



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne

Greater
Hamilton
Health
Network



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT 2023

Social Prescribing in Hamilton





Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



Greater
Hamilton
Health
Network

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEAN TO US?

Community involvement is at the heart of our mission and guides every step we take. The Canadian Red Cross is all about working with community members to make local solutions. Simultaneously, the Greater Hamilton Health Network is on a mission to craft a healthcare system that puts patients first and is tailor-made for the Hamilton community.

The concept of social prescribing revolves around a simple yet profound question:

“What matters to you?”

In this report, we share the key activities we’ve completed through **890+** hours of conversation and learning. We’re committed to understanding what truly matters to the community of Hamilton.

In 2023, we had...

150+

hours of stakeholder
consultation

500+

hours of student and
volunteer support

240+

visits to EngageGHHN

...and much more!



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



Our co-design partner, the **Greater Hamilton Health Network (GHHN)** is one of the few 'mature' Ontario Health Teams in the province. The Greater Hamilton Health Network is one of 58 Ontario Health Teams across the province to transform healthcare in partnership with patients, families, care partners, primary care, local organizations and the community. The Greater Hamilton Health Network is a collaboration of local patients, families, care partners, and health and human service partners. The GHHN includes representation from more than 40 organizations, reflecting primary care, home care, hospitals, community agencies, long-term care, mental health, Indigenous health, post-secondary education, and the City of Hamilton (Healthy and Safe Communities Department, Public Health and Paramedic Services).

30+

meetings over the past 8
months

400+

connections to health care
professionals in their
network

140+

primary care services
mapped in Hamilton



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne

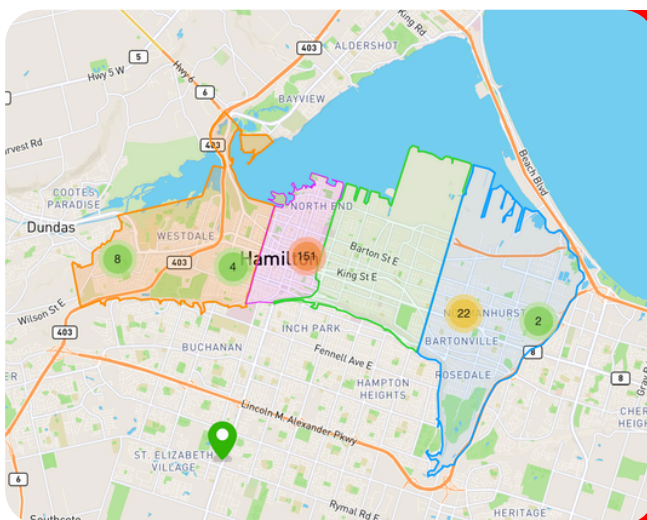
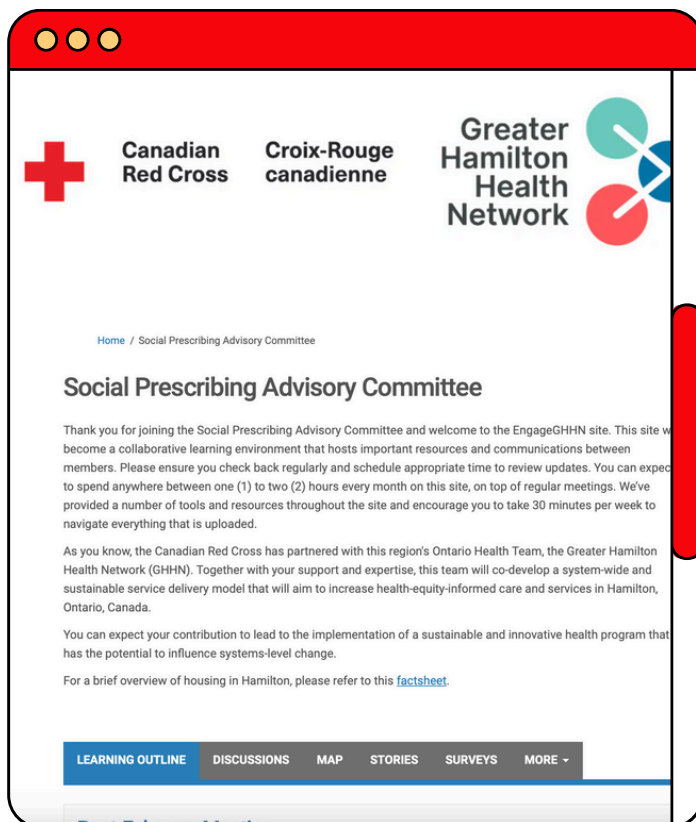


ENGAGEGHHN

Owned by the Greater Hamilton Health Network, EngageGHHN is an online platform used for patient engagement.

