



Afghan Women's Organization

Annual Report

2011-2012

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is a pleasure to submit the Afghan Women's Organization's Annual Report for 2011-2012. This report describes the progress our organization has made in meeting our goals and objectives for 2011-2012. Similar to last year, we were faced with financial strain and increasing demand for services. Despite these difficult times, we are pleased to report that we met our goals. Our programs and initiatives are making a positive difference in the lives of refugees and newcomers who have made Canada their home. This positive difference could not have been made without the contribution of our hard working board members, managers, staff and volunteers.

In 2011-2012 we exceeded the majority of our measure targets. For example, we had an increase in the number of our clients and volunteers. We were also successful in creating partnerships with other community organizations.

Our successes were not without challenges. Our organization faced financial strain due to budget cuts by our funders. However, financially we were able to deliver our programs within our reduced total budget. We made new alliances with other organizations and initiated steps to diversify our resources.

We look forward to working with our partners to build on these achievements in the year ahead. We will continue to make new partnerships and expand our resources and focus on working as efficiently as possible to maximize the resources we have.

We sincerely appreciate the leadership of our Board of Directors and Managers. Together we pledge to continue our mission to improve the quality of life of refugees and immigrants, and those who have experienced wars and persecution, with a special focus on women and their families. We seek to improve their social and economic inclusion in order to enable them to become contributing members of society and to live in dignity.

Asma Faizi, President

Adeena Niazi, Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

During the last 22 years, AWO staff and volunteers have worked hard at building a reputation of professionalism, courtesy, and enthusiasm in their program and service delivery. AWO's excellent track record for effectively identifying and addressing the needs and concerns of our clients is due to our staff's conscientious and diligent approach toward the provision of our services.

Currently, AWO's various projects and programs are assisting hundreds of immigrants and refugees immigrate to Canada; helping ease the settlement process for many new immigrants in Ontario; providing resources to find employment and training opportunities; offering psychological support; and creating individual and group counselling for families, seniors and youth.

We have also partnered with various non-governmental organizations over the years to provide the proper facilities, resources, information, and experience for our clients.

MISSION

AWO works with refugees, immigrants and those who have experienced wars and persecution, with a special focus on women. Its mission is to improve their quality of life and to promote their social and economic inclusion in order to enable them to become contributing members of society and to live in dignity.



VISION

Immigrants and refugees, as well as those who have experienced wars and persecution, are leading self-sufficient and dignified lives in a socially inclusive society.

VALUES

Access and equity; dignity and respect; social inclusion; and collaboration



SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement Programs – Welcoming Community and Newcomer Support Program (NSP) are providing services for newcomers to Canada to settle properly and integrate smoothly into Canadian society.

Our Counsellors provide direct settlement services to newcomers depending on each client's specific needs. Whether one-on-one or in a group setting, the focus is on needs assessments, referral to community services, information and orientation, interpretation, translation and solution-focused counselling. When appropriate, clients' family members are directed to AWO's other programs.

Serving clients in all 4 different locations has been an improvement for our organization as we are now able to serve clients one-on-one at a location convenient to them. We also provide itinerant services through partnership with other organizations. We have been an active member of different Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) such as Eglinton East and Kennedy Park, Don Valley, & Victoria Village to develop and organize programs and sessions for our target groups.

Majority of our clients are Afghan, Iranian, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pakistani and Middle Eastern women, youth and seniors receiving settlement services in a culturally-competent and linguistically-appropriate manner.

Among our greatest successes this year has been our Positive Parenting and Citizenship sessions. The workshops are very popular and are often overcrowded. The Citizenship sessions assist clients in getting ready for their Canadian citizenship test and cover topics such as the history of Canada, geographical characteristics, rights and responsibilities of citizenship in addition to the political, economic and social systems in Canada. Based on clients' high demand, a series of positive parenting sessions were held throughout the year covering topics such as the different phases of parenting, connecting parents and kids, the Canadian school system, the importance of healthy relationships, the power of positive thinking, communication in parenting, and so on. We have a great feedback from participants.



