



# Where Care Always Comes First **CAREFIRST CONNECTION**

March 2022

Carefirst One-Stop Multi-Services Centre | 300 Silver Star Blvd. Scarborough, ON M1V 0G2 | Tel: 416-502-2323

## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Lockdowns amid the pandemic disrupted all ways of life around the world and in our own backyards. But for many essential workers, retreating to the safety of their homes was impossible. Carefirst would like to say thank you to the people who have kept our community safe and offered us some refuge of normalcy during this time.

Every day, we learn a bit more about COVID-19. Although our collective fatigue is palpable after two years of restrictions, we must stay alert and adjust our strategy as the science changes.

In 2022, Carefirst is optimistic despite the uncertainties around COVID-19. We are excited about the development of our Campus of Care as well as enhancing our existing programs and services to provide improved care to our clients and the communities. We look forward to working with our cross-sector partners to help improve senior and community care across the province.

Thank you for your continued support. We hope to see you all (in person) soon.

— Sheila Neysmith



Army Spc. Angel Laureano holds a vial of the COVID-19 vaccine, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., Dec. 14, 2020. (DoD photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

As Ontario prepares to drop its mask mandate and vaccine

passport later this month, Ontarians should continue to take precautions to protect themselves and stay mindful of those who are at higher risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19, which could lead to hospitalization and death.

One way to protect ourselves against COVID-19 is getting vaccinated and adhering to the preventative measures, like hand hygiene. Vaccines (plus a booster dose!) triggers and strengthens our immune response to better protect us against infection.

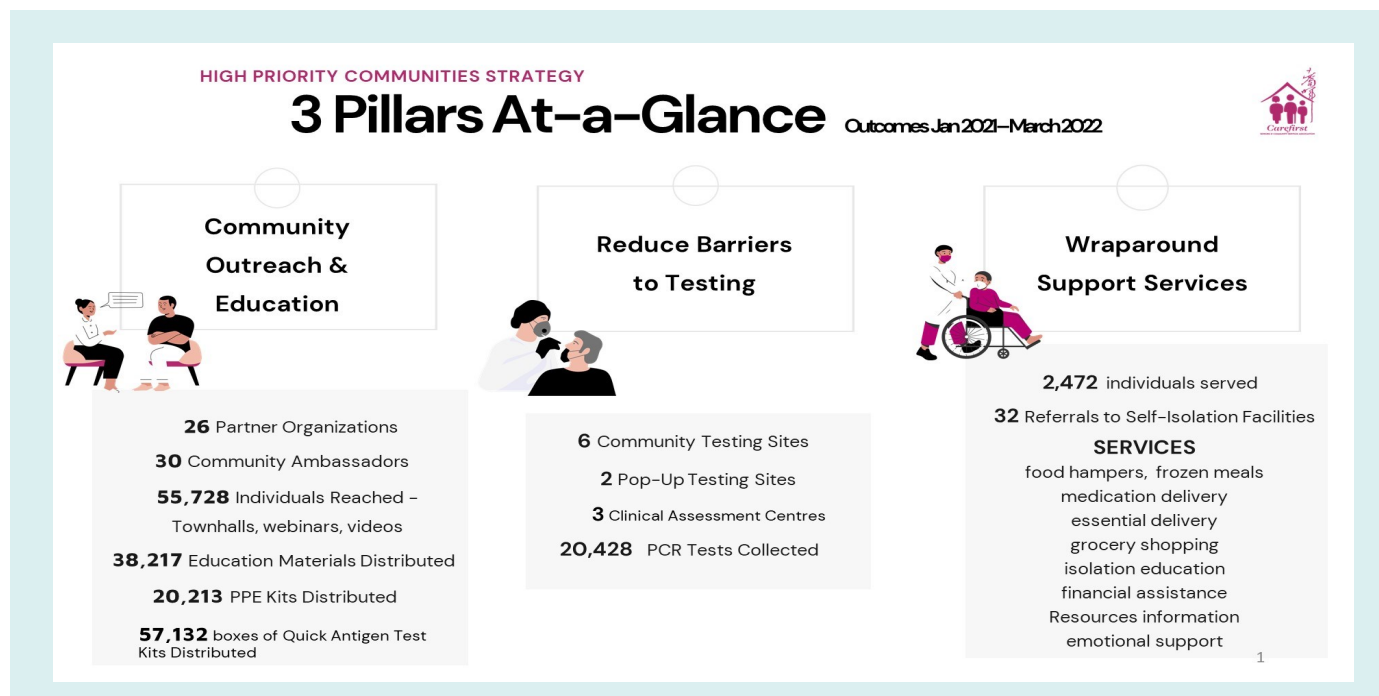
As a health and social services provider, Carefirst remains committed to the well-being of the community we serve. Vaccines and seeking proper anti-viral treatments (if contracted the virus) are our greatest tools to navigating out of this global health crisis.

