

Resources and Referrals

OCTOBER 2023



About Us

Founded in 2017 with core support from the Toronto Central LHIN, the Ministry Of Health, Sinai Health, and the University of Toronto

Mission

Create workable solutions to complex health challenges

Vision

All people living with dignity and health

More information

Visit our [website](#) OR [contact us](#)

We are a not-for-profit health and social care innovation lab

- Bring an equity-based population health approach to the health system
- Strong ground game based on a deep commitment to understanding and working with communities
- Scalable, transparent, non-proprietary solutions that are developed and tested with communities
- Bridge and broker between partners and across sectors to break down silos
- Flexible delivery model, drawing on in-house and external subject matter experts
- Diverse and experienced team that spans health care, health policy, public health, community-based research, and design

About this Toolkit

Why did we make this toolkit?

This toolkit aims to support you, creating an asset map of resources and services that will allow you to better serve your community.

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed to equip community ambassadors and community health workers with basic information on how to create their own repository of existing services and resources that will allow them to support community members. We invite you to share this toolkit with your networks.



Land Acknowledgement

As Health Commons, we acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and sacred territories and lands we call home across what is now known as Canada. Health Commons is located in Tkaronto, now known as Toronto, which is on the traditional territory of many Nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinaabe, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat peoples. Tkaronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands, and is Dish With One Spoon Treaty Territory.

We recognize that for many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, relationship with the land is profoundly important to their sense of self and place. We are grateful for teachings that have been shared with us about how the land and waters heal and nurture by gifting the languages, stories, songs, ceremonies, and protocols that guide and sustain many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities and Nations.

We carry tremendous privilege in being guests on these lands, and are serious about our responsibility to understand, reflect on, and then take meaningful action to improve our relationships to these lands and to the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples who are the original stewards of these lands and who continue to host us here. We are committed to doing whatever we can and are invited to do alongside communities to create space for healing, reparation, and wellbeing for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and the lands, skies, and waters that surround and nourish us.

Statement on Positionality

This training is meant to generate a broad understanding of how we conceptualize culture and the social determinants of health within Health Commons, across the diverse communities we serve, and is not intended to directly represent one specific group of people. We acknowledge the content will not be relevant to every person in every instance, and that it can cause feelings of erasure when people don't see themselves represented in something.

The intersectionality that we all carry as people with different lived experiences, worldviews, contexts, needs, and priorities is expansive, and we do our best within Health Commons to inform these training resources based on our shared lived experiences within and across communities and, most importantly, based on what is shared with us from community members and partners. Our commitment is to share back what we know to be true, using the information that has been gifted to us and that we have gathered over time through participation in different places and spaces.

We're not perfect and there is always something more for us to know. If there is something here that stands out to you as missing or misrepresented we are always open to receive this feedback, but please know that you are not required to carry that labour on our behalf. We are committed to being on a journey of continuous learning and unlearning, and to evolve the tools and resources we make as we learn and grow, and to carry this labour with humility, love, and respect.

Overview

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Providing Support

Connecting Communities to Services



What Role Can You Play?

As a community health ambassador, your role is to help equity-seeking communities access resources. Community health ambassadors are uniquely positioned to create connections through trusted relationships. In this space, your role has some parameters: you cannot assess, diagnose or treat issues you see in the community. Therefore, when working in the community, it is important to **draw on the principles of non-directive counselling, which is to *inform* rather than *direct* people to services.**

Providing supports can be helpful when you:

- Provide a judgement-free overview of the types of services available
- Bring people together for a community dialogue
- Make referrals to food, housing, employment programs, etc.
- Talk about the range of supports that cater to specific communities

Navigation Questionnaire

These questions are meant to support you in identifying and narrowing down suitable services based on the needs of the community you work with.

INTEREST IN ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT:
Would you be interested in mental health supports?
Can you tell me what type of support you are interested in? What is most important to you?

HOLISTIC CARE:
What are your priorities right now? Are you facing any challenges with housing, work, or other aspects of life that I can help you with?

TIME, TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL ACCESSIBILITY:
Do you prefer in-person or virtual support? Do you have access to a device and stable internet? Is transportation difficult for you? What hours work for you?

