

# Social Work at the Public Library

A case study of the Toronto Public Library (TPL)

## 1 The role of Public Libraries

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- What are the similarities between Social work and Librarianship?

## 2 The role of the Social Worker

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- What does social work look like at the public library?

## 3 The case of Toronto Public Library (TPL)

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- What is TPL doing to serve vulnerable populations?

# Public libraries are producers of Social Capital



Universal  
access to  
information



Community  
building



Literacy  
and  
education



Public  
culture



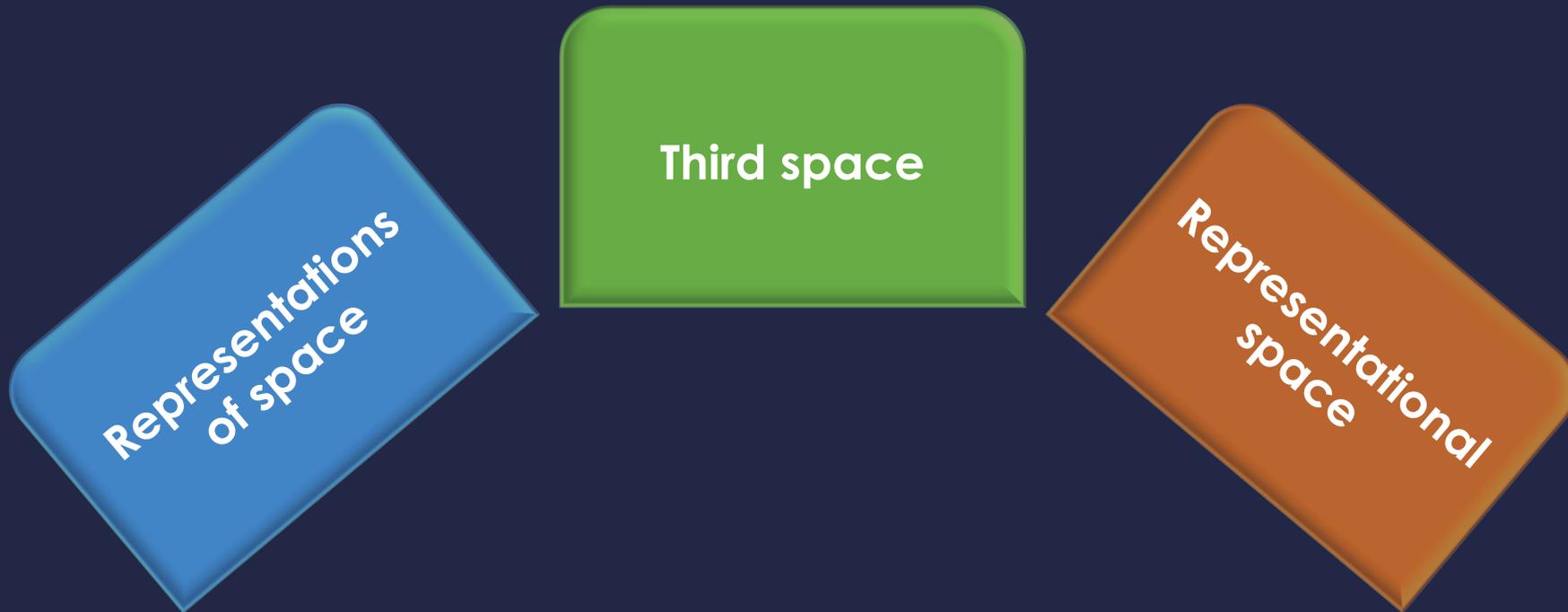
Free public  
space



# Librarianship is increasingly holistic



# Public libraries are used as a third space



# Public libraries are considered as a third sector





# Referral Model



Develops a referral pathway by building trusting and helping relationships with customers/patrons/clients as well as connecting people to appropriate services in the community.