We encourage individuals who are eligible but have yet to get vaccinated to speak to their health-care providers about their concerns. Boosting our immunity as a community is crucial to keeping vulnerable community members safe and alleviating pressures facing our health-care system.

**For more information on authorized vaccines and anti-viral therapeutic treatments in Canada, vaccine safety and more, visit Public Health of Canada's webpage on vaccines for COVID-19 at [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca) and Ontario's webpage on anti-viral treatment at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-antiviral-treatment>. Book your vaccine shot or booster at [covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine).**

*Should you have any ethics-related questions or concerns pertaining to Carefirst and its operation, please contact Human Resources Manager, Rochelle Leung at 416-847-6006 or [rochelle.leung@carefirstontario.ca](mailto:rochelle.leung@carefirstontario.ca)*

## HIGH PRIORITY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM



### Grocery shopping for the seniors.



On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. In the past two years, our communities were confronted by numerous difficulties that threatened our physical health and social and economic well-being. Moreover, the pandemic exposed the startlingly disproportionate toll on racialized and marginalized populations. COVID-19 drew the attention of many, including the government and policymakers, to health disparities facing many Canadians and forced us to recognize the importance of and take steps toward health equity.

During the early stages of the pandemic, Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association and Carefirst Family Health Team took swift action to respond to the needs of the community. We reached out to our seniors, clients, patients and neighbourhoods; we adapted our services; and redesigned some of our programs to ensure the clients and families we served were supported and had access to the care they needed.

Several initiatives and projects under the High Priority Communities Program were launched amid COVID-19.

*Operation of the Carefirst Mobile Health Unit began in April 2018 to offer more flexible and accessible care to clients living in the community.*



## COVID-19 Carefirst Hotline and Community Emergency Relief Services

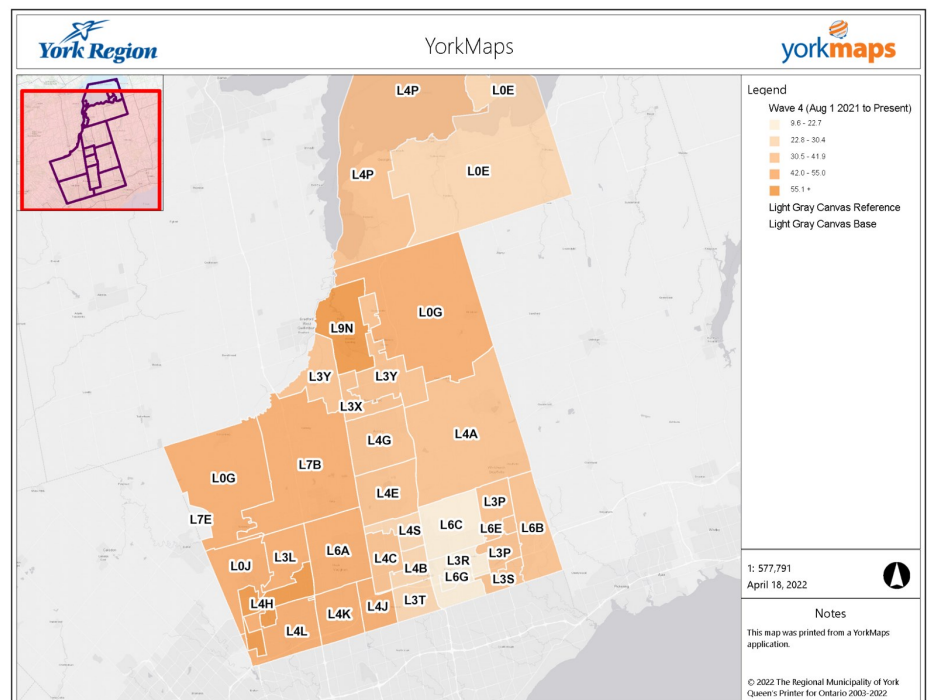
Carefirst Community Emergency Relief Program was launched in May 2020 as COVID cases rapidly increased across Toronto. Using short-term relief funding from the government, Carefirst redeployed our staff to support this initiative until the end of March 2021. More than 15,000 unique individuals received both tangible and intangible support, including assistance with vaccination appointments, transportation, care packages as part of the food security program, and supportive counselling that helped them cope with emotional stress and anxiety. Carefirst continues to provide wrap-around care, conduct virtual health education sessions and offer community support services to seniors and families in isolation as well as community members who are impacted by the pandemic.