SERVICE PROVIDER:
Describe your ideal provider. Does their gender, race, ethnicity, faith, languages spoken or sexual orientation matter to you? Who do you feel most comfortable seeing?

WAITING TIME:
Do you need immediate support? Are you able to be on a waitlist? If you have to wait, how can I support you in the meantime?

FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT:
Do you have extended health insurance or access to an employment assistance program? If we cannot find a suitable service for free, would a service with a cost per session be something you could consider?

Connecting People to Services

Below is an example of a conversation you might have to help someone navigate the supports they might be interested in.

Can you tell me what type of support you are interested in? What is most important to you?

I would like something that is...

Here's a service that might work for you. It is located [blank] and is [minutes/distance/bus stops] away from you. I have checked and you qualify based on their eligibility criteria. They provide [accessibility services such as virtual support, transportation vouchers, food, etc.]. Registration is [over the phone, online or in-person]. The waitlist is [insert days, weeks or months]. It is [free/cost/covered by OHIP/ etc]. I can help you register if you would like. Would this service interest you?

Asset Mapping Tool

Creating a Map for the Communities
You Serve



Finding Resources

Using the directories provided you can find services for mental health, housing, employment, legal aid, food support, language training, settlement, financial support, domestic violence, assault, and more.

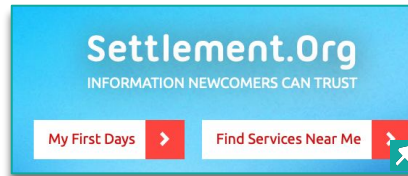
We know from the social determinants of health that housing, employment and other aspects of life can impact mental health. Thus, it is important to support people suffering from mental health challenges with supports that extend beyond mental health services.



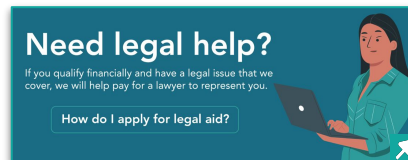
Financial supports (federal, provincial and local)



Directory for social and community services



Supports for immigrants and newcomers



Free legal support for low income individuals

Think about what matters most to the communities you serve when they access services. As you create an asset map, collect information based on what people need to know. What is the support or service? How far is it? Does it cost anything? What hours are they open? How do I prepare or register? What is the waitlist like?



DESCRIPTION

Include languages offered, diversity of staff, and the type of service offered. How long is the service provided for? How are clients discharged or handed off upon completion?



ELIGIBILITY

Include catchment area, age and other criteria.



APPLICATION PROCESS

What forms and documents are required? Is the registration over the phone, online or in person?



ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Is it accessible for people with disabilities? Do they provide transportation vouchers? Do they provide food?



WAIT TIME

How long should clients expect to wait? Is there a bridging program as they wait?

Organization or service

Location address(es)

Phone number

Hours of Operation

Virtual services provider? YES / NO

Cost: FREE / INSURANCE /OUT OF POCKET \$__

Description

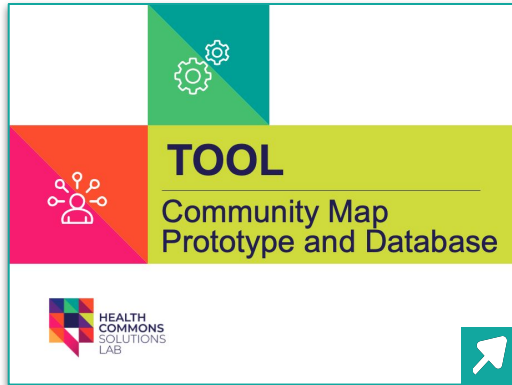
Eligibility

Application Process

Accessibility considerations

Wait time

Creating Your Own Tailored Map of Services



Download our tool for making your own map

A map of Toronto, Ontario, showing various service locations marked with colored pins. The map includes labels for neighborhoods like LEASIDE, GREENTOWN, and EAST DANFORTH. The Health Commons Solutions Lab logo is in the top left corner.

OUR EXAMPLE

Click [here](#) for example of database
Click [here](#) for example of map prototype

MAKE YOUR OWN

Here's how you can make your own database and link it to a Google map...

