

## Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario and East Toronto Health Partners celebrate grand opening of Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub

*Youth Wellness Hub model offers low-barrier integrated services  
for youth and young adults in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park*

**July 18, 2023 (Toronto, ON)** – Today, Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO) and East Toronto Health Partners (ETHP), the Ontario Health Team (OHT) serving East Toronto, celebrated the grand opening of the Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub.

The Youth Wellness Hub is a bright and welcoming 11,000-square-foot space that provides a variety of integrated walk-in services for youth aged 12 to 25, including mental health and substance use supports, employment and settlement services, trades training and social programs.

It is located in the heart of Thorncliffe Park at 45 Overlea Blvd. (inside East York Town Centre) and was designed in collaboration by and for local youth.

The Youth Wellness Hub supports youth and young adults in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park, two neighbourhoods that are home to some of the highest concentrations of individuals under the age of 25 in Toronto and where there is low access to mental health and substance use services despite high levels of need.

This is especially important because the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened mental health challenges – particularly for children and youth. A recent report from Toronto Public Health [found](#) that, in the first year of the pandemic, one in four youth experienced increased depressive symptoms. One in five experienced elevated anxiety, representing a 32% increase in experiences of worry and stress.

Hospital data showed emergency department visits related to self-harm among children and youth in Toronto increased from 467 visits in the 15 months before the pandemic to 606 visits in the 15 months after pandemic onset.

### **Diverse range of services available**

Starting tomorrow (July 19), the Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub offers a diverse range of in-person and online mental health, wellness and substance use services for individuals aged 12 to 25.

Youth and young adults are welcome to walk in Monday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. They do not need a health card, family doctor or medical referral to access services.





Services include:

- **Mental health and substance use counselling:** Staff, including counsellors, mental health workers and therapists, are available to talk to youth about stress, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance use, gender identity and more. No topics are off limits.
- **Case management:** A healthcare worker helps guide and connect youth to different services during their health and wellness journey. They create individualized treatment plans that help youth reach their wellness goals, advocate for youth and monitor their progress.
- **Peer support:** Peer support workers offer youth support for a health concern, such as a mental health challenge, that they have also lived through. Because they share similar experiences, peer support workers are able to help youth by providing knowledge, emotional support and more.
- **Care navigation:** Care coordinators connect youth to different services in the community. This helps ensure youth are able to get the care they need when they need it.
- **Employment services:** Staff help youth find and secure job opportunities. In particular, our employment program helps youth who face barriers to work, such as language and technological barriers.
- **Primary care and sexual health services:** A family physician or nurse practitioner provides youth with prescriptions, sexual health and other medical services.
- **Psychiatric consultations:** A psychiatrist provides youth with consultations regarding mood changes, medication, and diagnoses.
- **Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skills group:** In a group setting, mental health workers teach skills to help youth cope more effectively with intense emotions or stress in their lives.
- **Housing and settlement support:** Housing and settlement workers are available to assist newcomers, including immigrants and refugees, access local services and programs.
- **Drop-in groups and special events:** Youth can spend time at the Youth Hub, where they will socialize and engage in recreational programs.

The Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub is also home to [Trades Connect](#), a program that offers youth and young adults pathways to careers in construction trades, information technology and industrial transportation; and [Food Collaborative](#), a food bank that provides local families with access to fresh produce, eggs, dairy products and culturally appropriate food. Both of these programs are operated by TNO – The Neighbourhood Organization.



The following EHP member organizations work together to provide services at the Youth Wellness Hub:

- Flemington Health Centre
- Garry Hurvitz Centre for Community Mental Health at SickKids
- Health Access Thorncliffe Park
- LOFT Community Services
- Michael Garron Hospital
- Strides Toronto
- TNO – The Neighbourhood Organization

More information about the Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub is available at [ethp.ca/ThorncliffeYWHO](http://ethp.ca/ThorncliffeYWHO), [youthhubs.ca/en/thorncliffe-park-youth-wellness-hub](http://youthhubs.ca/en/thorncliffe-park-youth-wellness-hub) and [instagram.com/ThorncliffeYouthHub](https://www.instagram.com/ThorncliffeYouthHub).

### **Advancing health equity for youth and families**

The Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub helps advance health equity in Thorncliffe Park and Flemington Park, two neighbourhoods that are home to many newcomers and carry significant stigma related to mental health and substance use.

Here, [many families also face socioeconomic challenges](#), including limited access to public services, and [higher levels of marginalization](#), which may lead to poor health outcomes.

This hub helps alleviate pressures across the health system, including in emergency departments, by providing more accessibility to care, reducing wait times and connecting youth to a full range of services that are close to home.

