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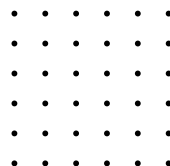
Greater
Hamilton
Health
Network
ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM



2024

FINANCIALLY ASSISTED SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

ANNUAL REPORT





**Canadian
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Prepared by:

Leah Fuller, Community Engagement Coordinator

Le-Tien Bhaskar, Community Health & Knowledge Coordinator

Mirela Marceta, Project Manager

April 2025

All photos within this report were taken by Canadian Red Cross staff with consent



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The work of the Greater Hamilton Health Network and its Partnership Council members takes place on traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. Indigenous people who have lived here since time immemorial and have deep connections to these lands.

This land is covered by the Dish Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation.

The GHHN catchment area continues to be home to vibrant, diverse Indigenous communities who have distinct and specific histories and needs, as well as a constitutionally protected treaty. The GHHN is located next to Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit but most Indigenous peoples in the GHHN catchment area live in urban Hamilton. We honour this diversity and respect the knowledge, leadership, and governance frameworks within Indigenous communities. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, meet, work, and are committed to engaging and building meaningful relationships and partnerships with the Indigenous communities, Six Nations of the Grand River, Mississaugas of the Credit and Urban Indigenous populations on this territory.

[Greater Hamilton Health Network Land Acknowledgement](#)

Learn about the Canadian Red Cross commitment to reconciliation and the humanitarian principles that guide them by visiting the [Indigenous Peoples Framework](#)

To learn more about the people and communities served by the Greater Hamilton Health Network, and the history of the lands that they live and work upon, [click here](#).



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Financially Assisted Social Prescribing (FASP)

Hamilton (Ontario) – wards 2, 3, 4

Since January 2023, the Canadian Red Cross Society and Greater Hamilton Health Network (GHHN) has set out to co-design a system-wide and sustainable service delivery model that aims to increase health equity informed care and services.

Together with community, we're pleased to introduce FASP, an innovative approach to bringing social prescribing to community organizations in Municipal wards* 2,3, and 4 in Hamilton, Ontario.

[Join Now](#)

Join your community to help build a collaborative network of social prescribing services and referrals. Applications are now open for community organizations and healthcare professionals who are already providing social prescribing, or would like to.

Advantages to Members

- Inventory of social prescribing services** in wards 2-4.
- Inventory of financially assisted services*** in wards 2-4.
- Online learning portal for members to access important social prescribing resources.
- Social prescribing training toolkit to train your organization.
- Link worker competency framework.
- Social Prescribing experts and facilitator knowledge.
- Financial Assistance toolkit to support clients.
- \$2M granting available for members to support clients when accessing social prescribing referrals and/or services.
- Low-barrier entry and application process for funding.

*wards refer to municipal divisions of the city that are represented by elected councillors. To see a description of the wards in the City of Hamilton, click [here](#).

**A repository of organizations and services currently providing social prescribing within wards 2, 3, and 4.

***A repository of organizations and services currently providing financial assistance within wards 2, 3, and 4.



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Meet Our Team



Mirela Marceta, PMP
Project Manager



Francis Tabu, MPH, PMP
Project Coordinator



Le-Tien Bhaskar, MPH
Community Health and
Knowledge Coordinator



Valentina Latorre Franky
Specialist, Learning and
Evaluation



Leah Fuller
Community Engagement
Coordinator



Hansika Gunaratne
Senior Manager,
Operations Ontario South



Sara Alzedawy
Project Assistant
Sept - Dec 2024



Coming 2025
Link Worker



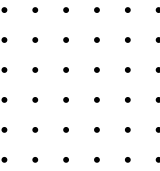
Coming 2026
Link Worker



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SEPTEMBER 2024

FASP Launch

On September 16, 2024, a coordinated communications and community engagement effort was launched to publicly announce FASP and initiate recruitment efforts for several collaboration opportunities.

The goals of this first and critical step were to connect with community members and organizations in the health and social sectors in Hamilton, who were either already delivering Social Prescribing; or those who wished to collaborate within FASP. Connecting with community in this way helped develop the first stages of a Social Prescribing Service Inventory* for Hamilton wards** 2, 3 and 4.