**Assesses  
individual  
needs**

**Establishes  
an effective  
referral  
network**

**Emphasizes  
the benefit of  
cross-agency  
collaboration**

# Outreach Model



Andersson (2013) proposes a broad definition: "The fundamental idea of outreach work is to start a process of social interaction between people in need, on the one hand, and some kind of support-oriented organizational body on the other." (p. 5)

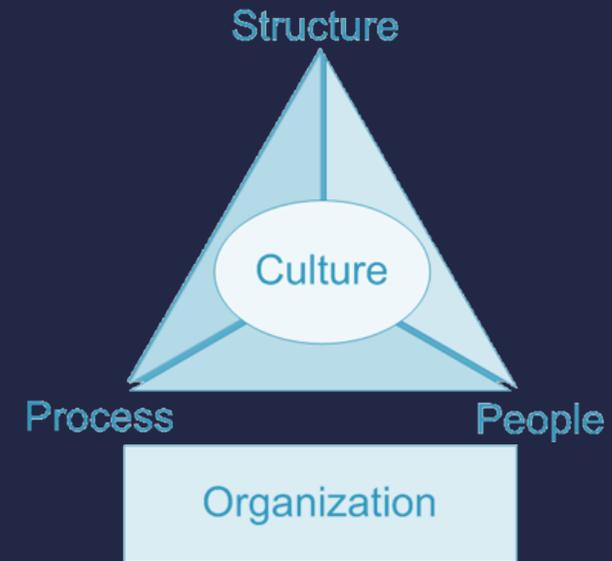
**Empowers  
and  
advocates for  
vulnerable  
groups**

**Enhances  
community  
linkage**

**Improves  
access to  
services**

# Assessment Model

Coulshed and Orme (2012) describe assessment as an ongoing process, which is participatory, seeks to understand the service user and his/her situation and sets a basis for planning how change or improvement can be achieved.



**Interconnects  
different  
layers of the  
system**

**Engages  
internal and  
external  
stakeholders**

**Maintains a  
responsive  
and relevant  
system**

# Community and individual well-being is the shared goal



OLA

- Advocate for open equitable access to resources and information.
- Responsive service and awareness of needs.



OCSWSSW

- Advocate for social change and develop social cohesion.
- Empowerment of individuals and communities.

# SWITL options

- 1 Hosting social service agencies in the library.
- 2 Building partnership between public libraries and universities.
- 3 Requesting training from community partners to introduce Social Work lens.

MSW students

Nursing students

Outreach workers

Consultants

On-site service

Trainers

Part time Social Workers

Peer navigators



# TPL uses various strategies to reach vulnerable persons



# We offer cohesive programs/services that respond to the need of vulnerable persons

-  Women and Girls
-  Indigenous people
-  Racial and ethnic minorities
-  LGBTQ+ community
-  Youth
-  Seniors
-  Children
-  People with disabilities
-  People with low socio-economic status
-  Newcomers
-  People who are marginally housed or experiencing homelessness

