



# Building Collaborations for Responsive Mental Health and Social Care Supports and Services



The Regional Municipality  
of Durham

Family Services Division

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## **Presenters:**

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# Family Services Durham

- Part of the Region of Durham's Social Services Department.
- Supporting mental health and well-being for fifty years.
- Services for individuals, couples and families, including counselling.
- Programs constantly evolve to meet emerging needs.



- Various initiatives to improve access, including:
  - outreach to vulnerable populations
  - onsite partnerships with other organizations
- Many services are based on formal and informal collaborations to leverage existing resources.

# Support for Recipients of Ontario Works (OW)

- Long history of collaboration with the Region's Social Service Dept's Income, Employment, Homeless Supports Division (IEHSD).
- Services have evolved in response to changing needs and demands.
- Focus on improving access to counselling for recipients of OW.
- Previously offered a "Quick Access" (QA) program:
  - referral by IEHSD worker for up to 12 sessions
  - Counsellors embedded in IEHSD offices
- 50% of referrals to QA did not follow through.
- Of those who did:
  - almost 40% attended only one session
  - high no-show/cancellation rate





# “Here and Now” Counselling (HNC) for Recipients of OW

- Recently moved to a single-session service model for OW recipients: “Here and Now” pilot.
- HNC offers fast access to “one session at a time” counselling.
- Clients can attend up to two sessions per month.
- “Use as needed” model is more client-driven and accessible.
- Outcomes have been positive:
  - in 2024, the “show” rate for HNC sessions was 72%
  - 92% of those who completed a feedback survey found the session helpful
  - Community counselling waitlist decreased significantly



# Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP)



- Delivered by FSD and Paramedic Services.
  - Offers a range of services to the unhoused.
  - Began as a pilot and now operates 7 days/week.
  - Travel to accessible locations (hubs, encampments).
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- Advanced Care Paramedic offers medical assessment, triage, care, and connection to other services (including virtual medicine).
  - Social Worker provides assessment and counselling for mental health and substance use, and navigation to community resources.
  - Integrates Adult Protective Services (APS) staff to support individuals with developmental disabilities who are unhoused.

# VIDEO



Primary Care Outreach  
Paramedicine that is making a difference

# Mental Health Outreach Program (MHOP)

- Services for those who are unsheltered or recently/precariously housed and face mental health and/or substance use challenges.
- A mobile team offers:
  - clinical counselling/psychotherapy for mental health and substance use
  - service navigation (income, housing, addiction medicine, etc)
- Support is provided where needed in the community or in-home.
- May support with transition from a correctional facility to community living.
- In process of expansion to include opiate rapid response services.





# Homeless Outreach

- PCOP and MHOP staff work to build trust and a circle of support around some of the community's most vulnerable members.
- Provide client-centered services tailored to individual needs.
- “Meet clients where they are” (physically and clinically).
- Collaborate with other organizations to coordinate service delivery:
  - Durham Region Street Outreach Team
  - Mission United Medical
  - Durham Mental Health Services
  - Homelessness Hubs
  - Shelters
  - Christian Faith Outreach Services
  - Lakeridge Health / Pinewood



# Older Adult Safety Advisor (OASA) Program

- Collaboration with Durham Regional Police Service's Older Adult Support Investigative Services (OASIS) Unit.
- Offers support, advocacy, and service navigation for older adults at risk of abuse, neglect, fraud, or other types of harm.
- Staff work closely with a range of other community organizations to increase safety:
  - Victims Services and VWAP
  - Alzheimer's Society of Durham Region
  - Brain Injury Association of Durham
  - Office of Public Guardian and Trustee
  - Community Care Durham and VON
- Also promotes awareness through public education and advocacy.



# Adult Protective Services (APS)

- Case management, service navigation, and advocacy for adults with developmental disability.
- Support clients to live independently:
  - meet personalized goals and navigate resources
- Long term relationship with Housing Services.
- Works with FSD's Counselling program to deliver specialized trauma counselling to those with a developmental disability.
- Monthly Prompt Access Single Session (PASS) offers service navigation to those with a diagnosed/suspected developmental disability.
- Launching a support group for parents with developmental disabilities (partners include Health Dept and Children Services).



# Positive Alternatives Diversion Program (PADP)



- Partnership with Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS) and Durham Children's Aid Society (DCAS).
- Delivers counselling to parents who used inappropriate discipline and have been investigated by police/CAS.
- Provides opportunity to learn effective parenting skills to improve the safety of children and support more positive interactions within families.

# Onsite Partnerships

## Safety Network Durham (SND)

- Service hub for survivors of GBV.
- FSD provides assessment/support and seamless connection to counselling.



## Durham Counselling Walk-In Clinic (DCWIC)

- Single-session counselling for families with children.
- FSD provides clinical intervention and referrals.

## The Nourish and Develop Foundation (TNDF)

- Offers low-barrier programs to those in rural North Durham.
- FSD delivers counselling/psychotherapy and service coordination.



# Service Pathways Expansion



- Like other organizations, FSD has faced challenges including increased demand for service post-COVID.
- Investigated ways to expand pathways to mental health support:
  - task group of front line and leadership staff (research, needs assessment)
  - consultation with leaders from 11 organizations
- Planning for diversification of service options and entrance points:
  - implementing fast access “one at a time” counselling available for all clients
  - addition of psychoeducational workshops and therapeutic groups
  - increased capacity to support seamless referrals to other services
- Allowing for customized service options and pathways will increase accessibility and improve ability to meet individual needs.

# Making Information Accessible to the Community

FSD also helps improve access to mental health information and support by providing resources on our public webpage:

## Resources and Information

- [Resources for Crisis and Mental Health Support](#)
- [Resources for Basic Needs and Community Connection](#)
- [Intimate Abuse - Information and Safety Planning Resources](#)
- [Depression Information and Resources](#)
- [Anxiety Information and Resources](#)
- [Understanding and Coping with Stress](#)
- [Strategies for Healthy Communication](#)
- [Understanding and Coping with Grief](#)
- [Understanding and Coping with Grief Due to Violent Crime](#)
- [Supporting Grieving Children and Youth](#)

[More information about mental health](#)

# Other Collaborations

- Support to other service providers:
  - workshops, training, resources, COP for leaders
  - helps build capacity for effectiveness and well-being
- Support to the Region's Community Safety and Well-Being plan:
  - mapping programs and strategies to address risk factors
  - supporting a Community Healing Project for youth impacted by gun violence
- Enhance social work/psychotherapy education in cooperation with local colleges and universities:
  - curriculum support
  - providing student internships




# Challenges That may Arise in Collaborations

- Implementing outreach services can raise considerations around worker safety.
- Some tasks may be more complex with staff from multiple organizations:
  - training needs can be intensive:
    - for implementation
    - in response to staff turnover
  - communicating updates can be challenging
- Organizational recruitment/onboarding process can be lengthy.



# What We Have Learned:

## Keys to Successful Collaborations

- Commitment to working with others to serve vulnerable residents.
  - Commitment to innovative service delivery that meets the needs of the evolving population's needs within Durham Region.
  - Stay informed about other services (who is doing what).
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- A photograph showing three people—two men and one woman—sitting around a table in a modern office setting. They are engaged in a collaborative meeting, with one person using a laptop and others looking at documents or the screen.
- Assess needs and identify gaps and barriers.
  - What services are often sought together?
  - Identify and leverage existing resources, expertise, and knowledge.



# Contact Us for Additional Information

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# Questions and Comments

# Thank you!



# The Regional Municipality of Durham

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