1. If you don't already have one, make a Google account.
2. Download and upload our database [template](#) to your Google Drive to collect your own information. Modify the fields (columns) to make them work for you. Make sure the addresses are consistent – we suggest copy & pasting that information from a Google search.
3. From the Google Drive page, select 'New' > 'More' > 'Google My Maps'
4. Under the 'Untitled Layer' section, select 'Import' and choose your database template.
5. Select 'Address' as the field with the mapping information and 'Name' as the title for your markers.
6. To be able to visualize the data by the fields (columns) of your database, you will need to add more layers from the same database file (i.e., repeat step 4). For the added layer, click on the paint roller icon and select 'Style by data column' and select the field (column) you'd like to filter on. Our example has filters for Type of Service and Specific Sub-Population Focus.

Contact us @ www.healthcommons.ca/contact

Initial Service Map

Connecting Communities to
Services



Service and Resources

Why did we make this list?

To help you get started, we created a repository of services for different needs and populations. This is only a beginners list. As you work in the community, your list of services will get longer, and hopefully, more tailored to the specific needs of the communities you serve.

These lists are not static.

They evolve over time. New services pop up, old ones close down, and sometimes the services change. Eligibility criteria or location might change over time, and innovative programs open up. As long as you are in the field of helping connect people to services, you will always be on the lookout for new services and changes.



Temporary and Emergency housing

Some emergency housing facilities are open to all people and others are restricted to men, women, youth or other groups with specific needs, such as victims of abuse, newcomers, or refugee claimants who are awaiting hearings or status.

- [Homeless shelters](#)
- [Shelters for abused women](#)
- [Shelters for youth](#)
- [Transitional housing](#)

Subsidized housing

- Subsidized housing is when you get help paying your rent from the government or a private organization ([learn more](#))
- [Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association \(ONPHA\)](#) - An association of private and municipal non-profit housing providers in Ontario. The ONPHA website explains what non-profit housing is, describes ONPHA services and has links to related organizations.

- Call 211 or visit their [website](#) to check out subsidizing housing in your region



Many food banks are tied to a geographic area - or FSA's (the first three letters of a postal code). Most food banks provide specific portions of food, more specifically, a week's worth of food once a month. Food availability may vary however, because food banks are experiencing extremely high demand.

Foodbanks

- [Mississauga Food bank](#) The Mississauga Food Bank is the central food bank in Mississauga
- [The Foodbank of York Region](#) The Food Bank of York Region (FBYR) is dedicated to alleviating food insecurity and hunger in York Region.

Some food banks require ID and several documents in order to receive food. Call the foodbank ahead of time to ensure eligibility criteria is met and what the required documents are.



Financial Supports

Today, many families and individuals are experiencing financial constraints. There are several options available to receive financial supports. For individuals who are struggling to find stable employment, Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program can provide financial assistance in the form of direct transfer of funds.

- [Ontario Works](#) – Offers income support to help with the costs of basic needs and health benefits. Up to \$733 a month.
- [Emergency Assistance Program](#) – Assists with the cost of food and housing for up to 48 days. The amount you get depends on the situation.
- [Low-income Energy Assistance Program](#) – If you're behind on your electricity or natural gas bill and face having your service disconnected, you may qualify for emergency financial help through the Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP). Low-income customers can get up to \$500 in emergency assistance for their electricity bills (\$600 if your home is heated electrically) and \$500 for their natural gas bills.
- [Home and Vehicle Modification Program](#) – Funds to make home and vehicle more accessible if you or your child has a disability that restricts mobility. Up to \$15,000 for your home and up to \$15,000 every ten years for your vehicle.

- [Ontario Electric Support Program](#) – This program can help you cover the cost of electricity bills for lower-income households. Up to \$75 per month.