# At TPL, Social Work is designed as a system-wide approach

**1** Share Social Work approach



**2** Make community connections



**3** Research and data collection



**4** Provide learning opportunities



**5** Support projects and initiatives



**6** Create resources and tools



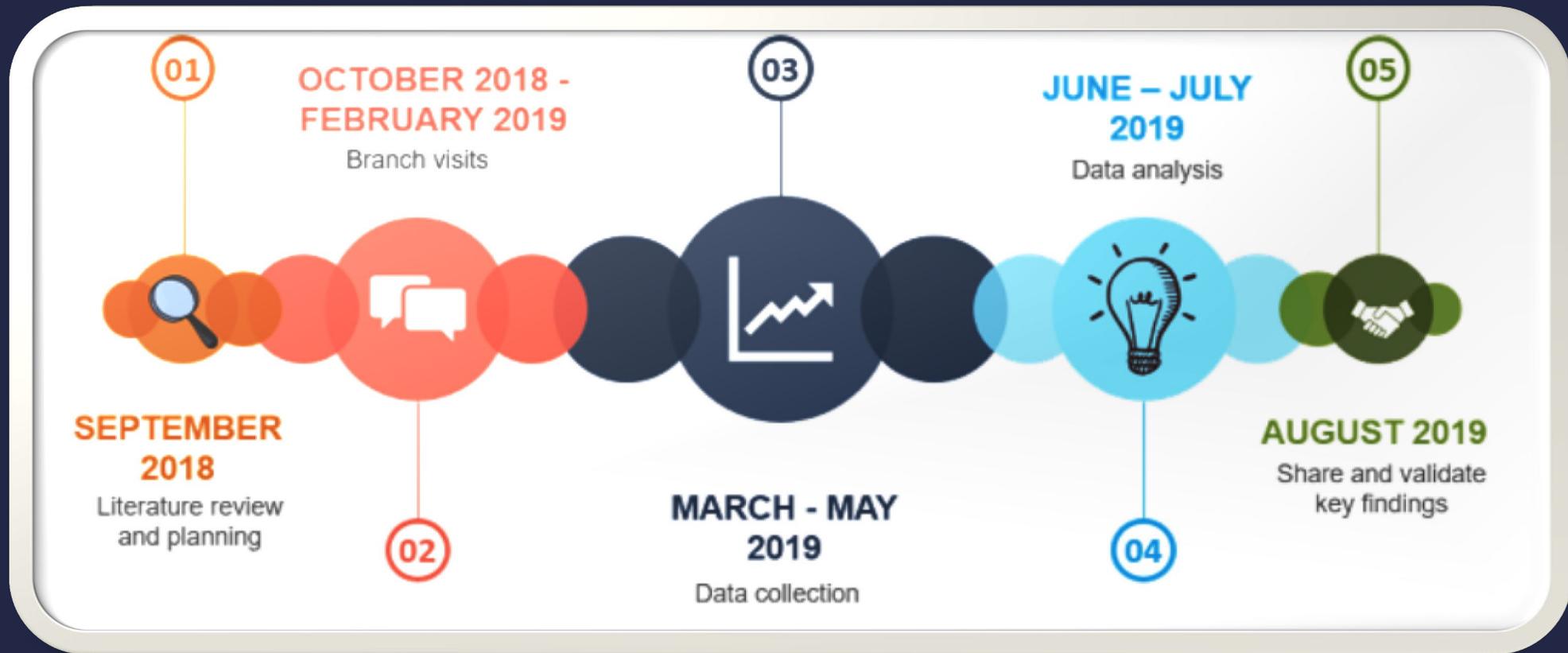
**7** Support Social work students



**8** Conduct a Needs assessment



# We assess needs to provide relevant services



**We build on our strengths and expertise**

**Asset based**

**Strengths**

**Skills**

**Resources**

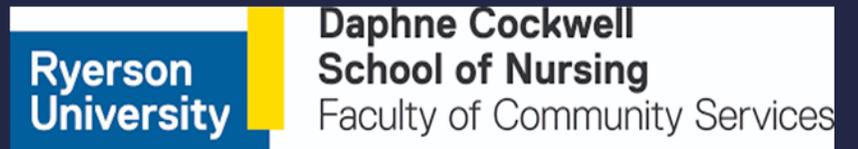
**Knowledge**

**Collaboration**

# We work with community experts



homeless connect toronto



# We pilot drop-in programs to engage vulnerable patrons



## COFFEE & CONVERSATION

Fridays  
2 to 4 PM

[torontopubliclibrary.ca](http://torontopubliclibrary.ca)



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## Coffee and Conversation

Sanderson Library  
Wednesdays, 1-3 pm  
March 20 & April 3

Join us for some informal discussion about the services in our community. Get to know your local librarians while enjoying some light refreshments. All are welcome.

Sanderson Branch  
327 Bathurst St. Toronto, ON M5T 1J1  
416-393-7653

[torontopubliclibrary.ca](http://torontopubliclibrary.ca)



# We ensure a knowledge base is available

## Homelessness in Toronto

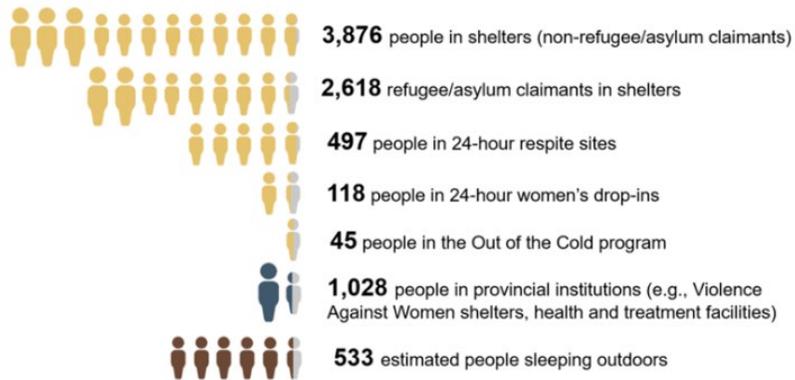


Image source: Street Needs Assessment, 2018

### Additional Resources

+ new item

Service Description Phone number Link

Type of resources : Health (9)