**With this approach, by October 31, 2024
FASP was able to...**



deliver an invite to join FASP to
over **779+** individuals



receive **17** Community Collective
Applications



receive **8** Advisory Committee
Applications



receive **5** Working Group Applications

116 Hours

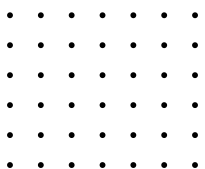
dedicated to outreach
over 7 weeks

18 Hours

facilitating community
presentations

70 Hours

of volunteer work
completed by 8
volunteers





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2024 in review

2024 has been a year of new beginnings for the FASP project. Since the launch of the project in September, we have evolved from our learnings. While we are excited to move forward, we take a moment to reflect upon the work done so far.

During the first quarter of the four-year FASP project, the team established three integral project components: the Advisory Committee, the Financial Assistance Working Group (FAWG), and the Social Prescribing Service Coordination Community Collective (The Collective).

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee is a group of community leaders that help advise the FASP project. Members share knowledge and lessons learned that assist in identifying and advancing key opportunities in alignment with strategic priorities. Additionally, one sub-committee was established in support of selecting and welcoming additional Advisory Committee members.

This year, we welcomed back

8

*previous members to the
Advisory Committee.*

FAWG

The FAWG is comprised of subject matter experts, people with lived experience, and community leaders. Members determine inclusion and exclusion criteria of the planned Canadian Red Cross Community Health Fund to ensure that it is as low barrier as possible while maintaining its efficacy and legitimacy.

This year, we welcomed

11

*new members to the
FAWG.*

4 people with
lived experience
6 front line
workers
1 policy expert

This year, we welcomed

25

*organizations to the
Collective.*

12 Social
services
5 Health
services
8 Community
services

The Collective

One of the biggest endeavours that the FASP project took on this year was the establishment of the Collective. The purpose of this Collective is to create a safe space for community, health, and social service providers to come together and create a shared vision of social prescribing in Hamilton.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of the FASP project. Social Prescribing Community Liaison volunteers create and update the service inventory for social prescribing and financially assisted services in Hamilton, Ontario through environmental scans and community outreach activities.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Meet George

We are excited to shine a light on George Sargious (He/Him), a member of the Social Prescribing Community Liaison volunteer team within the FASP project. George's enthusiasm and initiative has made a significant impact since he began volunteering with the Canadian Red Cross Society this past Summer.



(Left to Right) George (volunteer), with staff Sara and Leah
Photo Credit: Leah Fuller, Oct 2024

George is a newcomer to Canada and as a previous Anesthesiologist, has seen the benefits of connecting healthcare to community first-hand. George connects deeply to the values of social prescribing, and his commitment to community engagement is truly commendable. No matter his role, he eagerly takes on new challenges and goes above and beyond in his duties. To date, George has supported with community outreach along the Barton Street corridor in Hamilton to help build an inventory of social prescribing service* that will be used to better connect health and community together. George also regularly attends public meetings in support of gathering information to further the FASP project, like those organized by the [Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction](#), and shares what he learns with the volunteer team. George has also been someone that the FASP team can rely on to complete a thorough search to support the inventory, as well as pick up extra tasks that need completing.

George's efforts have also set a wonderful example for his daughters. Recently, volunteering has become a family affair for the Sargious family. His daughters, Holy and Joy, have joined the FASP volunteer team, turning their volunteer work into a meaningful family activity. Together, they embody the true spirit of voluntary service, making a real difference in the lives of many. We are proud to acknowledge George as part of the Canadian Red Cross Volunteer team, a network of over 13,000 individuals spanning across Canada. We are grateful for the positive impact he and his family have on the community. George's story is a testament to the power of volunteerism and the incredible things that can be achieved when we come together to help others. Thank you, George!



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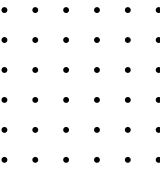
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Our Process