Resources

- [Adult literacy Basic](#) instruction in writing, reading and mathematics. Includes first language literacy programs for those whose first language is not English or French.
- [Academic upgrading](#) – High school equivalency and academic upgrading programs to help adults gain entry into post-secondary or apprenticeship programs, or to find employment.
- [Career counselling](#) – Assessment of aptitude and skills, labour market information, counselling and referral for persons choosing a career direction.
- [Find a family doctor](#)
- [Evaluate credentials](#)
- [Attend ESL classes](#) or [LINC classes](#)
- [Occupation-specific Language Training \(OSLT\)](#)

Common questions and guides

- [Newcomer guide to elementary school](#) and [Newcomer guide to secondary school](#)
- [Getting a Social Insurance Number](#)
- [Opening a bank account](#)
- [Filing a tax return](#)
- [Understanding car insurance](#)
- [Preparing for the citizenship test](#)

Most lawyers offer a **free consultation**. They will briefly listen to your problem and tell you if they are qualified to help you. Read more [here](#).

- The [Law Society Referral Service \(LSRS\)](#) is an online service making it possible for residents of Ontario to obtain referrals online, 24 hours a day. The online request, the referral process, and your initial consultation of up to 30 minutes are free.
- [Community-based clinics](#) that provide legal advice and representation in areas of law that affect low-income individuals and other vulnerable populations.
- [Community Legal services](#) includes advice and representation, funded by Legal Aid Ontario. Includes specialty clinics that focus on a particular area of law.
- [Justice Ontario](#) – This website has information about Ontario's legal system, including family and criminal law, lawsuits, human rights, wills and estates, and tickets and fines. You can get legal information in over 170 languages.
- [Law Society of Ontario \(LSO\)](#) – The governing body for Ontario lawyers. The LSO regulates the practice of law in Ontario and protects members of the public when they hire a lawyer.
- [Legal Aid Ontario \(LAO\)](#) – Provides access to legal services for people who are unable to afford them on their own. The website includes the LAO newsletter, publications, frequently asked questions and legal aid clinic listings.
- [LawHelpOntario.org](#) – This website has information about how to find a lawyer and how to work effectively with a lawyer. It also has resources for those who cannot afford a lawyer or who do not qualify for legal aid.
- [Connect Legal](#) – is a registered charity that provides legal education and assistance to low-resource immigrants who want to launch and grow their independent businesses.
- [JusticeNet](#) – A not-for-profit service helping people in need of legal expertise, whose income is too high to access legal aid and too low to afford standard legal fees.
- [CLEO - Legal Services Information](#) – Clear language publications on getting legal help.

Health Supports

- [Apply for an OHIP card](#)
- [Find a family doctor](#) – Information and links to search for a family doctor
- [Your Health Care Options](#) – Information and links about options to get health care in Ontario. You can search the directory by location and type of services. It is run by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
- [MD Home Call](#) – These companies can arrange for a doctor to visit your home. If you have OHIP, you do not have to pay. If you do not have OHIP, you have to pay the doctor.
- [Refugee HealthLine](#) – Call this line (1-866-286-4770), for free, to register for help in being connected with a health service provider who can assist with initial medical assessments and referral to other health services. This is not an emergency or crisis line.
- [Rainbow Health Ontario Service Directory](#) – This directory includes doctors and health care professionals who deliver 2SLGBTQ+ friendly services.
- [Health Smiles Ontario](#) – If you are living on low to moderate income, your children may be eligible for regular dental services at no cost to you.

- [Eye See...Eye Learn](#) – gives free glasses to junior kindergarten students
- [OneSight](#) – gives free glasses through the OneSight Voucher Program



Mental Health Supports

- **See a family doctor** – Visit a family doctor to get assessed or diagnosed and receive ongoing care. If someone is unattached to a family doctor, they may see a doctor or nurse practitioner in a community health center or walk-in clinic.
- **Visit a community health centers** – [Punjabi Community Health Services](#), [Black Creek CHC](#), [Flemingdon CHC](#), [CMHA Peel-Dufferin](#), [South East Ottawa CHC](#), [Roots CHC](#), [Vaughan CHC](#), [Indus](#), [Scarborough Center for Health communities](#), [Wellfort](#), [CMHA-Windsor Sussex](#), [Pathways to care](#), [Hung Fook](#), [Gerstein center](#), [Catholic Family Services](#), [Access Alliance](#).
- **Call a helpline or crisis line.** Some are for specific equity seeking populations such as the Multilingual Distress Line, the Black Youth Helpline, Naseeha helpline, a hotline for Muslim youth, the LGBT YouthLine, the assaulted women’s helpline, and more. You can find these numbers and more [here](#).
- **Access online services.** Some examples include [BounceBack](#) and [Wellness Together Canada](#).
- **Join a a peer group.** They can be found in many places, including workplaces, schools and universities, facebook groups and community health centers. You can find some support groups [here](#).
- **See a private mental health provider.** You can use through websites such as The [Ontario Psychological Association](#), [Psychology Today](#), [Connex Ontario](#) and [Better Help](#).
- **Access an Employment Assistance program (AEP).** These programs can be accessed through a person’s employment benefits.
- **Talk to a trusted leader in the community or faith group.**