Call Carefirst COVID-19 Helpline at 416-646-5108 to receive support

## COVID-19 HOT SPOTS IN SCARBOROUGH & MARKHAM

In late December 2020, Ontario Health Central called upon Carefirst to lead the implementation of the High Priority Communities Program (HPCP) alongside local service providers to pave the way toward recovery for south Markham, which was one of the areas that was hit hardest by COVID-19. The HPCP involves on three service pillars: Community Outreach and Education; Access to Testing; and Wrap-around Support. We employed delivery strategies to execute the program effectively by collaborating with 26 local neighborhood of service partners and stakeholders through a **Shared Care delivery model**. These strategies enabled the collaborative to reach out to over 13,500 community members across Markham and Scarborough and educate them on ways to self-protect against COVID-19, including proper masking and vaccination.



▲ Weekly COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in York Region during wave 4 (August 2021 to present). Courtesy of the COVID-19 in York Region interactive dashboard.

Throughout the pandemic by end of December, Carefirst delivered over 19,500 swab tests, and supported close to 1,650 service users with wrap-around care with both tangible support, like food security programs and intangible services like supportive counselling.



## HIGH PRIORITY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

### COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics at Carefirst and Community Pop-up Clinics

Since April 2021, Carefirst established many COVID-19 vaccination clinics the GTA. Our main clinic was based at our Carefirst One-Stop Multi-Services Centre, with 55 mobile pop-up vaccination clinics operating in North York, Scarborough, and Markham. Our goal was to make vaccines more accessible to communities during the pandemic.

The launch of these clinics offered Carefirst an experiential learning opportunity to work with our new partners from the hospitals and public health units as well as to efficiently mobilize staff and volunteers to support the numerous clinics. In partnership with more than 10 partners, Carefirst has administered upwards of 30,000 vaccines as of April 2022.

#### *A Thank You Note from Anita Lun-Koem*

*"I would like to thank Carefirst for assisting our family with COVID. This was our first contact with Carefirst and we are thankful it exists.*

*When my elderly mother displayed COVID symptoms, I took her to the COVID Assessment Centre and that's when we learned about services that are available.*

*As my mother currently does not have a family physician, we were grateful to be able to see a doctor at the Centre. Dr. Allibhai and the technician who administered the test were so very kind. We were made to feel welcomed and treated with respect. We felt people cared about us which is not always the case in healthcare settings. Because COVID has affected our entire household, we were very relieved to find out about the available support services.*

*Thank you for making older people feel less isolated and providing invaluable assistance."*



## UNDER ONE ROOF

***A collaborative project co-led by Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association and CHATS, and funded by the Eastern York Region North Durham Ontario Health Team.***

Under One Roof explores ways service agencies can work together to better serve vulnerable communities that are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The project aims to bring primary care, acute care, health service providers and social service providers under one roof—physically or

virtually—to enable individuals who live and/or work in the forward sortation area - L3S in Markham to access services in a more culturally relevant, user-friendly and integrated manner.

Our work will emphasize community engagement as we, as service providers, must hear directly from community members from this neighbourhood in order to identify needs and resources shared in the community and tailor services accordingly.

We also recognize that as we move forward, it will be imperative to co-design an initiative that will have a direct positive impact on the lives of people we serve. For this reason, Carefirst will invite those directly impacted to participate in the decision-making process.