SETTLEMENT SERVICES

We have successfully served over 15,000 clients this past year, well-exceeding our target numbers.

Number of SETTLEMENT Clients Served between April 2011 to March 2012	
Total Number of N. New Clients	589
Total Number of New Clients	711
Total Number of Returning Clients	13629
Total Number of Previous Clients	709
Total Number of Services	59495

Many information sessions are offered to clients on a monthly basis targeting different groups (seniors, youth, women) and their specific needs. The purpose of these sessions is to provide information to large groups at one time and also to generate ideas and discussion in a safe and welcoming environment.

Some workshops for Seniors include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthritis • Better life for senior • Better life in Canada • Breast Cancer • Chiropractic sessions • Coping with stress of living in a new country • Dental Hygiene • Denture clinic • Depression • Diabetes • Disability equipment • Elder abuse • Fall Safety • Healthy Cooking • Healthy Environment • Healthy Feet • Healthy Habits • Healthy lifestyles • Herbal medicine • Information session on ear problems • Menopause • Mobile Clinic (Uterus Cancer) • Skin care • Social Activities

Some workshops for Youth include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Barriers to re-settlement for newcomers • Canadian Law • Civic Engagement (11 sessions) • Communication • Computer & Math Club (6 sessions) • Documentary Movie • Drug Abuse/Drug Addiction (3 sessions) • Family Reunification and adaptation to new environment • Field trip to Court house • Financial Management/Banking • Gender equalities • Healthy Cooking (quick snack recipes)/Healthy Eating • Importance of education in knowledge- based Economy • Movie night and group discussion on the movie • New Year In Canada and Afghanistan • Nutrition • Parent and Youth Conflict • Personality traits • Physical Activity /Yoga • Resettlement in Canada • Resume Writing • Self esteem • Settlement related Stress Management (6 sessions) • Skills development Leadership (5 sessions) • Vision health • Volunteerism • Youth and Peer Pressure • Youth Drop In Session (12 sessions) • Youth New Year potluck

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Workshops for Families and all newcomers

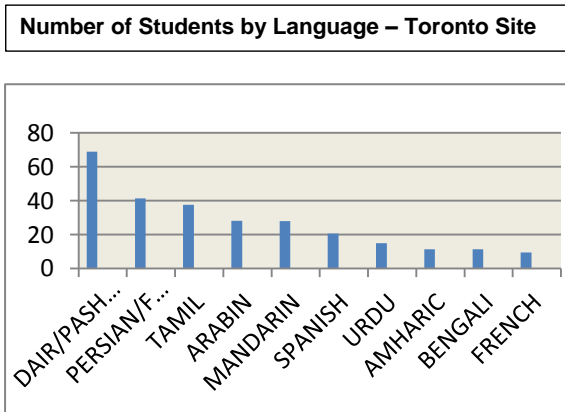
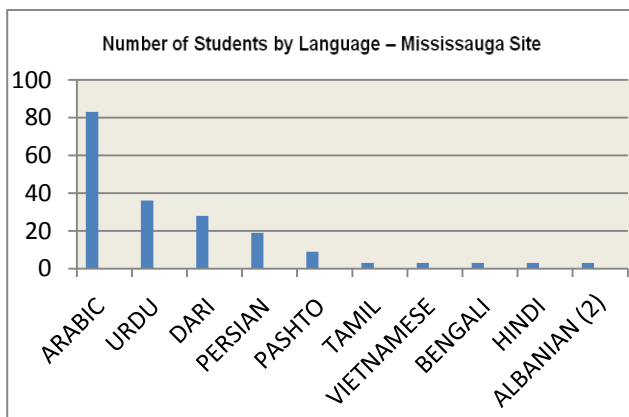
- Banking System in Canada
- Better Money Management
- Birch mount Bluff community bridge – newcomers
- Canadian Law & Regulations – rights and responsibilities
- Child care subsidy
- Child Tax Benefit
- Children Aid (How to become a foster parent)
- Children Aid Society
- Citizenship class (24 sessions)
- Culture Shock Translation in Urdu
- Diabetes prevention
- Domestic Violence and effect on Children
- Education
- Employment
- Family Nutrition
- Health / Health System in Ontario
- Healthy eating, how to read labels (Calories count)
- Healthy life Style with chronic condition
- High-rise Building safety (Fire Department)
- Housing
- IFH/OHIP
- Immigration Law Workshop Translation in Dari
- Immigration Law Workshop Translation in Urdu
- Leadership Skills
- LINC/ESL
- Mental Health and Newcomer Women
- Positive Parenting (12 sessions)
- Positive Parenting (8 sessions)
- Positive Parenting Translation in Arabic
- Positive Parenting Translation in Urdu
- Preschooler Nutrition
- Recreational and Community Information
- Self management with Chronic Condition
- Settlement related Stress Management
- Settlement Stress Management
- Shopping/Finace
- Social Insurance Number
- Toronto Housing connection
- Transportation & TTC
- TTC
- Women Health (5 sessions)



LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) provides English language training for newcomers at varying levels of proficiency in both part-time and full-time classes. LINC assists newcomers to acquire the English language skills necessary for effective integration. The goal of the LINC program is to provide basic communication and life skills that are crucial for individuals to develop into productive, independent and active members in their new communities.

AWO offers six full-time and thirteen part-time classes in three different locations. This past year, a total of 759 students participated in the LINC program from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The charts below illustrate the most predominant language groups served in both the Mississauga and Toronto locations.



LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

As a large focus of our English classes is to immerse our students into Canadian culture, LINC students have been fortunate to hear from experts in various fields and to participate in many school trips this past year. Below is the list of guest speakers and trips enjoyed by the students this past year

Guest Speakers

- Peer Nutritionist: Public Health
- Breast Health :Public Health
- Rent & Housing Control: Toronto Tenant Association
- Diabetes: Flemingdon Health Centre, South Asian
- Diabetes Prevention Program (three Clinics).
- Tuberculosis (TB): Public Health
- Taxes: Canada Revenue Agency
- Fire Prevention: Toronto Fire Services
- Assault: Toronto Police Services
- Volunteerism: Volunteer Toronto
- Garbage/Recycling : City of Toronto
- Colon Cancer: Public Health
- Banking: TD /Royal bank
- Water: City of Toronto
- Sun Safety: Public Health
- Registered Nutritionist - The Canada Food Guide
- Citizenship Judge - Mississauga CIC
- A police officer and firefighter - services

LINC Excursions from all Sites

- Black Creek Pioneer Village
- Maple Sugar Bush
- Ontario Science Centre
- Bata Shoe Museum
- Art Gallery of Ontario
- Casa Loma
- Eaton Centre
- War Memorial
- Edwards Garden
- Apple Picking
- Public Libraries
- Super Markets
- Samanak Event- Pearson Convention Centre;
- Centre Island
- Peel Language Partnership Picnic
- Strawberry picking
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Hamilton Children's Museum
- Ontario Science Center
- Bronte Creek Sugar Bush



JOB SEARCH WORKSHOPS (JSW)

Our Job Search Workshop program is open to all newcomers who are looking for work and may need extra support and resources. We offer two Modules: Module one (Occupation Blue Print), 5-days and Module 2 (Job Search), 4 days. To serve the community better, AWO offers day time, evening and weekend workshops at two convenient locations

AWO commenced a new JSW curriculum at the end of April 2011. We offered 24 workshops that included 13 Module I and 11 Module II workshops. The total number of clients assisted by the JSW program exceeded 192 newcomers. 73 clients attended Module I and 64 attended Module II, while 61 clients attended both module I and II. Clients were referred to other employment services. These included employment Ontario, Bridging, ELT programs, employment agencies, training and educational institutions to upgrade their educations and employability skills. More than 30 clients secured non career related jobs and 3 clients found career related employment after attending the program.