You can contact [2-1-1](#) to learn about local childcare services and financial assistance available to you where you live. If you cannot afford these costs, you can apply for assistance through your [municipal government](#) subsidy programs. You must meet certain criteria to be eligible for a fee subsidy and to maintain that subsidy.

The federal government offers many families the [Canada Child Benefit \(CCB\)](#). The CCB is a tax-free monthly payment that helps eligible families with the cost of raising children under the age of 18. You can apply for the [Canada Child Benefit](#):

- When you complete the [newborn registration](#) for your child
- Online through your [Canada Revenue Agency \(CRA\) MyAccount](#).
- By mail, you can [download the application](#) or contact your local [CRA office](#) to get one

Links and resources

- [Financial Support for Child Care](#) – Information on government subsidies and grants for families in Ontario. From the Ministry of Education.

- [Canada Child Benefits Application](#) – The application form for the CCB, including an explanation of the application process and requirements. From Canada Revenue Agency.
- [Having a Baby](#) – Information on benefits and information for new parents. From Service Canada.
- [Service system managers for child care and early years programs](#) – Find contact information for service system managers and a list of the communities they serve. Each municipality has information about childcare subsidies.

Education and Employment

Services

- [Adult literacy Basic](#) instruction in writing, reading and mathematics. Includes first language literacy programs for those whose first language is not English or French.
- [Academic upgrading](#) – High school equivalency and academic upgrading programs to help adults gain entry into post-secondary or apprenticeship programs, or to find employment.
- [Career counselling](#) – Assessment of aptitude and skills, labour market information, counselling and referral for persons choosing a career direction.
- [Skills for change](#)



2SLGBTQ+ Supports

- [Mindfulness Meditation](#)
- [Bi+ Women of Toronto](#)
- [CAMH Gender Identity Clinic](#) (service provider - referral only)
- [Service provider directory](#) (managed by Rainbow Health Ontario)
- [Service provider and resource directory](#) (managed by Ontario Caregiver Organization)
- [Across Boundaries](#) (service provider)

Youth specific services

- [Trans Youth Mentorship Program](#)
- [Kids Action and Arts Space \(6-9 Years\)](#) (2SLGBTQ+)
- [Youth Action and Arts Space \(10-14 Years\)](#) (2SLGBTQ+)
- [LGBTQ Youth - Anxiety and Stress during COVID](#)
- [Trevor Project Self-Care Guide](#)
- [Supporting Black LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#)



2SLGBTQ+ Supports Continued

- [Support Group: Living with Grief](#)
- [Phone Check-in for Racialized and Trans People of Colour](#) or [Phone or Email Check-in](#)
- [FTM, Transmasc & Non-binary Support Group](#)
- [Queer Muslim Community Circle](#)
- [Warmline](#) (GTA and Peel Region)
- [Toronto Shyness and Social Anxiety Support Group](#)
- [Henna Hangs](#)
- [Among Friends LGBTQ+ Refugee Support Group](#)
- [ODE: Remembered Voices](#) (First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples)
- [Transition Support](#)
- [Gay Fathers of Toronto](#)
- [Latino Group Hola](#)
- [Toronto Bisexual Network](#)

Learning resources

- [Talking About Suicide in LBBT Populations](#)
- [Black and LGBTQ: Approaching Intersectional Conversations](#)
- For providers supporting trans and gender diverse folx, there is [Project ECHO](#) (CAMH and University of Toronto)
- [A Guide to Mental Health Care for People who are Transgender](#)
- [Mapping the void: Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Experiences in Hamilton](#) (data to support learning and decision making)
- Rainbow Health Ontario [learning and training resources](#)



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