

ADDICTION SERVICES CENTRAL ONTARIO



2024/2025 **Annual Report**

Hope begins here.





Printed in Canada.

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For more information on addictions, or a copy of this report, please contact ASCO.

Call Toll-Free: 1 (800) 263-2288

Email: info@helpwithaddictions.ca

Visit our website at: helpwithaddictions.ca or hopebeginshere.ca



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Jojit Labuntog

As Chair of the Board of Addiction Services Central Ontario (ASCO), I am both honoured and humbled to reflect on a year of remarkable growth, resilience, and hope. This past year, ASCO not only reaffirmed its commitment to our Vision – *A world where all people affected by addictions have the opportunity to heal* – but also took significant steps forward in making this Vision a reality.

In 2024-2025 we marked the first year of our ambitious three-year Strategic Plan, *Offering Hope and Promoting Well-Being*, which continues to guide our efforts and progress. Co-created with staff, clients, volunteers, partners, and community members, this plan is more than a roadmap; it is a testament to the collective spirit and shared determination that drive our organization. Grounded in our three strategic directions – Developing our People, Driving System Leadership in Integrated Care, and Advancing Clinical and Operational Excellence – we are shaping a future where integrated, compassionate care is accessible to all who need it.

We are grateful for the steady leadership of Penny Marrett, our Executive Director, and the dedication of her team. Their commitment to excellence and collaboration has helped ASCO navigate challenges, pursue innovation, and build strong partnerships across the sector. Together, they have played a key role in advancing our mission and responding to the needs of our communities and our stakeholders.

The progress highlighted in this year's Annual Report is a direct reflection of the unwavering dedication of our staff, the invaluable partnership of our funders and community organizations, the commitment of our volunteers, and the trust placed in us by the communities we serve. Collectively, we have inspired hope, expanded access, and transformed lives.

Yet, we are also mindful of the challenges that lie ahead. The need for addiction services continues to grow, making our mission more vital than ever. As a Board, we are steadfast in our advocacy for sustained investment and innovation in addiction care, so that no individual is left behind on their path to recovery.

What inspires me most is the unyielding optimism and compassion demonstrated every day by our staff, leadership, and partners. Whether it is through initiatives like the staff Smiley Fund that brings joy to clients and families during the holidays, or pioneering programs such as our mobile addiction response clinic, the impact of these efforts resonates throughout the communities we serve.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my deepest gratitude to all ASCO staff, volunteers, partners, and our funders, the Ontario Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, United Way Greater Toronto and Health Canada. Your commitment is transforming lives and building stronger, healthier communities. Together, we are not just offering hope – we are creating it.

Let us continue to stand together, inspired by our shared purpose, and move forward with courage and compassion. The future we envision is within reach – one where every individual has the opportunity to heal, recover, and thrive.

With heartfelt thanks and optimism,

Jojit Labuntog

Chair, Board of Directors

Addiction Services Central Ontario

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Penny Marrett

This past fiscal year marked a pivotal moment at ASCO, with the launch of our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan – *Offering Hope and Promoting Well-Being*. Developed with and for our community, this Plan reflects shared priorities to achieve meaningful change for clients, their loved ones, and the communities we are privileged to serve.

I am so proud of the progress we've made across our three strategic directions, as we work to reduce barriers to care and build a more sustainable and integrated addiction care system. Our 2024-2025 Annual Report highlights these achievements and shares powerful stories of excellence and hope.

These achievements are even more remarkable given the persistent challenges we face in meeting the growing needs of our communities. As more and more people request programs and services, we are being stretched to capacity and beyond. We are committed to continuing to advocate for appropriate increased investments to enable us to respond to these ever-expanding demands.

To ASCO's skilled staff and dedicated Board, your contributions and belief in our mission are invaluable. I am continually inspired by the spirit of collaboration across the mental health and addictions sector, and incredibly grateful to our partners and funders for their essential support of our clients and team. My deepest gratitude to each one of you for your commitment to bringing hope and healing to thousands of individuals affected by addiction in 2024-2025.

Together, we are creating a world where every person affected by addiction receives the highest standard of care and lives in dignity.

Penny Marrett

Executive Director

Addiction Services Central Ontario



2024-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

Offering Hope and Promoting Well-Being

In May 2024, ASCO launched its Strategic Plan to envision a better future as we respond to the toxic drug crisis and rising need for addictions treatment and care.

