



AS York's Emergency Care Response Fund helps people impacted by dementia in crisis.

Alzheimer Society of York Region creates Emergency Care Response Fund

When an Alzheimer Society of York Region (AS York) social worker connected with a caregiver to check in to see how she was doing, she discovered the caregiver and her person living with dementia had no immediate access to food.

AS York staff immediately mobilized, gathering food from its kitchens and delivering it to the client. This is not an isolated case.

Since mid-March, when AS York closed its DAY programs and other face-to-face meetings, social workers have reached out to their clients to check in how they are doing. And what they have found is that many York Region residents impacted by dementia are now in crisis.

With social distancing and the closure of programs and services, caregivers are now having to care for their person diagnosed with dementia 24/7 without respite from AS York, personal support workers or family and friends. Caregivers are exhausted, stressed and emotionally drained.

People diagnosed with dementia are also failing. Without access to social stimulation programs and being with other people, many caregivers are reporting a sharp decline in their person's abilities.

Caregivers are also terrified they will catch COVID-19, leaving their loved one without someone to care for them. They are also afraid their family member will catch the virus because of their inability to practice social distancing and personal hygiene, and their already compromised health.

York Region residents impacted by dementia are in crisis because:

- They can't access food because grocery stores are limited to one family member and they are unable to leave their person at home alone. If they bring their person, there is the fear of not following social distance and personal hygiene rules.
- Essential needs such as food, personal care items and medicine are difficult to acquire.
- Needs for items such as food, personal care items, toilet paper, etc. increases as their loved one is at home full time.

- Caregivers are exhausted and do not know what to do to ensure their family members are mentally and physically stimulated and require help keeping their person engaged.

In response, AS York has established an Emergency Response Care Fund, raising money to provide necessities to help York Region residents impacted by dementia in crisis. The fund will ensure those in crisis have access to things they need – food; incontinence and hygiene products; prescriptions; and items that bring comfort and engagement to people diagnosed with dementia including dolls, stuffed animals, colouring books, music and other items.

This fund will continue operating and accepting donations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and for as long as there is a need to help York Region residents impacted by dementia.

While AS York has temporarily closed our DAY centres, we continue to connect with our clients and are still here to help our family, friends and neighbours in need.

To give to the Emergency Response Care Fund and help York Region residents impacted by dementia in crisis, visit bit.ly/ASYorkGiveWeb . Every gift will be used to help people living with dementia who are in crisis.

Thanks to the Carswell Family Foundation, every gift donated to the Emergency Response Care Fund will be matched dollar for dollar.