies providing services to ODSP clients. Initial agency response has been positive. Feedback from client surveys is being gathered to inform future decision-making. Department's web pages reviewed using auditing software and made necessary changes to ensure all information could be accessed by people with visual disabilities

¹ Give a description of the barrier and indicate where the barrier was found. For example: was the barrier in a program, service, by-law, policy, practice or facility?

² Indicate the type(s) of barrier (physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological, policy/practice).

³ Indicate the type(s) of disability affected by the barrier (physical, sensory, cognitive or other).

⁴ Describe the action taken to identify, remove or prevent the barrier.

Barrier Identified¹	Barrier Type²	Disability Type³	How the barrier was addressed⁴
accessibility/barriers to sensory or cognitively disabled.			
People with disabilities need access to computers and specialized computer training (including financial assistance for low income families) to participate in employment programs	Physical, Technological	Physical	The Georgina Social Assistance office implemented a pilot accessible computer workstation. Signage has been posted to identify work station as an accessible station. Feedback from the pilot workstation will inform future accessible workstation purchases for other offices. Feedback is being collected through the 3 rd and 4 th quarters of 2004.
A number of physical and architectural barriers in seniors residential housing complexes including: • Difficulties entering buildings for persons with mobility restrictions • Difficulties seeing in public areas of building due to reduced vision acuity • Difficulties using office furniture in lounge areas of buildings • Lack of accessible public washrooms • Out-of-date elevator designs	Physical and Architectural	Physical and Sensory	A steep slope into the front door of the building at 57 Orchard Heights, Aurora is being re-designed. The positions of 2 sets of power operated doors at Keswick Gardens are being aligned to improve the path of travel into and out of the building. Public area lighting was upgraded at properties located at 190 Church Street, Keswick; 48 Wilson, Nobleton; and 76/78 Dunlop, Richmond Hill. Furniture replacement has taken place in several buildings to provide furniture that is ergonomically suited to persons with diminished physical agility and coordination. A storage room was converted into an accessible washroom with wide doorways and sufficient turning radius at 468 Eagle Street, Newmarket. Elevator cabs at 57 Orchard, Aurora and 125 Pugsley, Richmond Hill have been upgraded to provide eye level LCD displays with large lettering.

Barrier Identified¹	Barrier Type²	Disability Type³	How the barrier was addressed⁴
Font size for printed material being sent to seniors was too small	Communicational	Sensory	The standard for print material sent to senior residents was changed from 12 font to 14 font.

Barrier Identification for 2005

By-laws, policies and practices to be reviewed	Methods to be used to identify the barrier	Timing ⁵ (When will this be completed)
Access to Contact Centre for persons with disabilities	Survey disabled clients	4 th quarter 2005
Determine the willingness of non-profit housing providers to create a centralized waiting list for households requiring modified units without support services	In the absence of regulatory change, initiate discussions with non-profit housing providers regarding transfer of modified unit waiting list responsibility to a centralized waiting list	2 nd quarter 2005
Review policies, practices, and documents to identify barriers in the social assistance appeal process	Use existing resources and partnerships to facilitate a review of the Ontario Works appeal process	4 th quarter 2005
Review accessibility of Ontario Works resource centres	Conduct client surveys Conduct accessibility reviews of all employment resource centres in local offices and assess needs for any accessibility changes	4 th quarter 2005
Review usability and accessibility standards for online information found in the YorkLink directory/web site	Screen reader/auditing software	1 st quarter 2005
Review writing standards in program communications to improve usability and accessibility	Plain language standards	1 st quarter 2005

⁵The timing for addressing a barrier does not necessarily have to be set within 2005. The nature of the action may be *phased in* over a number of months or years depending on the resources and priorities of the Department.

Barriers That Will Be Addressed for 2005

Barrier identified ⁶	Barrier type ⁷	What will be gained by removing or preventing this barrier? ⁸	Means to prevent/remove the barrier ⁹	Indicators of success ¹⁰	Timing (When will this be completed?) ¹¹
Need to continue to provide effective staff training in order to effectively promote services and information to persons with disabilities	Attitudinal, policy/practice, informational, communication	Promote enhanced knowledge of disability issues and more effective service	Sensitivity training. Topics to include: addictions, adult mental health, ODA orientation, hearing impairment, physical accommodation, seniors accommodation, literacy	Training courses introduced and all direct service staff trained	4 th quarter 2005
Need to review and revise the current employment information presentation given to all Ontario Works applicants as part of the second stage application process	Informational	Increased knowledge about the Ontario Works program	Revisions will be made to the overall format of the employment information presentation to enhance communication of information for people with sensory and cognitive disabilities.	Review of the employment information presentation completed and revisions made as appropriate	3 rd quarter 2005
Based on a review completed on the Ontario Works application process, access needs for persons with disabilities, particularly for those with non-visible	Policy/practice	Increase staff knowledge attained in a supportive, non-invasive way, to identify people's service needs and potential barriers related to disability issues in order to better serve them	Supportive, non-invasive questions will be developed and incorporated into the application interview to help identify how to better support persons with disabilities in ongoing work,	Questions incorporated and asked in the initial interviews	4 th quarter 2005

⁶Indicate where the barrier was found. For example: was it in a program, service, by-law, policy, practice, or facility?