In Module I, clients learn the Canadian company perspective of employment as well as describe their own work experience within a Canadian context. They also learn to analyze their professional skills to a minimum of one Canadian occupation and create a list of networking contacts, and plan their next step in their own job search process. In Module II clients learn about job search strategies, target resume and cover letter writing, interviewing techniques, labour market trends, strategies to tap the hidden job market, cold calling and networking, to overcome the barrier of 'no Canadian work experience'.

All eligible clients receive the three mandatory components of the JSW program: Assessment, Action Plan and Follow Up, but only suitable clients are accepted into JSW Module I or II program

Clients have access to one-on-one counselling, assistance to develop an employment action plan, work experience placements, and referrals to job development. They also have access to the Internet, computers, telephones, and fax machine for job search purposes.



YOUTH PROGRAM

As every year AWO's youth program maintained its goals by providing various services to meet the specific needs of youth GTA wide. We have empowered them with skills and supported them in different areas of their lives. Our youth program includes; settlement services as well as mentorship and civic engagement programs. We have provided supportive solution focused counselling to newcomer youth to reduce the level of social isolation and to assist them integrate in to Canadian society by participating in the wider community programs. During our once a week drop-in sessions we have provided number of skill development workshops which has assisted youth in building leadership, public speaking skills and programs to bring awareness about Canadian culture and society. We have also worked closely with TDSB, and have been able to provide number of conflict resolution and skill development workshops for Afghan youth at schools, we have been working on once a week bases with Greenwood Secondary school.

Furthermore, we have served a number of at risk youth; we have provided solution focused counselling, assistance with court issues, interpretation, and referral to lawyers. Moreover, we offered a ten week course named "Aggression Replacement Training" served as a valuable tool in conflict mediation for our at risk youth.



We have also served as a member on "EE/KP Youth Service Network" and "Neighbourhood Action Plan" for Eglinton East and Kennedy Park priority neighbourhood and "Youth Service Network" for Felmington Park, Victoria Village and Throncliffe Park priority neighbourhoods. With collaboration of youth serving agencies we have planned different programs for youth in the priority neighbourhoods.

In addition, we also took clients on field trips to Ontario Science Centre, court house, and city hall to promote civic participation. In collaboration with Ontario Justice Education Network we have organized third series of "Mock Trial" which helped youth learn about Canadian law and career as a lawyer.

YOUTH PROGRAM

Moreover, through the mentorship program we were able to match newcomer youth with established Afghan Canadian youth to reduce social isolation, intercultural difference and low self esteem, by providing social and educational guidance and support. We partnered with Afghan Association of York University and The Afghan Canadian Sports Association to pair up youth with University students and Afghan Youth Athletes, in this way the program helped youth to learn from their pair experiences towards admission, course selection and requirements and being coached by experienced youth athletes.

With the help of our youth advisory group, we were able to plan number of cultural, social, religious and recreational events for youth, to educate them about their heritage and increase their awareness about Afghan culture among the broader community. The following events took place.

- Khatem-ul-Qurhan during Ramadan,
- Afghan Cultural Show for the 5th time at “Taste of Asia”,
- Youth Picnic
- Afghan Attan show at” Community day” Ontario Science Centre

SENIORS PROGRAM

The senior’s program in Toronto and Peel targets the senior demographic of the Afghan and other communities who have experienced isolation, depression, and severe culture shock upon their arrival and while settling in Canada. As family members are often consumed with employment, children, and their own settlement needs, seniors are expected to be independent and self-sufficient during this time. They are expected to maintain their living quarters, travel to appointments and take care of all their needs on their own. These responsibilities are often too much for the senior family members to handle. Our frontline staff are well aware of senior’s situations and needs. The program reaches out to those that are experiencing hardship, loneliness, obstacles, and possibly neglect.