Through focus groups, interviews, and surveys, ASCO engaged staff, Board members, clients including our Client and Family Advisory Council, community members, and partners. Together, we renewed key elements of the Plan including our Mission and Values and created three Strategic Directions, with specific goals for enhancing the well-being of clients and caregivers and preparing our organization to meet changing and growing needs across our communities.

Our Vision

A world where all people affected by addictions have the opportunity to heal.

Our Mission

Uniting to support individuals to achieve their goals by offering hope and promoting well-being.

Strategic Directions

- **Develop our People**
Cultivate an environment where ASCO Employees are supported, invested in, and cared for each and every day.
- **Drive System Leadership in Integrated Care**
Collaborate with partners to develop a “no wrong door” approach for the people we serve.
- **Advance Clinical and Operational Excellence**
Champion quality, innovation, and continuous improvement.

Values

- **Respect** – We respect, honour and champion everyone we serve.
- **Inclusivity** – We celebrate the unique strengths of diverse communities.
- **Equity & Access** – We believe in equitable access to programs and services.
- **Flexibility** – We offer flexible, person-centred care.
- **Belonging** – We cultivate a safe, and welcoming environment where all individuals feel valued, accepted, and heard.



[DOWNLOAD](#)

ASCO PROFILE

Total participants across all programs (April 2024 - March 2025)

13 programs offered at ASCO locations in York Region, South Simcoe & North York.

38,766 - Total Client Visits

20,476 - Total Individuals Served

382 - Total Group Sessions

5,565 - Total Group Interactions with Service Providers

Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine*
Top 3 substances used.

* Mirroring broader population trends, rates of harmful opioid use continue to rise, particularly among youth and young adult clients.

OUR CLIENTS & COMMUNITIES

Where ASCO Clients Live

ASCO clients live in many different communities and can receive services in person or virtually.

The top 2 areas where ASCO clients participate in programs and services are York Region and North York. Clients also come from South Simcoe, Durham Region and Niagara Region, among others.

Our Clients' First Language

Approximately 75% of the clients served in 2024 had English as a mother tongue.



Client Access to Healthcare

A profile of 3,825 ASCO clients (of the total 20,476 individuals served by ASCO in 2024-25), shows that over 80% were not "attached" to a primary care provider. ASCO serves as a vital service for individuals and communities, whether they have access to a primary care provider or not.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS & MILESTONES

Voices of Clients and Families



Being a parent of children experiencing addiction can be isolating and overwhelming.

When my friend encouraged me to connect with ASCO around eight years ago, our family finally had a real path forward. As parents, we took comfort in knowing that so many people are dealing with similar challenges and ASCO was there for my daughter during a critical time. One of the things I appreciate most is ASCO's openness to feedback and willingness to make improvements to ensure clients and families get what they need

For people with children, parents or siblings affected by addiction, there is help right in York Region. You don't need to take this journey alone. For our family, hope began when we were introduced to ASCO.

~ Linda B., family member and member of the Client & Family Advisory Council





My name is Michelle, and for 26 years, I've been living with multiple sclerosis (MS) – a constant companion, influencing every facet of my life.

A turning point came when I was involved in a devastating car accident. The aftermath led me down a path of opioid dependency, a struggle that consumed nearly a decade of my life. During this time, I witnessed the erosion of relationships with my children and husband, family and friends. I teetered on the brink of losing myself entirely.

In my darkest hours, I found a beacon of hope: Addiction Services Central Ontario (ASCO). From the moment I connected with them, ASCO provided a safe, judgement-free environment where I could confront my challenges head-on. Through extensive therapy, I began to peel back the layers of my identity, gaining insights into my mental health and building resilience. The counsellors at ASCO are not just professionals; they are pillars of support, guiding me with compassion and understanding.

Accepting help for addictions requires diligence – especially when asking for help is outside your comfort zone and you are filled with self-doubt. For me and my family, seeking help and sticking with it through the discomfort has been one of the most rewarding experiences.

Today, I'm honoured to serve on ASCO's Client and Family Advisory Council. This role allows me to give back, sharing my experiences to help others. ASCO's commitment to offering hope and promoting well-being has been instrumental in my recovery, and I am a testament to the transformative power of their work.

~ Michelle M., ASCO client and member of the Client & Family Advisory Council



ASCO helped me get my life on track. I have bipolar disorder and what made all the difference to me is the well-rounded approach ASCO takes. The counsellors look at the entire person – their mental health and how that relates to their substance use, their family and what's going on in their lives. Throughout my journey, ASCO counsellors have always had my back.