To support our work, we created a private page for our Advisory Committee. We used this platform as a place where resources were shared, and discussion boards were available for members.

One of the features of this platform allowed for individuals to place pins on a map, which was used by the CRC team to visualize social, community, and health services in wards 1-4.



The CRC team
identified and
mapped

180+

community and social
services in Hamilton.



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee (AC) is a group of passionate, committed, and knowledgeable experts that have shared their time with us to help us understand the different needs of the community and organizations in Hamilton.

The committee is assembled of 15 selected leaders, each with their own expertise in different fields, including Hamilton based community organizations, social prescribing practice, academia, and health care systems. We had representation from several Hamilton organizations, including:

- McMaster Family Health Team
- Wesley Services
- CityHamilton Housing
- Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction
- YMCA HBB
- Home and Community Care Services
- City of Hamilton

and more...

Over the development of the implementation plan, the Advisory Committee helped advise the CRC team during key decision points, including identifying a population of interest, service delivery models, and community engagement.

See our advisory committee handbook here

CLICK HERE 



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



Brent Essau

Brent Esau (he/him) is Chief Operating Officer for Compass Community Health in Hamilton, ON. Brent oversees clinical services as well as community/social support programs and has a strong understanding of the impact that social supports can have on the health and well-being of clients and communities. Brent looks forward to building a stronger network across Hamilton to increase opportunities for clients to access income and social supports to improve their health outcomes.



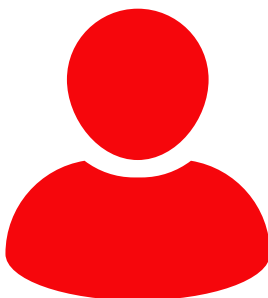
Gary Bloch

Gary Bloch (he/him) MD CCFP, is a family physician at St. Michael's Hospital and Inner City Health Associates in Toronto, with specific expertise in social interventions and equity in primary care, including social prescribing. His work is nationally and internationally recognized. For over 20 years, Dr. Bloch has engaged in social interventions program development, education, research, and advocacy. He is recognized as an expert on the link between poverty and health. Dr. Bloch looks forward to developing a novel, community-focused intervention with income supports, grounded in trauma-informed, culturally safe, and anti-oppressive approaches to care.



Genevieve Hladysh

Genevieve Hladysh (she/her), B.Kin, MAL (Health), CHE is the Senior Regional Manager at the YMCA and provides leadership to five YMCA Centres of Community in the Hamilton, Burlington and Brantford regions. Genevieve developed the LiveWell community health model in partnership with Hamilton Health Sciences and McMaster University and brings a wealth of knowledge that has already informed best practice recommendations nationwide. She is an Assistant Clinical Professor (Adjunct) at McMaster University and has certifications in design thinking and organizational systems. Genevieve looks forward to influencing policy and funding to bridge the gap between clinical and social care through community-based solutions and partnerships from various sectors.



Gillian McLaughlin

Gillian McLaughlin (she/her) is Manager of Tenant Supports for CityHousing Hamilton where she and a network of support work front-line to create hubs for wellness and health across the City. Navigating a health care system that is no longer accessible, Gillian and her team link people living in precarity with resources through persistent attempts to cut down as many barriers as possible. Gillian looks forward to an easier to navigate system someday where medical professionals also have a stronger understanding and relationship with the people they serve.



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



Gina Gentili

Gina Gentili (she/her) is an Intellectual Property Lawyer with a passion for social justice and improving healthcare. Gina is currently advancing her education on Racial Disparities in Health Care at Harvard. Gina was born and raised in Hamilton, ON and later moved to Toronto and met her husband, a world-renowned brain cancer surgeon who would later pass from the same ailment as many of his patients. Throughout this experience, Gina realized the many gaps in information throughout health care that patients and caregivers face every day and ultimately wrote a booklet on resources for caregivers and patients called the Caregiver Guide. The Guide is translated in Spanish and soon Italian. Gina will be present this resource for patients and physicians at two Hospitals in Italy in 2024, including the Gemmelli Hospital Rome. Gina is a philanthropist and has experience leading boards including Integra, Meta Centre, and UforChange. Gina looks forward to ensuring an individual's right to receive the healthcare they deserve.