In addition to the one-on-one settlement services, AWO offers services such as telephone support, group workshops and activities, and friendly home visits by our dedicated volunteers. We have conducted a variety sessions addressing senior related issues, concerns and needs.

Afghan Youth Ambassadors: Trillium Environmental Project

The Afghan Youth Ambassadors Environmental Project, was very triumphant in its first year. The project aims to enhance environmental awareness, leadership skills and civic participation amongst Afghan youth, in particular those aged 15-25 living in the GTA. It achieved these aims by providing in-class workshops and seminars, hands-on activities and even outdoor trips. In addition, collaborations with several green NGOs in Toronto were formed, in particular with Evergreen and EcoSpark. At the end of year one, there was a total of 179 different participants; if family members were not directly engaged in activities, home surveys and informational material formed an enhanced awareness and desire to leave lighter carbon footprints. From the final assessment surveys, it was observed that 84% reported being significantly more environmentally aware; 76% have reported they were more likely to make environmentally-friendly choices; and 69% have indicated they wanted to participate in the organization of the program next year. The program not only gave youth the opportunity to be more environmentally aware; it also gave them the chance to be more socially, politically and culturally attentive as well. The workshops and informational sessions have given extra benefits, like literacy skills, problem-solving strategies, research skills, and presentational/social abilities. It was noted that the youth were more effectively involved, and more eager to learn, when they were being instructed by their peers and older youth who were trained. In conclusion, the strong sense of community the program has fostered, and the close relationships the youth leaders/mentors have formed with their peers, have increased self-esteem, created positive thinking, activated motivation in learning, and have made these youth more involved and hopeful citizens.



MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S WELLNESS PROGRAM

AWO provided a multicultural women's wellness program, funded by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), which raised the awareness of mental health among our clients and educated them on mental health issues and resources in the community. Workshops were provided bi-weekly on different topics on mental health issues. Guest speakers were invited. The sessions were well received and many participants were benefited from them.

HOMEWORK CLUB

Afghan Women's Organization runs a Homework Club for kids twice/week in two locations in Toronto and Mississauga by our dedicated volunteers. The program goal is to assist newcomer children with their homework to achieve higher marks for related subjects and gain better credits.

We ensure that every child receives individual assistance based on their needs to complete homework and assignments in timely manner. We also provide an opportunity for children to work together and provide encouragement and support each other. AWO's Homework Club is well-received by participants.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE

To assist parents with young children, our Women's Circle activity group has been designed specifically for women who are staying at home, busy taking care of their children, and who are feeling isolated from their community, mostly due to a language barrier. The sessions ran twice a month and were developed in partnership with Toronto Public Health. The sessions were well received by participants. In our Mississauga location, we facilitated the women's support group once a month, and its focus was on providing information in a culturally-appropriate model and to establish a starting point for women's self-help and advocacy. Topics that were covered include: learning leadership and goal setting skills; learning how to access services; growing in self-confidence, particularly under stress; learning to work through issue/problems with other group members.



HELPING SEPARATED FAMILIES – REUNIFICATION AND ADAPTATION PROGRAM (RAP)

AWO developed partnerships with nine other agencies to deliver RAP services supported by the City of Toronto – Toronto Public Health.

The program targeted families who became separated during the immigration process. The effects of long-term separation often results in severe stress, loss of parent-child attachment and resentment which can lead to family tension and breakdown. For this reason, the Reunification and Adaptation Program used peer support and mentorship strategies to bring parents together to better understand the needs of their children/youth. Similarly, youth come together to develop positive social skills to resolve intergenerational conflict and deal with social challenges such as bullying and racism. The project targeted the Filipino, Caribbean, African, South Asian, East Asian, Southeast-Central Asian and Hispanic communities. The services included but were not limited to one on one and group support, development of ethno-specific parent/caregiver and children/youth support, development of community reference group & resource guide, and identifying gaps in services and programs.