Carefirst Family Health Team strives to improve the health of patients and families by providing culturally sensitive, family-centred and holistic primary health-care services with the help from a team of multidisciplinary professionals.

**Register NEW patients in Scarborough 416-502-2029 & Richmond Hill 905-695-1133**

## Seasonal Flu Shots

Every year, the Carefirst Family Health Team (FHT) actively promotes the annual flu shot. This year, efforts actively will start in October with promotions to be emailed and mailed to our FHT patients. Vaccine clinics will be held on at least 24 days across both sites at Richmond Hill and Scarborough throughout the months of October and November. The FHT will also continue collaborate with our partner Ontario Health Teams (OHT) this year to organize and provide flu shots to the community.

With no supply issues experienced last year, we were still able to vaccinate 1,447 people, which included FHT patients, Carefirst staff, Transitional Care residents and members of the community. A slightly lower demand and uptake was observed for the lower risk group last year. This was likely due to many other locations offering the flu shot, such as local pharmacies, that may be more convenient for people. The FHT will continue to promote the flu shot to our patients and offer throughout the coming flu season.

## NEIGHBOURHOODS OF CARE



Carefirst builds capacity through our partnerships. We engage our peers and partners across the health system and leverage collaborative opportunities to make widespread change in our communities. The relationships that Carefirst has built over the years have benefited many of our community development programs—our experience with the HPCP in south Markham tells us that building a neighbourhood of care together is valuable, warranted and doable.

By sharing a common mission and vision to bridge service gaps, we are confident that Carefirst and our partners can lead the development of a “community of care” in Markham as the region

embarks on its economic, social, and health recovery. Carefirst believes that sustaining the program would be vital to the recovery of the community as well as to achieving health equity for all. Moving forward, we will build on this collaboration to strengthen our community’s preparedness for future public health emergencies.

Since January 2021, the HPCP team of roughly 22 local organizations has grown to 26 members. Our partners include Carefirst FHT, Health for All FHT, Markham Stouffville Hospital, YMCA of Greater Toronto, Health Common Solutions, York Region Community and Health Services, Centre for Immigrant and Com-

munity Services, The Cross-cultural Community Services Association Services, CHATS, Hong Fook Mental Health Association, City of Markham (Ward 7 & 8 City Councillors), Social Services Network, 105 Gibson Centre, Markham Wesley Centre, York Region Public Health, Markham Chinese Presbyterian Church, Islamic Society of Markham, Eastern York Region North Durham Ontario Health Team, Scarborough Ontario Health Team, Markham Public Library and Ebenezer United Church, Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action, and 360 Kids. To better serve the community and bridge service gaps, Carefirst will continue to invite relevant service partners to join the collaborative.

## WHY WHAT WE DO MATTERS — OUR CLIENTS' VOICES

The weekly gatherings organized by Stella Sum at Carefirst is one of the best activities that I can ask for my mom to attend. My mom loves coming to these weekly meetings and when the meetings stopped during the pandemic, mom missed seeing her friends immensely. During this time, I noticed my mom's cognitive skill deteriorates and ever since the meetings resume, I see the improvement in mom's mental state. The activities offered are very helpful. I can see a lot of thoughts had been put in running these meetings. Kudos to Stella and all the volunteers who help in making these meetings successful. It takes my mom almost an hour to come to these meetings, but to her, it's worth every minute. Thank you for your great work and please don't stop offering these meaningful programs.

— Sabina Ho

Recently my family and I had our third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine at your organization. We are in praise of your team for providing us an excellent service from booking a schedule to getting our vaccine shots. We appreciate that your staff attentively responded to our questions and made the whole process of vaccination a "painless" one. Allow us to acknowledge again the service of your organization to the public.

— Andrea Luk and family

My late mother, Chui Wai Ling, lived in the Tam O'Shanter Senior Apartments from 1994 to 2019 until she was admitted to Yee Hong Long-Term Care Home, where she passed away in January 2021. Since she was diagnosed with moderate dementia in 2013, she has benefitted from all the services provided by Carefirst Supportive Housing. Without such help, I, as her only daughter, would never have been able to take care of her on my own while working at the same time.