Type of resources : Legal (3)

Type of resources : Mapping tool (7)

### Referrals Quick Links

Description	Resource
24-hour respite sites offer a place to rest (usually a cot or a mat), meals, service referrals, and programming.	24-hour respite sites
Shelters provide temporary accommodation and related support services that assist people to move into housing.	Shelters
Free or low cost meals are available throughout Toronto. You can search by day of the week to find the breakfast, lunch or dinner nearest you.	Toronto Meal Program
Clothing bank programs provides individuals with much-needed clothing items. The availability of clothing can vary, please call ahead to make sure the item you're looking for is available.	Clothing banks
Ontario Works provides money for food, shelter and other costs to people in financial need who meet the eligibility criteria.	Financial Assistance through Ontario Works
ODSP provides financial assistance to people living with disabilities.	Financial Assistance through Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
In partnership with over 90 community agencies, Furniture Bank provides essential household items, free of charge, to formerly homeless individuals and families.	Furniture Bank
The Paid Project is city-wide and helps vulnerable people get the identification they need to access health care, sources of income such as pensions, and other services.	Paid ID Clinic
In addition to assessing eligibility for subsidized housing, Housing Connections supports households on the waiting list by making referrals to other services and supports to help address immediate housing needs.	Housing Connections

+ Add new item

### Documents

Type	Name
	City of Toronto Streets to Homes Service Model
	Free Clinics for Uninsured clients
	Guide to services for new tenants

+ Add document

### Glossary of Key Terminology

Name	Description
Diversity and Social Justice	This glossary is not intended to be an exhaustive list of terms related to diversity, many of these working definitions will continue to evolve
Mental Illness and Addiction index	Glossary of terms related to Mental Illness and Addiction compiled by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).
Racial Equity Tools	This glossary hopes to achieve some degree of shared understanding in the use of the most common terms related to racism.

+ Add new link

ShareTPL

BROWSE PAGE

- Site Home
- Services to Vulnerable Persons Work Group
- People Experiencing Homelessness
- Related Programs and Services
- Connecting Families Initiative
- Access T.O. - City Services for Undocumented Torontonians
- Recent
- Site Contents

> Public Service > Services to Vulnerable Persons

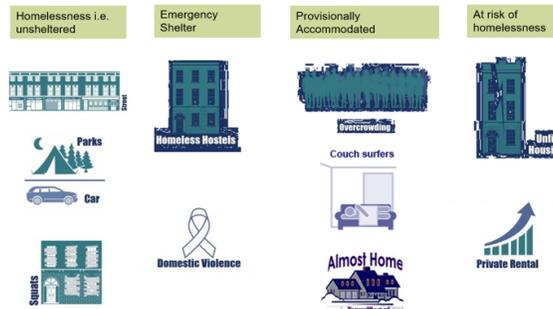
## People Experiencing Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness are one of the most vulnerable population in the City of Toronto. Experiencing homelessness can result in health inequities, social isolation, and victimization. Homelessness is defined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness as: "the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability to acquire it." This may be due to a combination of circumstances, including personal or family crisis, financial hardship, mental health or substance abuse, lack of affordable housing and lived experiences of discrimination, violence, and oppression.

