



2025 Project Review and Impact

Engaging older adults through social prescriptions, Links2Wellbeing is transforming the way healthcare providers link older adults across Ontario to social and recreational opportunities, promoting holistic health and well-being.

A total of 125 Seniors Active Living Centres (SALCs) and older adult centres are currently participating. Since 2021, the project has received 2800 referrals and counting, with 57% of all referrals now participating in programs. To-date, referrals have stemmed from over 392 distinct healthcare partnerships such as community health centres, hospitals, and pharmacists. Another 281 potential referral sources have been identified through ongoing outreach.

Referred clients have predominantly been women (76%), most commonly aged 65 to 74 (35%) or 75 to 84 (28%). A significant portion have reported living with a physical disability and/or living alone. Other participants include caregivers and individuals from Francophone, Indigenous, and other ethnically and linguistically diverse communities.

Participants have reported many positive impacts. Among those who reported on feelings of loneliness (n=91), 40% experienced a decline within 6 months, with average scores decreasing from 6.1 to 5.2 on a 9-point scale. By 12 months, loneliness scores declined further to 4.8. Participants also self-reported fewer primary care provider appointments (48%) and emergency department visits (32%) after 12 months.

First-hand client stories highlight a meaningful impact along 3 themes: strengthened social connections, improved physical health, and enhanced emotional well-being. Their testimonials highlight the difference social prescribing has made in their lives. Access to subsidized activities has also been greatly appreciated.

“One of my clients went from zero socialization to going to a SALC 2 or 3 times a week... I can confidently say that the social prescription to and subsequent experience at a SALC was the primary reason for me being able to discharge that client.”

Links2Wellbeing referral partner;
Mental Health professional



The OACAO project team provides one-to-one coaching and group training for L2W partners, including *Conversation Cafés* and other educational sessions. Our unlisted YouTube channel and virtual library offer a variety of tools and resources for L2W partners to support their efforts. This past year, we delivered over 25 outreach presentations on social prescribing in diverse settings. OACAO's 2024 *Aging Well Conference* also hosted a social prescribing pre-conference event. Collaborations with universities on various research topics are ongoing.

Key project learnings to-date highlight the importance of dedicated human and financial resources, strong leadership, and access to eReferral systems on the sustainability of social prescribing initiatives. SALCs with intentional staffing are often more effective, and access to eReferral platforms like Oceans or Caredove provides a significant advantage. The OACAO is addressing these challenges by improving data collection tools, simplifying referral forms, and exploring broader SALC access to eReferral systems. We are also exploring collaborative implementation models, such as piloted "Hubs" in Eastern Ontario, to ease administrative demand. A Social Prescribing Leadership Table also provides guidance on strategic issues.

CONNECT WITH US!

If you are interested in joining the project, referring to a SALC, learning more about social prescribing, or collaborating, please connect through L2W@oacao.org.