Being part of the Client and Family Advisory Council for the past four years has also been an amazing experience – it has given me a strong sense of community. ASCO truly listens to what people with addictions and families want. Among other things, the Council helped ASCO make client surveys more applicable to people affected by addictions. We helped with the client handbook, material for parent groups, the Touch of Art show, and even the wording on the Mobile Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinic van. When you can see the difference you are making for others, that means everything.

~ Mora C., ASCO client and member of the Client & Family Advisory Council



CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS & MILESTONES

Highlights at a Glance

MAY 2024

Launched 2024-2027 Strategic Plan

OCTOBER 2024

Received a \$31,000 Capital Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for an advanced filtration system and upgraded HVAC to improve air quality for staff and clients.

DECEMBER 2024

Board Risk Committee created as part of ASCO's commitment to governance excellence.

JANUARY 2025

Implemented a new Electronic Health Record - TREAT - enabling enhanced care coordination, quality and safety.

Ribbon cutting for ASCO's Ontario Health-funded Mobile Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (M-RAAM) clinic on wheels, designed to provide barrier-free supports for individuals affected by addictions in York Region and South Simcoe.

MARCH 2025

Funded for Black Mental Health and Addictions program. To ensure the program fits the needs of the Black community of York Region, ASCO and Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association partnered to host Community Conversations throughout the Region, which will continue in 2025-2026.

Purchased an accessible online learning management program for staff.

Invested in and began implementing clinical training focused on client safety and recovery:

1. **Seeking Safety and Creating Change** models to help people find safety from trauma and/or addiction.
2. **SMART Recovery** - an evidence-informed recovery method grounded in Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy that supports people with substance dependencies and problem behaviours.



Develop. Drive. Advance.

1. DEVELOP OUR PEOPLE

In 2024-2025, ASCO advanced its commitment to its staff team by implementing programs that support, invest in, and care for our employees.

We equipped our teams with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality care. This included organization-wide and tailored training for specific needs, such as nursing and interprofessional teamwork. The Seeking Safety and Creating Change along with the Smart Recovery training have provided our clinical team with common tools to promote safety and recovery in individual and group settings.

A new online learning management system will provide accessible and personalized continuous learning for employees.

Employee well-being remained a top priority. New benefits included extending Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP) eligibility to contract employees and enhancing support for psychological safety.

2. DRIVE SYSTEM LEADERSHIP & INTEGRATED CARE

Over the last year, ASCO continued to lead in integrated care, ensuring as many clients as possible could access addiction services, strengthening prevention and awareness of substance health and problem gambling, and supporting clients to navigate and connect to services.

As one of Ontario's largest community addiction care providers, ASCO contributed expertise to numerous regional and provincial tables focused on mental health, addictions, and integrated care.

We have started to improve the quality of our data about the "social determinants of health" – the social and environmental factors influencing clients' health outcomes. This will enable us to design services that reduce barriers, enhance prevention, and support proactive treatment.

With support from the Ontario Government and other funders, ASCO collaborated on services to close care gaps, including the Mobile Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinic (M-RAAM) – a mobile clinic that brings support and treatment to vulnerable individuals who have difficulty accessing services.

We also concluded the *Adopting Harm Reduction into Practice* initiative, funded by Health Canada, which expanded access to, and increased understanding of, harm reduction principles and practices. We are grateful to our partners, CAYR Community Connections and the Krasman Centre, for successfully educating community members, first responders, and people who may be using substances about harm reduction.

3. ADVANCE CLINICAL & OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

ASCO strengthened its capacity to implement the latest evidence-based practices from psychosocial and addictions medicine sources.

We made progress in increasing membership in our Client and Family Advisory Council and received positive feedback through our client satisfaction surveys – over 95% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that in-person services are high quality and clients reported high satisfaction with safety, compassion and respect for virtual and in-person services.

Operational excellence remained a cornerstone of our work. We provided regular updates to the Board on financial, legal, and organizational performance. The creation of the Board Risk Committee in 2024-2025 further enhanced transparency, accountability, and strategic oversight.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS & MILESTONES

Partnerships

ASCO is profoundly grateful to all our partners, with more than 20 organizations that have been integral to our collective successes this past year. All of our partnerships are very important to us and we thank each and every one of them for their leadership and commitment to enhance the well-being of everyone we serve.