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY PROJECT (YOP)

Youth Opportunity Project was a successful project designed for youth who were between ages of 18-24 and were out of school due to multiple barriers. At the end of the project, 63 participants were directly benefited from the program and approximately, 100-150 youth in the community were indirectly benefited from this project as mentees of direct participants (Mentors). The project enhanced their leadership skills, and assisted them to become contributing members of community. YOP provided them with educational trainings and life skill workshops took them to visit places of interest, such as City Hall and encouraged them to become civically engaged; as a result, their leadership skills were enhanced and they overcame some barriers and became more active socially.



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers make an incredible difference in our ability to provide effective programs to the community. We are most grateful to each individual and group who gives their time and talents to make this difference to the Afghan Women's Organization. Each year we rely on more than 150 volunteers to be a part of our team to assist with Settlement, youth, senior, the child minding program and a wide variety of seasonal and special events and activities. In the Settlement program, our volunteers escort our clients to the doctors, Ontario Works, lawyers, immigration, schools, housing and other service providers. Most of our volunteers are young adults with Canadian experience and they contribute their experience with newcomers to Canada. It is an excellent opportunity for our newcomers and clients to meet friends, learn new skills, and learn about Canadian society. For each individual volunteer we set an interview day and we have a discussion about their skills, area of interest and their ability. We also provide orientation about our services and mandate. We make sure that our volunteers gain valuable working experiences. Our volunteers have received The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

FOREIGN TRAINED MEDICAL PRACTITIONER'S FOCUS GROUP

The group is led by Sara Ahmadi, an experienced volunteer lecturer, who has an immense knowledge with the requirements of this exam; more importantly, who knows how to break down complex material into manageable and simple pieces of information. Included in the course, are sample exams modeled on the actual EE and QE1.

By participating in this unique focus group, group members will be capable of contributing to fellow IMGs who face the EE exam in myriad ways, like sharing information and ideas in the networking session; participating in an existing group or creating a group of their own; or even by donating materials like notes, books, CDs, and other things they have used while preparing for examination.

The Afghan Women's Organization has provided these foreign medical practitioners the opportunity to share the same vision of integrating all capable IMGs into the Canadian Medical System. This focus group provides every IMG with the opportunity to make a real difference in the community, while becoming a proactive individual who contributes ones time and talent and benefits from being part of a group of similar individuals who share the same vision.

STAFF TRAINING

Staff members have been fortunate to attend several training opportunities which have helped them to further assist clients. Below are some training workshops and sessions that they have attended:

- Annual Childminding Conference
- Annual TESL conference
- CNIB provided Information for clients with less vision or no vision and services are available.
- Community Legal Services (Legal Aid)
- CPR training
- Employment Training - OCASI
- Group of 5 information session (RSTP)
- In House training - anti-oppression and cultural competence
- In house training – outcome based program planning and evaluation
- Incredible years (Toronto Public Health)
- JSW Training (Costi)
- Law and regulation (Lawyers)
- OCASI Conference
- OCASI Training Session on Employment
- Peel Police Diversity Department (Policies related to Diversity Issues to enhance Police Service's ability to better serve the community)
- Service Canada (Canada Pension Plan and Guaranteed Income Supplement)
- Service Canada (Employment Insurance, Maternity and Parental Benefits)
- Settlement , I & R Training Program (CIC)
- Training on Canadian Immigration Law
- Victim Services of Peel training on Cycle of Violence and (Power, Control & Equality)

FUNDRAISING AND CULTURAL EVENTS

The Afghan Women's Organization has been host to many community events in the past. The most important one was Mela-E-Samanak, held in the month of April to celebrate spring and the Afghan New Year. This popular event was attended by almost 2100 community members.