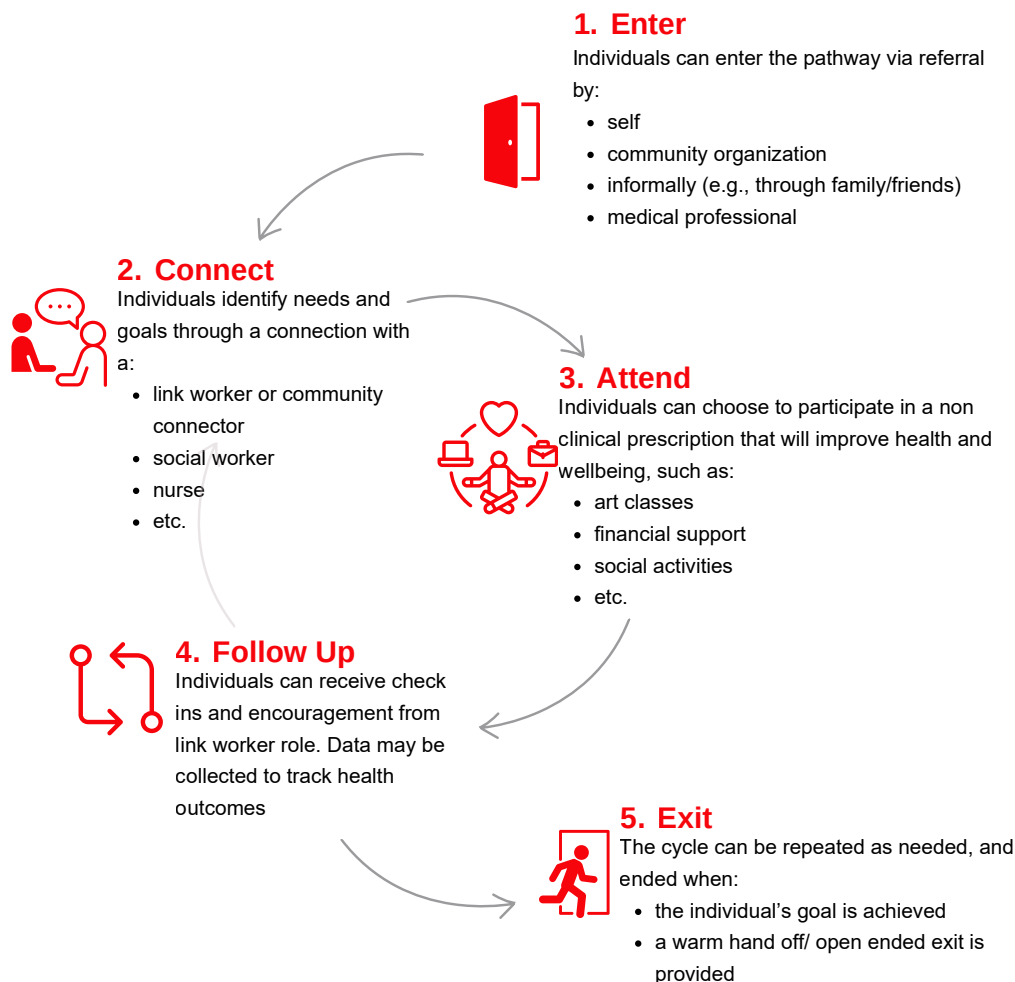
2024 was a year of learning about community needs and what infrastructure could benefit community members and their integration of social prescribing.

All Canadian Red Cross programs and activities are guided by the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality. These principles allow us to provide help immediately to whoever needs it, wherever they are, whatever their race, political beliefs, religion, social status, or culture.



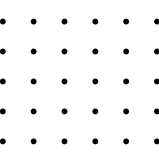
What is Social Prescribing?

Social prescribing brings community, social services and healthcare sectors together to support the diverse needs of patients and their goals for well-being. It is a person-centered approach that focuses on developing a comprehensive care plan that aims to address the unfortunate healthcare disparities that these patients face as individuals. When appropriate, patients are connected to community resources and organizations that support in referring non-clinical supports to individuals.



[Bridgeable, 2023](#)

Each social prescribing pathway is likely to vary according to the capacity of the service providers, the needs of the clients, and the assets in the community.

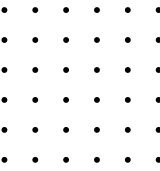




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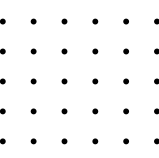


What is **FASP**?

FASP is a four year pilot program intended to supplement access to existing community based non-clinical supports through the creation of a Social Prescribing Service Coordination Community Collective, a Community Health Fund, and also through the delivery of a Canadian Red Cross Direct-to-Individual Support Service.

