



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Health Agency of Canada Announces Autism Ontario Awarded Strategic Fund to Support Autistic Adults and their Families in Ontario

Today's announcement means that autistic adults and their families will play a critical role in informing the adaptation of two evidence-based mental health promotion programs that will build mental health promotion service capacity for autistic adults and caregivers in Ontario

Autism Ontario is pleased to announce the Mental Health Matters project with our partners the Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto, MacART, South Asian Autism Awareness Centre and the York ASD Partnership. This mental health promotion program is made possible by the Autism Spectrum Disorder Strategic Fund of the Public Health Agency of Canada, and will roll out over the next 22 months in Ontario.

The Mental Health Matters project is a combination of two existing programs currently being offered by CMHA in Ontario that will undergo two different adaptations to support adults on the spectrum, their families and caregivers. The first adaptation will take place on the evidence-based Living Life to the Full and Mood Walks programs, which presents us with an opportunity to adapt and make accessible services that have had a positive outcome for neurotypical Canadians. A crucial component of the Mental Health Matters project involves the opportunity for autistic adults to help inform and participate in the adaptation of both programs, to benefit from these adapted programs as participants, and to train as facilitators.

Both Living Life to the Full and Mood Walks programs will be available for families and caregivers of people on the autism spectrum to participate in. Offering families and caregivers access to these programs to gain knowledge and practice new ways of coping with the challenges of caregiving in a group format will help build community capacity and form a community of practice and mutual support.

The second adaptation will involve the translation and production of the Living Life to the Full curriculum into Tamil. Guided by the leadership of the SAAAC Autism Centre, we will produce a thorough and culturally humble translation of the Living Life to the Full curriculum. In turn, Living Life to the Full will be offered to Tamil-speaking individuals and families in Ontario. Working together with CMHA to adapt and promote these programs is a continuation of the work both partners have been engaged in for a number of years in different regions of Ontario.

This deepened commitment to supporting adults on the spectrum and caregivers is an important step in a direction which integrates the unique perspectives and subjective experiences of

autistic adults and caregivers, and will improve the relevance and access to mental health promotion initiatives. Offering a way to expand the knowledge of current mental health providers and community members with these adaptations will enhance the knowledge base of mental health promotion facilitators and contribute to the effort to make both facilitation approaches and programs autism-accessible Ontario-wide.

About Autism Ontario: Autism Ontario has a 46 year history of representing thousands of families and people on the autism spectrum across Ontario. We are the only organization in Ontario that has formal parent representation in all areas of the province through our 25 Chapters. We advocate on behalf of all people with autism and their families – at all ages and stages of life, reflecting a wide range of expression and abilities. To connect with us, visit www.autismontario.com

Vision: Acceptance and Opportunities for all people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Mission: To ensure that each individual with ASD is provided the means to achieve quality of life as a respected member of society.

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