Toronto Public Library plays a number of key roles in serving the needs of our communities. Toronto Public Library provides access to its services in a number of ways, including in-person and online access. TPL is open to everyone and provides access to:

- safe and welcoming spaces that also serve as warming and cooling centers
- programs and services
- community resources and serves as a community hub
- information and expert staff
- collection and resources
- technology and related supports (computers, Internet, Wi-Fi)

### Spectrum of homelessness

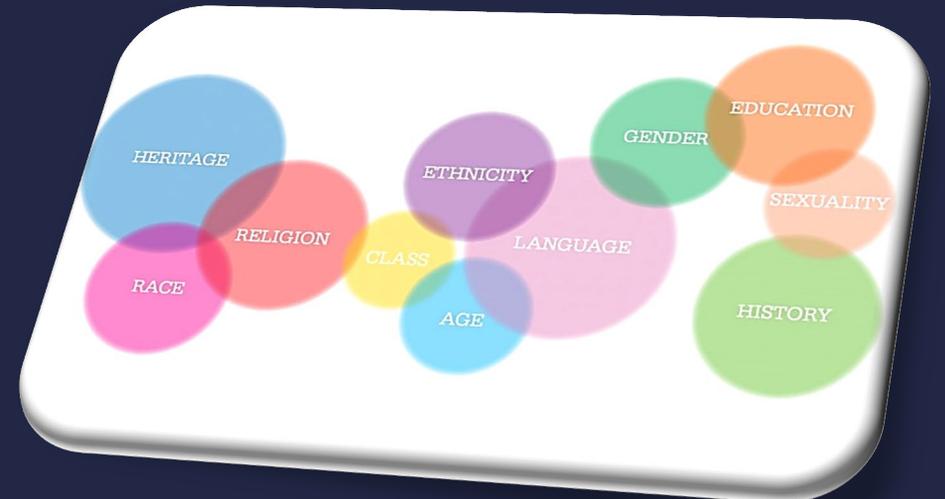
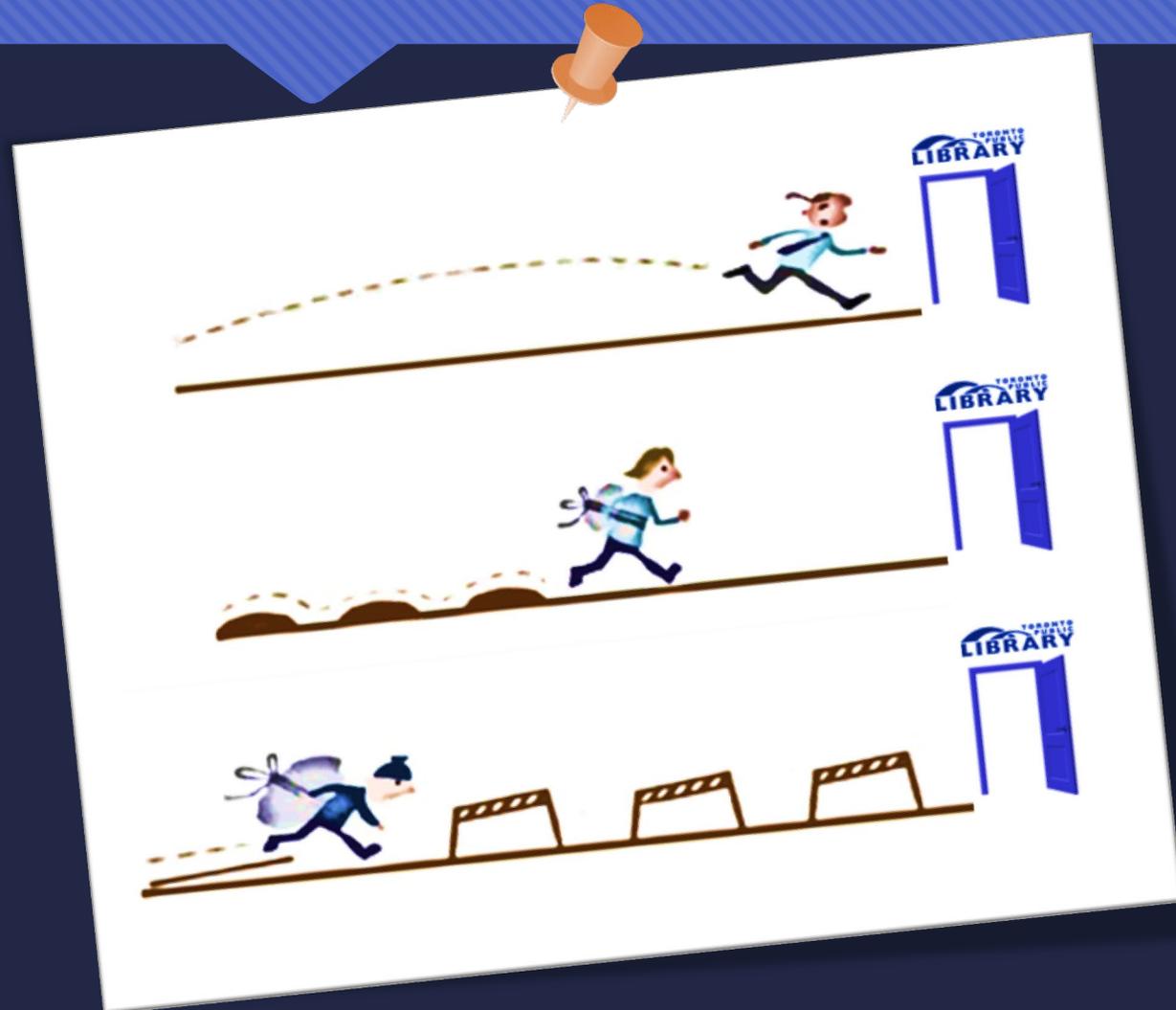