### **Designed in collaboration with local youth**

The Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub features consult areas as well as recreational elements that offer youth and young adults a safe place to socialize and hang out with peers. This includes a classroom, homework space, kitchen and games room.

Local youth contributed to the development of the youth wellness hub by advising on the physical design of the space, what programs are needed, how programs should be delivered and how youth should be engaged.

The Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub joins YWHO's existing network of hubs that serve over 30 communities across Ontario. It follows YWHO's Integrated Youth Services (IYS) model of care, which aims to bring the right services to youth (and their families) at the right time and in the right place.

### **Quotes**



"I grew up in Thorncliffe Park and have dreams to pursue a career in medicine, so I'm extremely excited to see the Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub open in our community. To me, mental health and well-being is not just the absence of mental illness; it is a journey of self-awareness, self-compassion and seeking support when needed. The Youth Wellness Hub has the potential to help me and my peers in this journey and I can't wait to see the positive impact it can make."

— **Serena Datta, local youth resident and member of the Youth Advisory Council, which provided feedback on the design and development of the Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub**

"Today, we celebrate an exciting milestone for youth in our Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park communities. These neighbourhoods have limited access to public services while having some of the highest concentrations of youth aged 12 to 25 in Toronto. Our youth deserve a safe, welcoming place like this, where they can access free, low-barrier and confidential services that will make a difference in their lives – especially following the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Youth Wellness Hub will advance health equity in our communities by providing much-needed services closer to home."

— **Ahmed Hussein, CEO, TNO – The Neighbourhood Organization**

"Michael Garron Hospital is proud to support the new Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub, a partnership that will help advance health equity in underserved East Toronto neighbourhoods. I look forward to this hub becoming a trusted space for youth to gather as they pave the way for a brighter future, nurture our community's potential and work to combat the stigma surrounding mental health. The Youth Wellness Hub is a great example of what teamwork can accomplish. This project would not have been possible without the collaboration of our Ontario Health Team and the youth who have volunteered their time and feedback to ensure this space is a success."

— **Melanie Kohn, President and CEO, Michael Garron Hospital**

"Our government is proud to support the crucial work of Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario, and I couldn't be happier that the Thorncliffe Park site is up and running. We know that children and youth have the highest mental health needs of any demographic, and Youth Wellness Hubs provide unique opportunities for us to ensure they can access the supports they need in a friendly, safe environment. The fantastic services provided at this hub will help children and youth in the area grow into happy and healthy adults. I look forward to hearing about its successes for years to come."

— **The Honourable Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions**



“Our government is building a system where Ontarians of all ages have access to timely and appropriate health, social, and community supports closer to home. With the opening of the Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub, youth and young adults in East Toronto will be able to connect to developmentally appropriate mental health, addictions, and primary care in a youth-friendly setting for years to come.”

— **Robin Martin, Parliamentary Assistant to Ontario’s Minister of Health**

“We are thrilled to celebrate the opening of the Thorncliffe Park Youth Wellness Hub. The Youth Wellness Hub will provide young people with an inclusive, welcoming space where they can walk-in and access a full range of Integrated Youth Services (IYS). These services include mental health and substance use health supports, primary health care and social services, all while creating connections through recreational, skill development and well-being programs. We are very grateful for the active and collaborative community partnerships that have made development of this Youth Wellness Hub possible and are essential for meeting the needs of youth throughout the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood and beyond.”

— **Dr. Jo Henderson, Executive Director, Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario**

### **About Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO)**

Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO) is a network of local hubs that provide integrated services co-designed with youth for youth in communities across the province. Originally funded through philanthropy and by the Ontario government in 2017, YWHO was established to address gaps in the youth mental health system by providing integrated youth services for young people aged 12 to 25, addressing needs related to mental health, substance use, primary care, education, employment, housing, peer support, outreach, system navigation, and other community and social programming. Through a commitment to rapid and low-barrier access, early and evidence-based interventions, equitable and culturally effective services, and youth collaboration, YWHO is taking a critical step forward to improve Ontario’s youth mental health system. To learn more about Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario, visit [youthhubs.ca](http://youthhubs.ca) or @YWHOntario on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

### **About East Toronto Health Partners (ETHP)**

East Toronto Health Partners (ETHP), the Ontario Health Team (OHT) serving East Toronto, is a group of more than 100 community, primary care, home care, hospital and social services organizations in East Toronto working together to create an integrated system of care across our communities. Collectively, ETHP is responsible for providing care and support to the 300,000 individuals who live in East Toronto communities, as well as an





additional 75,000 clients who choose to receive health care in the local area. Clients, family members and caregivers are partners in every aspect of the development of ETHP, working together to improve the way East Toronto residents access and receive care. Visit [ethp.ca](http://ethp.ca) to learn more.

Please contact [media@tehn.ca](mailto:media@tehn.ca) for more information.