SPONSORSHIP

As a sponsorship Agreement Holder organization with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), AWO sponsors refugees from Pakistan and other refugee camps to come to Canada. During this fiscal year, 39 refugees arrived in Canada and received settlement services and other supports to help them upon their arrival.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

AWO provides Heritage Language classes in Pashto and Dari for Afghan children as it is important for families to maintain elements of their culture and identity while living in Canada. In addition to our classes for children, our dedicated volunteers continue to provide a Dari and Pashto literacy program for Afghan women and seniors in Toronto.

AWO volunteers to provide these programs to many children and women as a way to give back to the community.



OMID –E-MERMUN ORPHANGE

The Omid-E-Mirmun orphanage was established by the Afghan Women’s Organization in 2004 in Kabul, Afghanistan with the support of Canadian Women for Women of Afghanistan. This orphan-age provides shelter and basic needs for approximately 30 girls between the ages of three to seventeen years. The girls have a safe and comfortable home, access to schooling and extra-curricular activities, as well as emotional support and care from the dedicated staff. We are thankful for the generous funding from Canadian Women for Women of Afghanistan, and other friends and supporters for making it possible for this project to persist and grow in its success.



PARTNERSHIP/ITINERANT SERVICES

AWO has been fortunate to broaden its client base by partnering with agencies and providing Itinerant services to:

- Neighbourhood Link Office
- Newcomer Information Centre
- Uma Nabawi Mosque

We take pride in being part of LIP (Local Immigration Partnership) committees. We are actively participating and attending meetings for Don Valley LIP, Victoria Village and Eglinton East/ Kennedy Park LIP.

To improve service delivery and meet clients' needs, we have developed partnerships with many other organizations, such as:

- Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- Across Boundaries
- African Canadian Legal Clinic
- Canadian Council for Muslim Women
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Catholic Crosscultural Services
- Centre for Information and Community Services (CICS)
- City of Toronto
- Costi
- Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)
- CultureLink
- East Metro Youth Service
- Family Education Centre
- Flemington Health Centre
- Heritage Skills Development Centre (HSDC)
- Hispanic Development Council
- Jenner Jane Community Centre
- Kababayan Community Centre
- Mother Craft Institution for Early Development
- Nabawi Mosque
- National African Integration and Families Association (NAIFA)
- Neighbourhood Link Support Service
- Overland Learning Centre
- Rehma Foundation
- Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services (SAFSS)
- Skills for Change
- Skills International
- Toronto Public Health

TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

THANKS YOU!

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MAYTREE

For Leaders. For Change.

- [Ontario Women's Directorate](#)



Ontario

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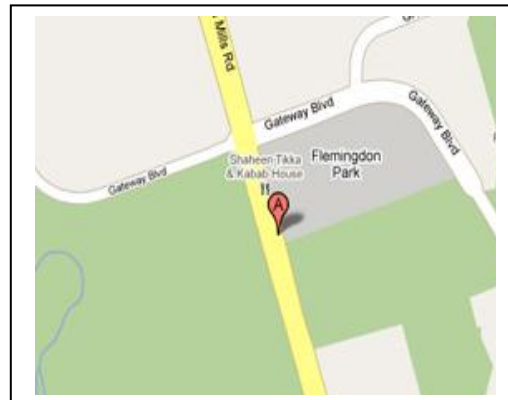
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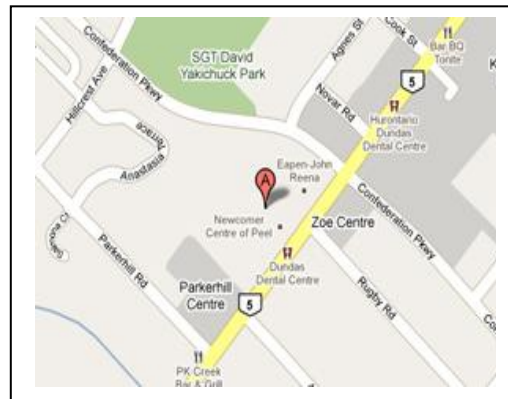
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 Evenings and weekends by appointment



Mississauga

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