Since 2022, the Canadian Red Cross has been collaborating with the GHHN to plan and implement FASP, an innovative approach to bring social prescribing to community organizations providing support to people living in Municipal wards* 2, 3, and 4 in Hamilton, Ontario. The planning phase of this initiative concluded in early 2023 and can be reviewed in the [2023 Community Engagement Report](#).

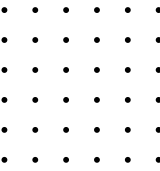
FASP has unfolded in three distinct phases:





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PHASE 1

Social Prescribing Service Coordination Community Collective (The Collective)

The Collective aims to create a safe and collaborative space for those who are providing social prescribing services to share and learn from each other to create a **shared vision for social prescribing** in Hamilton.

Deliverables:

Social Prescribing Service Inventory	A repository of organizations and services currently providing social prescribing within wards 2, 3, and 4.
Financial Assistance Service Inventory	A repository of organizations and services currently providing financial assistance within wards 2, 3, and 4.
Link Worker Competency Framework	A framework to guide hiring and training practices for Link Workers to support workforce standardization.
Social Prescribing Training Toolkit	A collection of training modules to support standardization of social prescribing knowledge within the community.

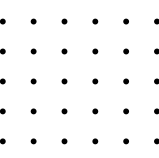
PHASE 2

Community Health Fund (CHF)

The Canadian Red Cross CHF seeks to increase the capacity of organizations to provide social prescribing. On an annual basis, organizations within The Collective are able to apply for funding to support their clients with financial assistance.

Deliverables:

A collection of training modules to guide financially assisted social prescribing in the community	Financial Assistance Toolkit
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PHASE 3

Individual Service Delivery Model (ISDM)

Using lessons learned from The Collective and the CHF, the Canadian Red Cross will develop an ISDM, in which Red Cross trained Link Workers will support any existing gaps within the services of wards 2 -4.

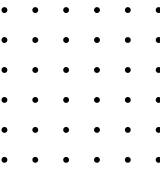
Deliverables:

Community Needs and Gaps Assessment	Informed by the service inventories and discussions within the Collective, this needs and gaps assessment will be used to support the development of the ISDM.
Red Cross Individual Service Delivery Implementation Plan	To address gaps and needs as shared by the Collective and informed through our Community Needs and Gaps Assessment, the Red Cross will hire two Link Workers to support wards 2-4 with the delivery of FASP.

Monitoring and Evaluation

FASP recognizes the importance of evaluating our process and impact. Our team is dedicated to developing tools to assess and monitor our work to ensure fidelity and ongoing quality improvement.





Service Inventories

The **Social Prescribing Service (SPS) Inventory** is a database of services, programs, and organizations offering social prescribing in Hamilton’s Municipal wards 2 - 4. Over a span of six months, FASP volunteers worked with the Hamilton Public Library’s Red Book and Ontario 211 to gather data for this inventory. The FAWG and The Collective conducted an internal audit and offered feedback that guided this work.

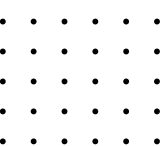
The **Financial Assistance Service (FA) Inventory** is a database of programs and organizations that provide some form of financial supports to clients. The FA Inventory has three critical needs:

1. Supports that assist clients with meeting financial necessities and commitments, such as paying bills on time.
2. Supports that assist clients with feeling financially comfortable, such as supporting a client to purchase equipment or clothing required to engage in an activity.
3. Financial supports that assist with financial resilience, such as creating a budget to allow for savings for unforeseen car repairs.

The goal of both of these inventories are to identify existing services to guide future service development and avoid duplication of existing resources. In the case that the client is not able to receive support from an existing program or their need falls within a gap of existing programs, the CHF can be applied to reduce barriers and improve access.

Municipal ward	Number of entries in SPS Inventory	Number of entries in FA Inventory
Ward 2	152 entries	41 entries
Ward 3	88 entries	16 entries
Ward 4	26 entries	2 entries
Misc Ward	87 entries	3 entries
Multi Ward	75 entries	22 entries
Unclassified		46 entries
	428 total entries	130 total entries

*wards refer to municipal divisions of the city that are represented by elected councillors. To see a description of the wards in the City of Hamilton, click [here](#).