Helen Harris

Helen Harris (she/her), RSW, has over 15+ years of experience within the Hospital health care setting. Helen brings in-depth knowledge related to complex medical and mental health needs, poverty, community services for individuals with mental health and addictions, and home and community care support services. Helen acknowledges that those living in precarity, especially those experiencing homelessness, will age more rapidly and need more services to support their physical health at an earlier age. Helen looks forward to helping those most marginalized so that they are able to thrive in community.



Jean-Jacques Somwe

Jean-Jacques Somwe (he/him), has a Master's in Public Health and works with the Black Community Leaders Forum of Hamilton and Communauté Congolaise de Hamilton. Jean-Jacques has supported over 5,000 Congolese newcomers to Canada and looks forward to sharing his experience with the lack of language interpreters in health care for newcomers to access correct services. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Jean-Jacques provided expertise to the Canadian Red Cross in Manitoba as public health specialist, and additionally acted as Advisory member for the City of Hamilton launching the vaccine ambassador program for marginalized communities.



Jodi Dean

Jodi Dean (she/her) shares her lived experience navigating healthcare in Hamilton, ON as someone who currently is living in poverty. Jodi is a community navigator and acknowledges the lack of communication for services available to those in need. Jodi is often found ensuring everyone around her has access to as much information and resources as possible. Jodi is currently pursuing her Social Service Worker certificate from Mohawk College and has a passion for advocating for income supports and has spoken about the effects that basic income, subsidized day care, and payday loans has had on her and within her network. Jodi looks forward to helping those who are in a dark place, like she once was, and ensuring they know they have someone fighting for their rights.



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



Kim Ritchie

Kim Ritchie (she/her), BSW, RSW, is a person with lived experiences with homelessness, substance use, sexual exploitation, and criminalization. After many years of living on the margins of our society, she has become an advocate for harm reduction and trauma-informed practice. Kim feels strongly that these revolutionary theoretical approaches help us to navigate the complexities of our humanity. Kim is also a graduate of McMaster University Bachelor of Social Work program. Her career has focused on frontline and leadership roles engineering programs such as: novel harm reduction programs, peer-based programs, and working in residential settings for women and gender-diverse folks experiencing a lack of housing, gender-based violence, poor mental health, and substance dependency challenges. Kim often engages in public speaking and facilitates organizational training on these topics to initiate change and raise awareness.



Kristyn Bruce

Kristyn Bruce (she/her), RSSW, is Director, Housing and Outreach for Wesley in Hamilton, ON. Wesley provides services to those living in precarity including supportive housing units, harm reduction transitional programs, rapid intervention support team and operates a Housing First program working with individuals from the City of Hamilton's By Name List. Kristyn has worked in housing services for 20 years in various regions and has experience in program development and understanding how systems can collaborate for change. Kristyn looks forward to collaborating with health care and social services to develop an action plan and pathways that support better health outcomes of those most vulnerable.



Laura Cattari

Laura Cattari (she/her) is a Senior Policy Analyst for the Roundtable for Poverty Reduction in Hamilton, ON specializing in income security, affordable housing, and human rights issues, especially concerning the intersection of disability and poverty. Laura identifies as a person with a disability and someone who has experienced homelessness and poverty in her lifetime. Laura looks forward to utilizing social prescribing to reduce isolation for community members and helping shape something that brings some stability to people's lives.



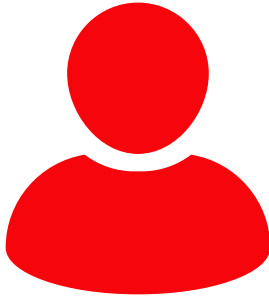
Mary Elizabeth Atkins

Mary Elizabeth Atkins (she/her), RPN, is Director of Home Care for Bayshore Home Care Solutions. Mary Elizabeth advocates for holistic care and for transparency amongst information shared with patients trying to navigate a disconnected system. Mary Elizabeth looks forward to finding a solution that offers immediate support to those in need and one that reduces referrals to incorrect or lengthy services that patients may not need. Mary Elizabeth always ensures a patient receives "real" care that shares what supports are available and also the boundaries and restrictions that come with navigating certain supports.



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



Terry Ramirez

Terry Ramirez (she/her) has been involved within Health Care for 30 years with a focus on Indigenous healthcare. Terry recognizes the need to build a more inclusive community and looking at health in a holistic way where individuals are connected to community. Terry acknowledges there is a lot of work to be done in order for an entire community to understand its needs and how everyone can be included.