York Region Mental Health Community Care Centre – Making Sure Someone’s First Mental Health and/or Addictions Crisis is their Last

ASCO is proud to be part of a large partnership to expand vital crisis services in York Region – The York Region Mental Health Community Care Centre.

Led by the Canadian Mental Health Association York South Simcoe, the Centre’s proposal brings together more than 20 organizations, including ASCO, community agencies, hospitals, and first responders. The partners share a commitment to a modern, person-directed approach to crisis care. The Centre is made possible by funding from the Ministry of Health and a capital campaign is currently underway.



This new Centre is designed to reach and stabilize people who are experiencing mental health and/or addictions crises and connect them to ongoing care in the community. The goal is to provide a compassionate community-based alternative – one that prioritizes appropriate care, reduces strain on emergency services, and supports individuals to receive the help they need.

The Centre will serve individuals aged 12 and over and take referrals from primary care, paramedics, police, 911, community agencies, and self referrals. It will feature:

- 10 withdrawal management beds
- 10 crisis stabilization beds
- Integrated care teams including medical professionals, peer workers, and partner agency staff, ensuring personalized support and continuity

The proposal is currently in the final stages of capital approval, after which it will move to the construction tender phase. For more information, visit <https://www.thecentre-yr.ca/>

ASCO Team Participation in Regional & Provincial Tables

Beyond our strong local partnerships in York Region, North York and South Simcoe, ASCO is amplifying the voices of those affected by addiction and those working in the sector at regional and provincial tables. 2024-2025 highlights include:

Ontario Health

- Member, Oversight Table for the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence
- Co-Chair, Ontario Health Central Region - Central Mental Health and Addictions Planning Table
- Member, Ontario Health Central Region - System Transformation Advisory Regional Table

Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)

- Co-Chair, Eastern York Region North Durham OHT Access & Navigation
- Chair, Eastern York Region North Durham OHT Mental Health & Addictions Wellness Centre Planning Committee
- Member, Eastern York Region North Durham OHT Executive Operations Team
- Co-Chair, Northern York Region South Simcoe OHT Mental Health and Addictions Network Table
- Member, North York Toronto Health Partners OHT Backbone Team
- Co-Chair, North York Toronto Health Partners OHT Mental Health & Addictions Steering Committee
- Chair, North York Toronto Health Partners Health Equity Committee
- Co-Chair, North York Toronto Health Partners OHT Stewardship Council
- Co-Chair, North York Toronto Health Partners Governance Committee
- Co-Chair, North Western Toronto OHT Mental Health & Addictions Committee
- Co-Chair, North Western Toronto OHT Governance, Nominations and Membership Committee

York Region

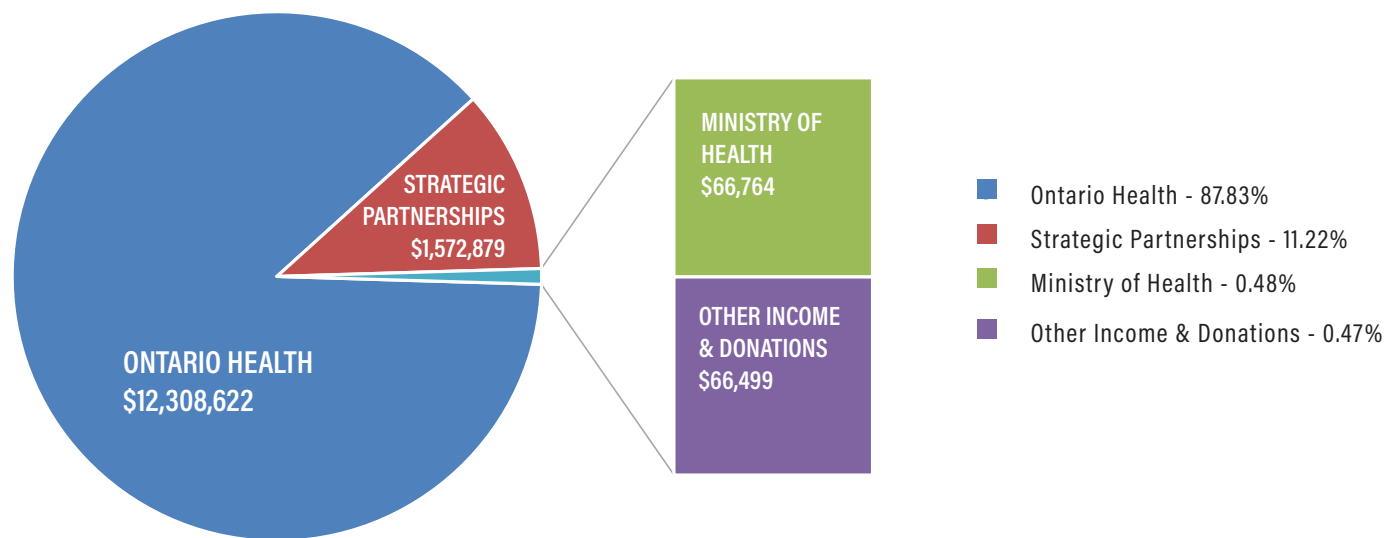
- Member, York Region Mental Health Community Care Centre Planning Committee
- Treasurer and Board Member, Addictions and Mental Health Ontario (AMHO)
- Member, United Way Greater Toronto Homelessness Service Providers Table
- Member, York Region's Community Collaborative Tables
- Member, Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee of York Region
- Member, Harm Reduction Coalition of York Region
- Member, Planning Committee for York Region World Poisoning Awareness Day
- Member, Community Opioid and Drug Response Collaborative
- Member, Community Opioid Response Committee for York Region
- Member, York Region Rapid Response Table
- Member, Vaughan Youth Wellness Hub Planning Committees
- Member, Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee York Region
- Member, York Region Situation Tables (Adult, Children and Youth Tables)