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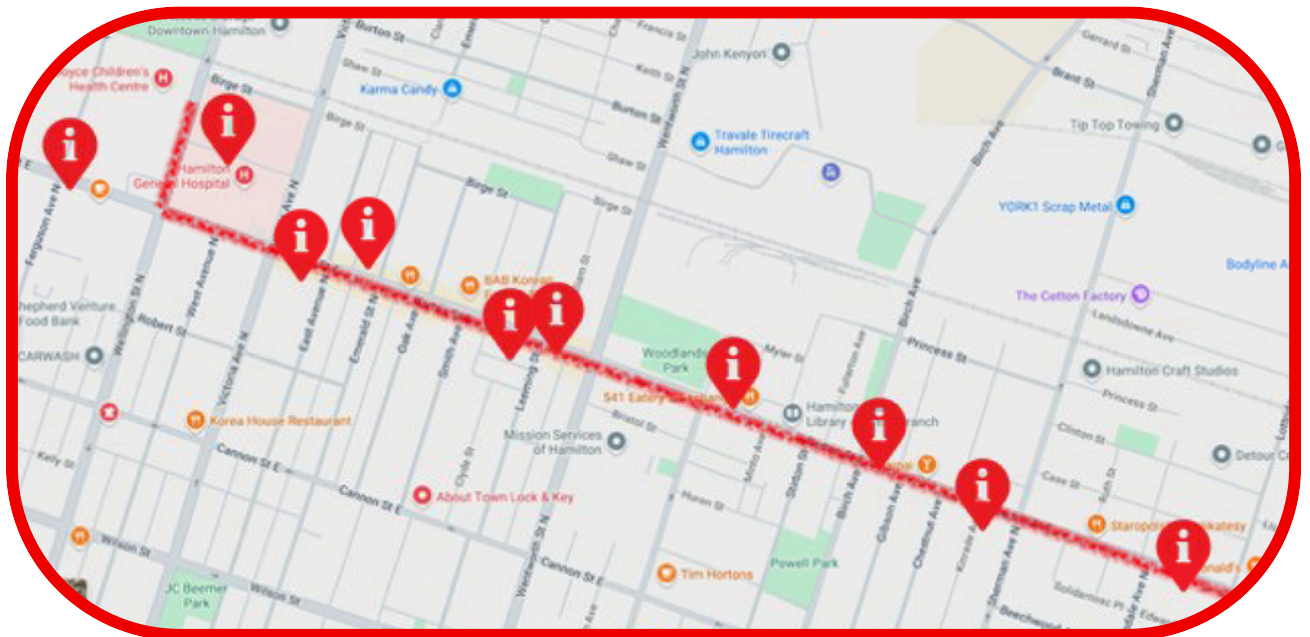
Barton Outreach

FASP was launched utilizing a Communications and Community Engagement strategy that included (I) an environmental scan, (II) an email campaign, and (III) community outreach in identified neighbourhoods.

Through the environmental scan, FASP learned that many organizations were not easily accessible to potential clients who may be eligible or able to use their services.

The e-mail campaign resulted in 50% of health and social community partners engaged to join FASP under one or more of the membership opportunities available.

In the final phase of this work, FASP staff and volunteers visited Barton Street, in particular its East corridor, a neighbourhood close to Hamilton General Hospital.





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Lessons Learned

The FASP team is privileged to have the opportunity to learn from the Hamilton community. Each interaction, meeting, and discussion has imparted valuable lessons that will be carried forward as the project advances. Here is what we have learned in 2024:

1. Relationship building is foundational to our work
2. We need to build capacity for change
3. Collaboration requires infrastructure

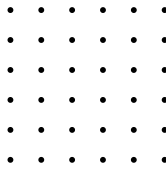
Taken by: Mirela Marceta, Oct 2024



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Relationship Building is Foundational To Our Work

Our collaboration with the advisory committee, financial assistance working group, collective, and volunteers has been invaluable. From the informal chats before our meetings to the in-depth discussions that take place during them, we have built stronger relationships that enhance collaboration and collective impact.

These interactions not only broaden our collective understanding of each of our needs, perspectives and lived experiences, but also enrich the ways that we work together and with people and communities

As we continue to engage with our partners and stakeholders, we are dedicated to nurturing these relationships, understanding that our collective impact and success is deeply anchored in mutual respect and a shared purpose.

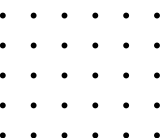


112
Connections made between Collective members



“It’s amazing seeing the Hamilton organizations joining forces to improve our community.”