Tom Cooper

Tom Cooper (he/him) is Director of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and has helped coordinate Hamilton's poverty-reduction advocacy for the past decade. Tom is co-founder of the Ontario Living Wage Network and Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters. Tom brings a deep understanding of income security, food security and housing challenges faced by low-income community members and has connected people with lived experience of poverty through collaborative partnerships with governments, non-profits, and many other communities.



Tracey Carr

Tracey Carr (she/her), RN, BScN, MBA, is a health professional and leadership member of the McMaster Department of Family Medicine and academic Family Health Team. Tracey has experience in establishing new province-wide programs, creating and sustaining collaborative and multi-institutional governance structures and providing leadership in primary care systems thinking and digital health. Tracey looks forward to establishing a social prescribing infrastructure that will lead to building strong relationships between primary care clinic and link workers.



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



Over the past six months, the Advisory Committee met individually and as a group, totaling over **60+** hours of discussion together. Meetings were held monthly, with additional opportunities for discussion available through our online engagement platform, EngageGHHN, and 1:1 discussions.

Meeting	Purpose
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduced the concept of social prescribing for income to the Hamilton communityRecruited volunteers, advisory committee members, and community organization partners
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduced the AC to EngageGHHNParticipated in Advisory Committee orientation and agreed to the Equitable Engagement Agreement
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provided opportunity to the AC to meet and learn from each otherFacilitated discussions to reach consensusSet boundaries and key termsIdentified population of interest using population information sheets
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Shared target population with ACDiscussed point of entryShared revised numbers on ODSP/OW dataDiscussed planned community engagement activities
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revisited population of interest
Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewed the proposed concept
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Answered questions about the proposed service coordination hub phased approachDiscussed next steps for the AC, including development of an implementation AC and working groups



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne

Greater
Hamilton
Health
Network



OCTOBER ADVISORY MEETING

October 23, 2023 was our first all-day Advisory Committee meeting, where members met in person to learn more about each other, Hamilton, and social prescribing.





Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



HERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT WE HEARD....

I do believe SP is happening in Hamilton to a degree in ad hoc ways, but access to it is not equitable nor do I know if it is reaching those who most need it. The system to support SP is critical, including clear entry points and ease of those at the entry points to refer people to Link Worker; continuity of Link Worker with person accessing SP; strong collaboration between Link Worker(s) and supports/services relevant to a given situation; relationships and resources necessary to address structural or systemic challenges; feedback loop to health care providers, community decision-makers or others at a macro level (e.g. x people experiencing this challenge have encountered [insert] barriers) to facilitate system-level interventions concurrent with individual SP experiences.

Everyone is so passionate and committed! I am uber excited to learn and work with everyone.

Everyone understands that there are gaps in the system and want to collaborate to make a difference. I also felt that people generally wanted to see this help go to the most vulnerable residents of Hamilton.

I really like what you've arrived at. There were no complaints/red flags presented by the Advisory Committee and that to me is a win. You are all doing great work and I'm really happy with the leadership of this committee

The project is positioned to be equitable and just. Strategic partnerships will solidify project longevity.



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

One of the key goals in social prescribing is to bridge the health and social sector together. Therefore, we made extensive efforts to engage with primary care providers to understand the unique barriers they face when serving their patients. Through these conversations, we've learned a lot about the hardships that our health care professionals are experiencing, including limited resources, overwork, and burn out. As we move forward, we look to collaborate with our health care partners to create a sustainable and equitable service that makes everyone healthier and happier.

"My theory is that one thing that makes all of our service fall apart is how many different players and modes of communication there are in order to get one or two important things done. If having a navigator (or many navigators) makes this even more people and more layers then we have made things worse not better."

Physician, Shelter Health Network



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



ACADEMIC COLLABORATIONS

McMaster University has a long history within Hamilton, with students coming from all over the world. We believe in the potential of students, and sought opportunities to have students become more engaged in the community through various avenues. With each interaction, the CRC staff was able to learn some key lessons from students.

PRACTICUM STUDENT

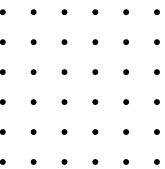
From September to December 2023, the CRC team welcomed a part-time practicum student from the Master of Public Health program at McMaster University. The practicum student assisted in development of resources and materials that were shared with the Advisory Committee. In addition to providing support to the team, an environmental scan of social prescribing and income supports was conducted.