South Simcoe

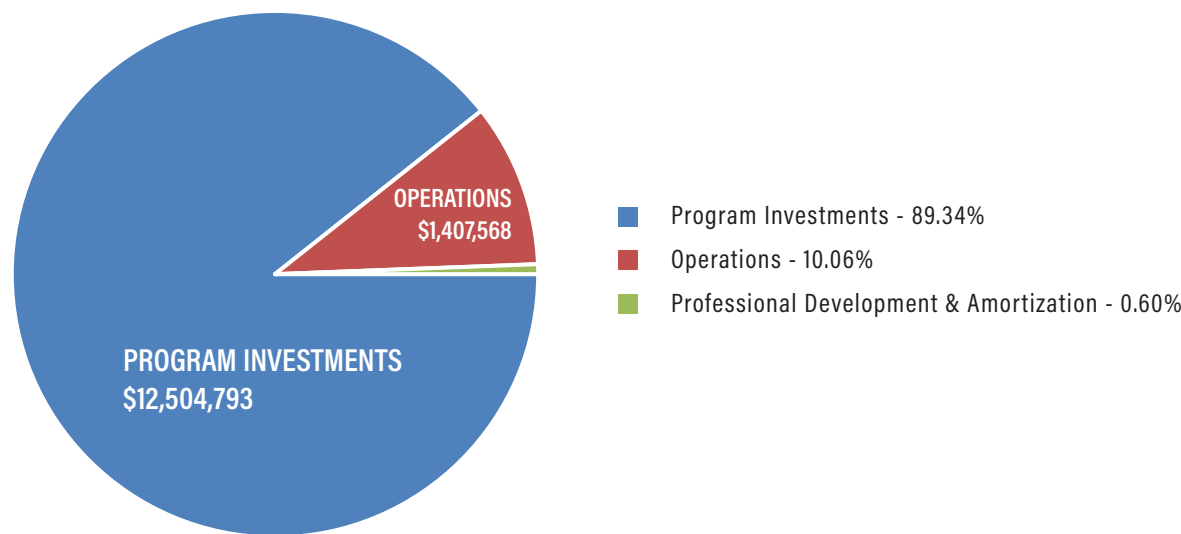
- Member, South Simcoe Situation Tables (Adult, Children and Youth Tables)
- Member, South Simcoe Service Resolution Table
- Member, Nottawasaga Opioid Advisory Working Group

FINANCIAL REPORT

Revenue | \$14,014,764



Expenses | \$13,977,040



Full audited statements for the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2025 are available upon request.

OUR BOARD & STAFF



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We have several Satellite Offices, Community Withdrawal Management Clinics
& Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Clinics throughout
York Region, South Simcoe & North York.

Visit our website @ helpwithaddictions.ca or call us at
905-841-7007 or 1-800-263-2288 for more information.

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