Collective Member





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We Need To Build **Capacity** For Change

While we have learned of the many passionate individuals and organizations in our community doing amazing work providing services to community members in need, we have also learned that there are many challenges that remain unaddressed.

Identified Barriers to Financial Assistance

1. Funding availability & sustainability
2. Capacity to deliver financial assistance
3. Available guidance & standards in delivering financial assistance

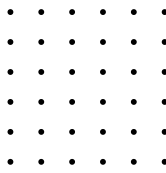
To truly foster meaningful change, it is imperative that we collaborate more effectively to support the efforts of these dedicated groups. Red Cross has committed to supporting individuals and organizational capacity by providing:

- Access to the Community Health Fund
- Networking opportunities
- Developing tools that support understanding of social prescribing concepts, implementation, and evaluation

As we move forward, we will continue listening to our partners, and the people and communities they serve, to learn what is working well, and how we can improve in pursuit of our goal.

“There is a network forming that will build capacity in our community for referrals and social prescribing.”

Collective Member



Collaboration Requires Infrastructure

Discussions with collaborators have revealed a clear need for a supportive infrastructure for community connections and referrals between health and social partners, in two distinct ways:

1. Standardized Evaluation Tools

A standardized approach to evaluation which prioritizes participatory inclusion of partners and their clients, and enables systematic learnings for outcomes, benefits and areas for improvement.

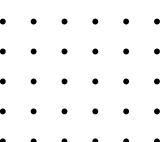
2. Data Sharing

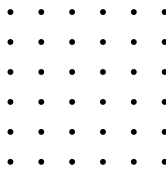
A shared platform for securely capturing, storing, accessing and updating relevant and meaningful data in real-time to help facilitate person-centered care and service.

These findings will help FASP improve and streamline communication and collective learning through a common foundation of consistent, reliable and usable data and information.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased client emotional, physical and mental wellness due to financial assistance interventions
- Increased client resilience, self efficacy, and dignity
- Increased coordination and collaboration between health and community sectors
- Health, social, and community sectors are better equipped to utilize social prescribing
- Health, social, and community sectors are better equipped to reduce the risks associated with financial assistance





Community Landscape

After reviewing the first iteration of the service inventory, Collective members shared their insights on the services they felt were missing or were inaccessible due to high wait times for services in Hamilton, Ontario. The list provided below comes from preliminary conversations held in December 2024, primarily by individuals who are providing referrals to community members, and will change as community consultations continue.

Services that are not currently available:

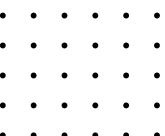
- Financial support for rent
- Financial support for pest control when housed
- Financial support for baby formula
- Financial support for caregiving (i.e. childcare, seniors)
- Financial support for trauma care and access to low barrier therapy for trauma
- Financial support for language interpretation, including therapy services available in multiple languages.
- Long-term case management
- Program and administration funding for service providers
- Social navigation
- Indigenous traditional healings and cultural programming

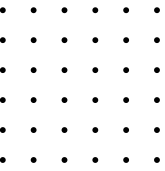
Services that are experiencing high wait times:

- Gender affirming care
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Counselling for trauma
- Housing
- Respite services
- Caregiving support
- Financial support for accessible needs
- Financial support for transportation
- Cleaning and laundry and home maintenance or improvement services
- Disordered eating support
- Hoarding disorder supports
- Youth substance supports

Populations most often encountering barriers to accessing health and community and social services:

- Youth
- Indigenous Peoples
- Incarcerated individuals or legally involved persons
- Two-Spirit LGBTQ+ senior services
- Sex workers or former sex workers
- Asylum seekers
- Worker/student visa holders
- Precariously housed individuals
- Individuals experiencing generational poverty
- Marginalized populations
- People living with disabilities
- Undocumented individuals
- The working poor
- Older people experiencing homelessness





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Looking Forward

Moving forward, the FASP project remains committed to expanding its reach and impact. With the first phase of the project well under way, we look forward to learning more from the community as we continue to implement the FASP project. In this section, we outline our plans for the next year of FASP.

