**York ASD Partnership Launched to Support York Region Population with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

*Grassroots Collaborative Created to Improve Existing Systems of Service and Support for the Growing Number of People Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder*

**YORK REGION, ONTARIO — October 4, 2011 —** Today sees the launch of the [*York ASD Partnership*](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/), a unique autism-focused, grassroots collaborative that brings together community service providers, government agencies, educators, healthcare professionals and parents dedicated to improving the existing systems of service and support for children, youth and adults with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in York Region.

Recognizing that collaboration is essential to effectively support and improve service delivery for those with an ASD, more than a dozen parents and professionals from across 21 organizations are working together to drive changes in the way the ASD community in York Region is supported.

The goals of the York ASD Partnership include:

* Coordinated access to services to ensure that any call to an agency involved in the York ASD Partnership will lead families to the appropriate resource and action for those with an ASD;
* Increase knowledge and raise awareness about ASD among physicians, service providers, parents and the general public;
* Provide a continuum of coordinated services through the frequent use of individualized, electronic Single Plans of Care (SPOC);
* Formalize partnerships, strengthen collaborative capacity and increase transparency and accountability across the system of support.

“York ASD Partnership is three years in the making, and the first initiative of its kind in Canada. It was created to address growing concerns that demand for services and supports for those with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in our community is on the rise, yet available resources continue to be limited,” explains Neil Walker, Project Manager with the York ASD Partnership. “Our hope is that the model we’ve created will provide a sustainable and scalable platform that communities across the province and country can embrace to improve local service delivery to the growing number of individuals diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.”

ASDs are one of the most common developmental disabilities, and approximately 1 in 110 children today are believed to be on the spectrum. An estimated 70,000 individuals with ASDs live in Ontario, of which 8,300 are currently living in York Region including 1,660 children aged 0-14 years; 1,100 youth aged 15-24 years; and 4,600 adults aged 25-64 years.

To achieve its goals, the York ASD Partnership is led by the ASD Steering Group and has established seven Working Groups that are responsible for driving specific action areas within the [York ASD Strategic Plan](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/about-us/strategic-plan/). Working Groups have balanced representation of parents, local service providers and community stakeholders. Working Groups include: [Screening and Assessment](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups/screening-and-assessment/); [Communications](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups/communications/); [Mapping and Pathways](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups/mapping-and-pathways/); Physician Support; [Professional Development](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups/professional-development/); [Systems Change](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups/systems-change/); and, [Transition Planning](http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups/transition-planning/). Information on each of the Working Groups is available at <http://www.yorkasdpartnership.org/working-groups>.

“We’re very pleased to be joining with many organizations in the York ASD Partnership Launch. Autism Ontario families in York Region are proud to have been part of this working relationship for many years where the voice of families is not only heard, but actually informs meaningful local choices for supports that have real impact on the lives of children and adults on the autism spectrum,” says Margaret Spoelstra, Executive Director, Autism Ontario. “This type of partnership is ultimately the most effective in creating responses that reduce stress on families and individualized opportunities for people with an ASD.”

Founding partners of the York ASD Partnership include: [Autism Ontario](http://www.autismontario.com/york); Blue Hills Child and Family Centre; [Catulpa Community Support Services](http://www.catulpa.on.ca/s/programs/CCC.aspx); [Central East Community Care Access Centre](http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Content.aspx?EnterpriseID=9&LanguageID=1&MenuID=1); Children’s Case Coordination; [Children’s Treatment Network](http://www.ctn-simcoeyork.ca/); [Early Intervention Services of York Region](http://www.york.ca/departments/community%2Bservices%2Band%2Bhousing/family%2Band%2Bchildren%2Bservices/early_intervention_services.htm); [Kerry’s Place Autism Services](http://www.kerrysplace.org/Public/Home.aspx); [Kinark Child and Family Services](http://www.kinark.on.ca/); [Markham Stouffville Hospital](http://www.msh.on.ca/); [Muki Baum Treatment Centre](http://www.mukibaum.com/home.php); [Reena](http://www.reena.org/); TRE-ADD; [York Catholic District School Board](http://www.ycdsb.ca/); [York Central Hospital Behaviour Management Services](http://www.yorkcentral.com/main/serv30.htm); [York Region District School Board](http://www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/); [York Region Preschool Speech and Language Program](http://www.beyond-words.org/); [York Support Services Network](http://www.yssn.ca/); [York University Faculty of Health](http://www.health.yorku.ca/); [Ministry of Children and Youth Services](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/) / [Ministry of Community and Social Services](http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/); and the [Ministry of Education](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/).

**About the York ASD Partnership:**

The York ASD Partnership is a unique, grassroots collaborative of community service providers, government agencies, educators, healthcare professionals and parents dedicated to improving the existing systems of service and support for children, youth and adults with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in York Region. Additional information is available at [www.YorkASDPartnership.org](http://www.YorkASDPartnership.org).

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**Note to media:**

The York ASD Partnership launch is also an Autism Awareness event to commemorate October as Canadian Autism Awareness Month. Media are invited to attend the launch event, which kicks off at 10am on Tuesday, October 4at Glenway Country Club, 470 Crossland Gate, Newmarket, Ontario.

**Media Contact:**

Jodi Echakowitz

Echo Communications

T: 905-709-9600

C: 416-271-7250

jodi@echo-communications.com