KEY LEARNINGS

Found seven programs that resembled social prescribing with a focus on income. Key themes found across these programs were:

- Initial goal to enhance health equity
- Mediated by primary care physicians
- Services mostly supported applications for government social assistance programs

CLICK HERE 
For the full report



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



MCMMASTER RESEARCH SHOP

The **McMaster Research Shop** is a free service provided by McMaster University to aid local community organizations in conducting research to inform decision making. Each project is supported by student volunteers with experience in research. The McMaster Research Shop was asked with conducting a scoping review to identify key indicators used in similar projects. They were engaged in July 2023 and completed their report in September 2023. The volunteer team was supported by CRC staff through regular check-ins, where questions could be answered, and further details would be shared. CRC staff invited content experts to speak with the volunteer team to provide more insight into social prescribing itself, which was a novel concept to the volunteer team.

Future collaboration opportunities have been discussed with the Research Shop as implementation begins, including using their services for primary data collection (surveys, interviews) and geospatial mapping.

KEY LEARNINGS

A total of 31 different tools were identified to measure key indicators such as:

- reduction in poverty
- improved housing circumstances
- general well-being
- self-awareness of mental health
- self determination

These tools were selected based on their accessibility and validity, as well as which populations that the tool has been validated for. Several of the tools were also validated in various languages.

CLICK HERE 
for the full report



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne

Greater
Hamilton
Health
Network



MCMASTER PUBLIC HEALTH COURSE

As part of their final capstone course, the **Master of Public Health** students often collaborate with a local community organization to address a specific health concern. This year, CRC and McMaster collaborated to provide an opportunity for students to learn about local issues. The students were tasked to conduct rapid evidence syntheses on topics proposed by CRC staff. To support the students' learning, CRC staff came onto the McMaster campus to provide a one-hour lecture on the project and an introduction to social prescribing. Throughout the three month project, CRC staff had several online drop-in sessions, and were available via email to support students.

KEY LEARNINGS

Barriers to implementing income support programs

- Lengthy application processes
- Overly restrictive and stigmatizing eligibility criteria
- Insufficient funds available

Facilitators to implementing income support programs

- Sustainable funding sources
- Intersectoral collaboration between health and social sectors

Recommendations

- Develop a task force to oversee the distribution of funds and provide support throughout the process of obtaining and distributing income supports
- Invest in a Medical-Financial Partnership (MFP) model to link healthcare and financial services where healthcare providers act as referrers connecting patients to income related social services

CLICK HERE 
to learn more



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



LEARNING MEETINGS

The CRC team sought out experts within and beyond Hamilton to learn more about the amazing work being done, and to take away lessons learned to apply to our work.

50+

meetings over the past 8
months

30+

hours of conversations with
leaders in their field

Thank you to the amazing people who shared their time with us...

Amber Dice
Andrew Matthews
Dr. Andrew Pinto
Beth Mansell
Christine Meyer
Claire Williams
Dan Edwards
Dr. Emma Apatu
Evan Gravely
Heather Shaw
Jen Gammad

Jennifer Mills Beaton
Jennifer Mackey
Dr. Jiaying Zhao
John McKay
John Stapleton
Julia Hamill
Dr. Kate Mulligan
Katrine Raymond
Dr. Kerry Beal
Kienan Williams
Le-Tien Bhaskar

Listenology Inc.
Maggie MacNeil
Marijke Jurriaans
Mary Modayil
Megan Lynch
Melissa McCallum
Rachel Kott
Renee Wetselaar
Ruby Ganann
Ruthanne Talbot
Safiya Clarke Mendes

Sana Mohammad
Sarah Precious
Shane Johnston
Shawna McGhan
Shawna Mutton
Sonia Hsiung
Councillor Tammy Hwang
Victoria Bui
Vivien Underdown
...and more



Canadian
Red Cross

Croix-Rouge
canadienne



WHAT WILL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE MOVING FORWARD?

As we move forward to implementation, community engagement will continue to be the foundation of our work.

Volunteering

Key activities that our volunteers will conduct will be to lead discussions with service providers in Hamilton and to foster relationships with others in the community.

Advisory Committee

Leadership by the Advisory Committee was so impactful during the planning process and has led us to the work that we are doing today. In recognition of the vital role of an advisory committee created of community leaders, we will establish a new advisory committee that will support in the implementation of this work.

Working Groups

Working groups will be formed to inform key decisions and inform our community-led approach.

Continued Collaboration with Academic Institutions

Data, evaluation, and evidence are key to informing systems-level change. Therefore, continued engagement with students and researchers from Academic Institutions continue to be important to us.

Together, we can create positive change and support the well-being of all residents in our vibrant and diverse community.