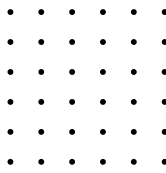




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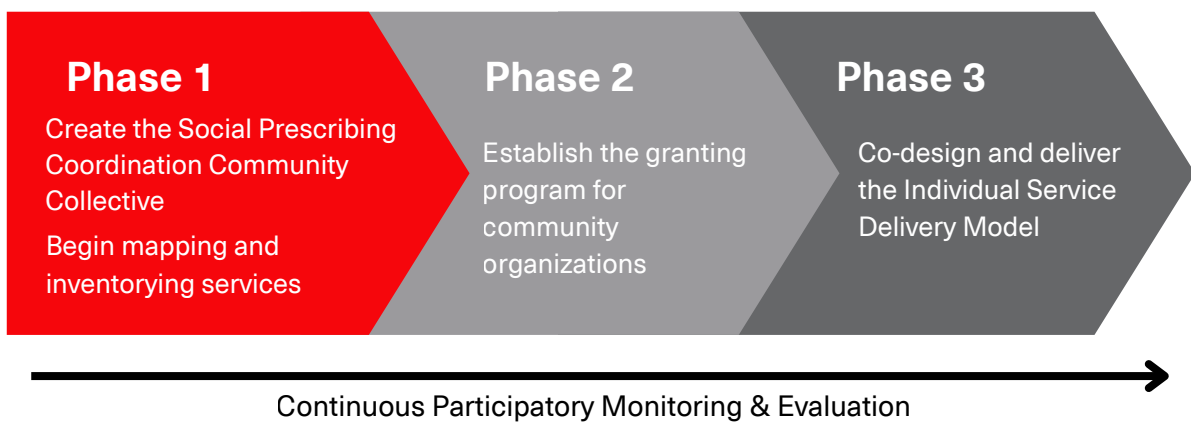
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Our Plan

The establishment and ongoing momentum seen within The Collective firmly puts the FASP project into Phase Two. In the upcoming year, we will be working toward our key milestones, including the launch of the Community Health Fund.



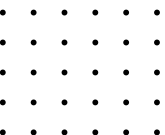
We will be taking forward the lessons from this past to year to ensure that we continue growing alongside the community. We outline some of the ways we plan to incorporate these lessons below.



Our current relationships with the GHHN and Primary Care Network have established the value of engaging physicians and healthcare workers in our discussions. We will continue to develop these relationships and find other ways to engage the healthcare sector with our community partners to foster opportunities for collaboration between community and social services with healthcare services.

Goal

More healthcare professionals understanding the value of social prescribing and greater collaborations between health, community, and social care.





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SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

From our discussions with our partners, we have identified various avenues to support community organizations. It is clear that our members are all equally eager to learn more about the community. We will respond to these needs by developing the relevant tools or finding opportunities to support the needs of our collaborators.

Goal

Development of a social prescribing toolkit and standardized evaluation tools to support our collaborators. Collective members will have access to the CHF to support their individual social prescribing services.

One need that we are committed to exploring more is using technology to improve communication between health, social and community services. We will develop relationships with additional partners and experts in the field to identify feasible tools for future investment in the community.

Goal

A better understanding of the technology needed and available to partner organizations to support the ISDM.

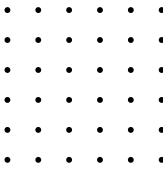
BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR COMMUNICATION



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SPRING 2025

Inaugural Community Health Fund Launch

SUMMER 2025

New Member Recruitment Launches

FASP 2025 MILESTONES

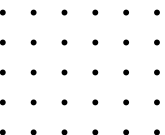
With the new year comes exciting milestones that the FASP team has been working toward. In 2025, we will be starting Phase Two, which includes the launch of the Community Health Fund. We will also be preparing for Phase Three by using the lessons learned from the community to develop a plan to provide financial assistance directly to individuals. While continuing to create new opportunities, we will also be learning and iterating our existing work to better improve our reach and impact.

FALL 2025

Individual Service Delivery Model

WINTER 2025

Applications Open for the Canadian Red Cross Community Health Fund





Get Involved

Help pilot this initiative with your insights, leadership and strategic connections

Join the Advisory Committee

Provide social prescribing, or would like to, within Municipal wards 2,3, and 4 in Hamilton, Ontario?

Join the Collective

Share your passion and time to help illustrate a new path for financial assistance

Join the Financial Assistance Working Group

Support with your time, passion and skills and help the community develop resources for those receiving social prescribing services.

Join the Volunteer Team

Contact Us

for more information, partnership opportunities or how you can support

E: mirela.marceta@redcross.ca