⁷Indicate the type(s) of barrier (physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological, policy/practice).

⁸Indicate how accessibility will be enhanced by removing or preventing this barrier.

⁹Describe what action will be taken to remove and/or prevent the barrier.

¹⁰Indicate how customer service will be improved by removing or preventing this barrier. Also indicate any other

measure(s) that will be used to determine whether or not the department was successful in removing and/or preventing this barrier.

¹¹ The timing for addressing a barrier does not necessarily have to be set within 2005; the nature of the action may be *phased in* over a number of months or years depending on the resources and priorities of the Department.

Barrier identified⁶	Barrier type⁷	What will be gained by removing or preventing this barrier?⁸	Means to prevent/remove the barrier⁹	Indicators of success¹⁰	Timing (When will this be completed?)¹¹
disabilities, is not easily identified by staff			i.e., communication, environmental concerns, etc.		
An accessible computer workstation is currently only available in one Social Assistance office	Policy/practice, technological	Enable people with physical and/or sensory disabilities to use accessible computer workstations at for job search and other activities at more than one location	Complete a review of best practices based on feedback gathered from the first pilot workstation. Implement a second accessible computer workstation in one other location	Second accessible computer workstation implemented in a second office location	4 th quarter 2005
An accessible information brochure for the Ontario Works program is currently not available in York Region	Informational	Increased understanding of the Ontario Works program	Develop a new easy to read information pamphlet about the Ontario Works program in York Region	An information pamphlet completed and available for distribution	3 rd quarter 2005
Awareness of TTY service at Contact centre	Communicational	Improved customer service	Promotion of TTY number on brochures and publications	# of calls to TTY	Ongoing
Need to develop affordable accessible rental housing units for frail, elderly seniors and adults with disabilities	Physical	Addition to the inventory of social housing units available to those with disabilities	Development of up to 60 new, affordable units for seniors in partnership with the City of Vaughan. At least 5% of units will be fully accessible. The public areas of the building will be fully accessible as well.* Renovation and upgrade of 14 units at Hadley Grange seniors building in Aurora to accommodate fragile	Housing additional households of persons with disabilities	2006 2005 to 2007

Barrier identified ⁶	Barrier type ⁷	What will be gained by removing or preventing this barrier? ⁸	Means to prevent/remove the barrier ⁹	Indicators of success ¹⁰	Timing (When will this be completed?) ¹¹
			seniors* *Note - "These projects are carried forward from 2004 plan due to development delays"		
Need to provide greater accessibility services for households requiring transitional housing	Physical	The ability to serve those facing physical barriers in need of transitional housing	Development of an accessible transitional housing unit in a project in Sutton	Serving households requiring transitional housing with accessible features	End of 2005
Need to create centralized source of information regarding special needs units within the social housing portfolio	Informational	Clients will be better able to determine the suitability of units made available to them	Engage a consultant to confer with housing providers, disabled individuals and support agencies to develop a list of the information required for special needs applicants to assess the suitability of modified or supported units. Engage a consultant to compile a detailed inventory of modified and supported units and supportive housing referral agreements in the social housing portfolio.	The number of special needs units which are rented which match the needs of the clients needing them	2 nd quarter 2005 3 rd quarter 2005
Need to create a comprehensive inventory of the renovations and	Informational	The ability to address barriers in York Housing Inc. properties in a planned and	Engage a consultant to identify those modifications to be made	Staff will be better able to incorporate	End of 2005

Barrier identified⁶	Barrier type⁷	What will be gained by removing or preventing this barrier?⁸	Means to prevent/remove the barrier⁹	Indicators of success¹⁰	Timing (When will this be completed?)¹¹
upgrades which could be made to Housing York Inc. properties to remove barriers		coordinated fashion		upgrades and renovations into multi-year capital planning to ensure continuously improved access for clients	
Continue to review web pages to identify potential barriers for persons with disabilities	Informational and technological	Improved access to online information	Use of auditing and screen-reader software	Improved accessibility and customer service	Ongoing
Provide print communications in on-line format (PDF)	Informational and technological	Improved access to information about programs and services via on-line format and screen reader software	Use of Adobe Acrobat	Improved accessibility and improved customer service	Ongoing