

Mental Health Resources to Support York Region Residents During COVID-19 Pandemic

York Region's york.ca/covid19 webpage provides information to residents on community supports, resources, services and programs to address a variety of needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The [Community Support](#) section provides information on assistance available for mental health and well-being. This includes the provincially-supported [BounceBack](#) program (a self-managed life-skills program to develop coping techniques) and other resources provided by the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) and the new federally-supported [Wellness Together](#) program. The Ontario government is also providing [additional investments](#) to help expand access for critical mental health and addictions supports during COVID-19 as part of the Province's 10-year plan, [A Roadmap to Wellness](#).

While the provision of mental health services is not a legislated responsibility of the Region, the Region's [Community Investment Fund](#) supports mental health-focused projects and initiatives delivered by community agencies, such as Hong Fook Mental Health Association, Catholic Community Services of York Region, and John Howard Society York Region. These agencies provide a variety of services, including youth mentoring programs to address trauma and build resiliency, mental health and well-being supports for community housing residents, and culturally appropriate mental health supports for immigrant youth and their families. As part of the review of the Community Investment Fund projects in 2020, Regional staff supported agencies with any required enhancements and adjustments to program delivery as a result of COVID-19 needs and limitations, including additional resources and shifting to virtual models to deliver mental health counselling services. The Region's Community Support page referenced above includes initiatives delivered by Community Investment funded agencies.

Additionally, through the provincial Social Services Relief Fund, the Region is providing children's mental health training to staff in internal and external partner agencies to support the current and future mental health needs of children. The Region is also offering primary care and mental health and addiction supports to clients at the Region's Transitional Shelter. York Region also regularly provides wraparound services to support clients with complex needs, including those experiencing mental health-related concerns, through programs offered by the homelessness community programs and social assistance.

The COVID-19 Community Coordination initiative the Region is hosting with United Way Greater Toronto offers the Region an opportunity to inform community supports outside the scope of Regional social services, including those related to mental health. Agency partners have noted that mental health incidents and cases have been on the rise since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic leading to higher demand for mental health supports. Mental health is also emerging as a top risk category in consultations for the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region that is [under development](#).

Staff continue to work collaboratively across the Region and with community partners to identify actions to address mental health-related concerns, including continuing to leverage the Community Investment Fund and other partnerships. Staff will also look to further identify and propose targeted solutions through the development of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

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