



Halton-Peel Community
APHASIA PROGRAMS

March 1, 2016 Press Release: Funded Aphasia Program Pilot Project Approved for Mississauga Halton

The Halton-Peel Community Aphasia Programs are pleased to announce that the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) has provided funding for a one-year pilot project to look at expansion of services for people living with acquired communication disorders in the Mississauga, Milton and Oakville areas.

In collaboration with community partners, conversation groups will be established to serve clients with acquired communication disorders who want to improve their communication. Community partners supporting the aphasia programs by advocating for the program's importance, providing space for the groups, and/or providing client referrals include:

- Community Living North Halton
- Corporation of the City of Mississauga – Next Step to Active Living
- Halton Healthcare
- Halton Region Community Support Services
- Harmonize4Speech
- Heart & Stroke Foundation
- March of Dimes Canada
- Milton Stroke Survivors Support Group
- Mississauga Halton Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)
- Monarch House, a division of CBI Health Group
- Oakville Stokers
- Peel-Halton Dufferin Acquired Brain Injury Services (PHDBAIS)
- Seniors Life Enhancement Centres (SLEC)
- Trillium Health Partners
- West GTA Stroke Network

The Halton Aphasia Centre, operating as the Halton-Peel Community Aphasia Programs, began serving clients in Burlington Ontario in 1984. In collaboration with the Central West LHIN, the program expanded into Brampton in 2014. Group therapy sessions are facilitated by a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) and Communicative Disorders Assistants (CDAs) contracted through Monarch House Oakville, a division of CBI Health Group. The new Mississauga Halton LHIN aphasia programs also include Registered Social Worker support. Together, the aphasia program and Monarch House continue to advocate for people with aphasia and are working to expand aphasia awareness in Southern Ontario.



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"We are thrilled to be expanding our services" said Brittany Clark, the program's clinical lead and Speech-Language Pathologist. "Our goal is to enhance the communication skills and quality of life for people living with aphasia. Our services take into account the clients' perspective and current communication needs, and our programming is designed to reflect the unique goals, wants and abilities of our clients."

Aphasia is an acquired communication disorder that affects over 120,000 Canadians (Rose & Attard, 2015) and over 1 in 3 stroke survivors (Dickey et al., 2010). Following a stroke, brain injury or brain illness, adults with aphasia unexpectedly find themselves unable to or limited in their ability to express their wants, needs, thoughts, and feelings. Aphasia may cause difficulty with speaking, understanding spoken or written language, reading and/or writing, but does not affect intelligence.

As aphasia is rarely understood by people in the community, this disorder can cause individuals to withdraw from communicating with friends and family members. In a recent study, aphasia exhibited the largest negative relationship to Quality of Life in Long Term Care centres in Ontario, followed by cancer and Alzheimer's disease (Lam & Wodchis, 2010).

Scott Richardson, an aphasia group member since September 2015, expressed his enthusiasm for the opening of the new groups: "The Halton-Peel Aphasia group is a safe place to practice my communication skills, talking and writing. I'm encouraged to practice my oral and writing skills and the instructors/facilitators give me real-time feedback. It is a diverse group of members, who have amazing stories about their families and careers. The program is supported by dedicated "outstanding" volunteers who are trained to deal with aphasia and encourage each member to strive to their individual goals."

Resources, ideas and information are shared among program sites, community partners, and with other Speech-Language Pathologists in the Ontario Aphasia Centres Interest Group to continually enhance the aphasia programs and practice. For more information about program locations, dates and times, please visit www.h-pcap.com.

Dayna O'Kelly, H-PCAP Board of Directors President