The personal support workers under the supervision of Ms. Ann Cheuk and Ms. Hedy Ma had provided great care to my mother. They were very caring and professional, and often took the extra mile to make sure that my mom was doing fine. The donation is only a very small token to show our appreciation and gratitude to the Tam O'Shanter team and Carefirst as a whole.

— Daughter of the late Chui Wai Ling

Thank you to the front line workers who are there for the COVID testing process and doing the follow up. During the entire testing process everyone was super nice and chill. When I received the follow up call that's when I was really impressed. The nurse was very caring over the phone. She offered all these services for support ... Long story short, had it not been for the impact of the frontline workers I would not have taken the time to research about the services and support that Carefirst provides. Management, do something for the frontline workers and support them. And no, a pizza party is not enough. They deserve a lot more.

— Anonymous client, Carefirst COVID test service



## FUNDRAISING EVENTS

### 2022 Young at Heart Virtual Charity Gala

Carefirst would like to thank you for attending the 25th annual 2022 Young at Heart Virtual Charity Gala which was livestreamed at [www.carefirstyoungatheartgala.com](http://www.carefirstyoungatheartgala.com) on March 26th, 2022 at 8 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the gala was hosted virtually to enable supporters from across the country and beyond to attend safely in the comfort of their own homes.

We managed to meet the fundraising budget of \$250,000 from the gala. All proceeds raised from the Carefirst Young at Heart Virtual Charity Gala will support the development of Carefirst Campus of Care. This \$76-million capital project will offer greater access to care to the community.



### 2021 Radiothon

The radiothon was successfully held on Thursday, December 9, 2021 and the radiothon event raised over \$220,000. All the proceeds were designated towards the Carefirst Campus of Care capital project located at 9893 Leslie Street, Richmond Hill.

Sincerely gratitude to all sponsors, donors, A1 Chinese Radio and call center volunteers for their support towards the 2021 Radiothon.



## Accreditation

Carefirst Seniors & Community Services Association (Carefirst) is preparing for the sixth accreditation cycle with Accreditation Canada (AC). AC is an international, not-for-profit organization offering accreditation specifically tailored to community-based health and social service agencies.

Accreditation is important because it helps to create better health care and social services. It allows organizations like Carefirst, to understand how to make better use of resources, increase efficiency, enhance quality and safety, and reduce risk.

The accreditation process begins by preparing for a site survey taking place from Monday June 6th to Thursday June 9th, 2022. We have chosen to conduct the survey as a “hybrid” model. This means one surveyor will be virtual and the other will be on-site during the scheduled site visit.

Ready, Get Set, Go!

### Donation

Charitable donations to

**CAREFIRST FOUNDATION** are always welcomed. Your generosity helps change lives of people in need.

Cheques are payable to **Carefirst Foundation**. You can also donate online at [www.carefirstontario.ca](http://www.carefirstontario.ca).

*Any donation over \$20 will receive a tax receipt upon request.*




Charitable Registration


#83974 4943 RR0001


*Visit our website and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to learn more about Carefirst development and upcoming agency events:*

<https://www.carefirstontario.ca>

<https://carefirstcampusofcare.ca>

 @CarefirstSeniors

 @CarefirstSenior

 @CarefirstSeniors

### Vocational Training Centre

Carefirst Vocational Training Centre currently offers certification courses:

- ◆ Personal Support Worker (PSW) certificate program
  - ◆ May, 2022
- ◆ Food Handler
  - ◆ May 2022
- ◆ Post-natal care attendant
  - ◆ July, 2022
- ◆ Community & Hospice Care Education Program—Volunteers Training
  - ◆ July, 2022

Please contact VTC for additional details:

tel: 416-847-2767

email: [training@carefirstontario.ca](mailto:training@carefirstontario.ca)

### We're hiring!

If you are interested in working at Carefirst, please send a resume and cover letter to the following:

- ◆ email: [hr@carefirstontario.ca](mailto:hr@carefirstontario.ca)
- ◆ fax: 416-502-2382

For more information, call us at 416-847-6005 or visit our website [www.carefirstontario.ca/about/careers](http://www.carefirstontario.ca/about/careers).

*We are committed to creating a safe and barrier-free environment for all. If you require accommodation, please inform us in advance to explore alternative arrangements.*



United Way  
Member Agency