### Crisis numbers

Name	Description	Phone Number
The Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team (M-DOT)	Specialized team of providers from various organizations that delivers services to the most vulnerable individuals on the street and in shelters. To discuss a potential referral, please call Streets to Homes at 416-338-4766.	(647) 777-0130
Anishnawbe 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Management Service	Crisis services for Aboriginal clients	(416) 891-8606
Assaulted Women's Helpline	Crisis services for Women	(416) 863-0511; Toll Free 1-866-863-0511
Distress Centre	Crisis support over the phone, text or online chat	416-408-HELP (4357)
Gerstein Centre	Adults with mental health issues	(416) 929-5200
Kids Help Phone	Children and youth	1-800-668-6868
Youthdale's Crisis Support Team	Children and youth	(416) 363-9990
Scarborough Hospital Mobile Crisis Program	Crisis response for Scarborough and East York	(416) 495-2891
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre	Crisis line for victims of sexual violence	(416) 597-8808
Toronto Seniors Helpline	Phone line that offers information and access to community, home, and crisis services to seniors.	(416) 217-2077

+ Add new item

# We see challenges as opportunities



# Our best practice is to work at three different capacity

01



Apply consistent frameworks across the system



02



Offer capacity building opportunities



03



Build connections with social service agencies



# Key challenges

Isolation

No Social  
work  
Supervision

Knowledge  
transfer

Multi  
focused role

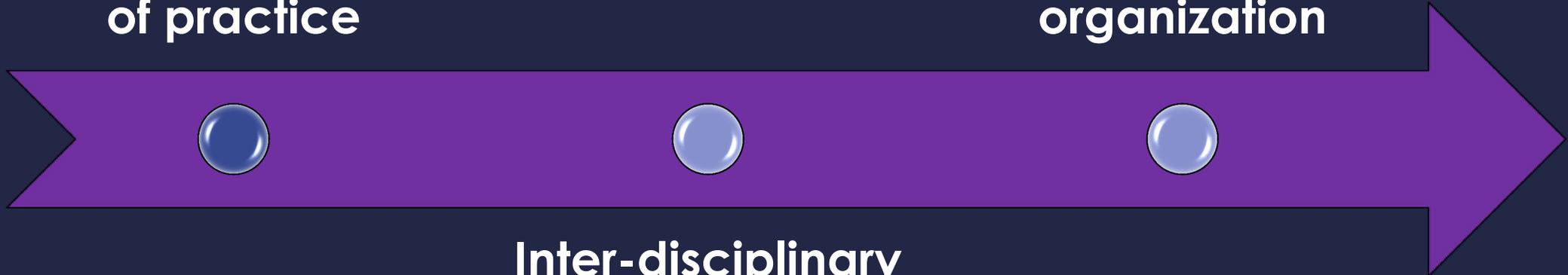
Expectations

# Implication for Social Work Practice/Research

Emerging area  
of practice

The Public library  
as a human  
service  
organization

Inter-disciplinary  
approach



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