

Creating Pathways to Opportunity



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22


Social Services

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Us	3
Mission	3
Vision	3
Values	3
Message from the board chair	4
Annual Report 2022	5
Health and Safety	5
Service Quality	5
Partnership and Collaboration	6
Financial Strength	7
Social Services	8
Sanad Program	8
New Location at 627 Main Street	9
Emergency foods services	10
The Barakah Box Program	10
People Supported Testimonials	11
Employee and Volunteer Recognition	11
Financial Information	12
Corporate Profile	13
Board of Directors	13
Senior Management	13
Locations	13

ABOUT US

Our agency serves to bridge the gap between current services in Hamilton and the Muslim population. However, everyone is welcome, regardless of faith.

The word “Mishka” is an Arabic word describing a niche in a wall where lamps are placed, radiating light to the surrounding areas. Our name embodies the principles that drive us as an agency - we strive to be a beacon that empowers our clients to light up the world around them.

Mission

Our mission is to better our community by providing social services through safe spaces, advocacy, and building pathways between existing services and the Muslim community.

Vision

A community where everyone has pathways to opportunity.

Values

- Based on Islamic values and principles
- Inclusion
- Community-based
- Leadership in Excellence
- Equity
- Justice

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

“Despite the pandemic influencing the way we deliver our programs and services, we have continued serving our community. In 2022, Mishka Social Services expanded its social service program, reinvented its Halal food bank, completed a new strategic plan, and reorganized at a senior management level!”

With the support of the Hamilton Community Foundation and Employment and Social Development Canada, Mishka Social Services expanded the Sanad program (page 8) obtaining new staff and support to provide culturally informed case management to Muslim, Muslim-adjacent, marginalized, racialized, low-income individuals and families.

With the support of Islamic Relief Canada and the National Zakat Foundation, Mishka Social Services has been able to continue to provide emergency halal foods to over 500 Muslim families in Hamilton, Ontario. Our volunteer-led program reinvented the food bank model whereby our registrants now have a reloadable gift card that they can use at Eastern Food Market, our local halal grocery store partner. This transition has given them the dignity and power to make their own

choices about the products they need when they need them.

As our communities change and diversify, so too did Mishka. Over the past year, we have welcomed new staff, volunteers, and a program manager. These changes have brought more expertise to the teams which has resulted in the bolstering of collaboration across the agency.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the leadership team, it is a great privilege to display what we have accomplished in this report. Mishka Social Services' excellence in service has been made possible with the continued support, efforts, and commitment of our funders, community partners, employees, and volunteers. We look forward to expanding our services and continuing to deliver quality service in the future.



Dr. Khalid Azzam

Board Chair

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Health and Safety

Mishka Social Services embraced the responsibility to protect the safety and well-being of our employees, volunteers, and those we serve by adhering to Covid-19 protocols. As the province transitioned to the Covid-19 exit strategy, Mishka Social Services embraced and continued safer practices in delivering service.

The Sanad program offers virtual or phone options for consultation and case management to individuals and families. Through this, it became clear that there was a need for seniors among the vulnerable populations we serve needed support with computer literacy. Mishka Social Services aims to roll out a computer literacy and friendly visiting program in 2023 to bridge this gap and to also foster more ways of keeping everyone safe.

BarakahBox reinvented the halal food bank delivery system and has successfully transitioned to a gift card system. This reduced the traffic produced by the drive-by food box program to which guests were accustomed. Mishka Social Services is committed to reviewing and evaluating the agency's risk management annually, and to continue to make recommendations for improvement where it is needed.

Due to the impacts of Covid-19, and with the interest of safety, it is with great sadness to announce that the Sawa program seized its operations. However, in the new strategic plan, this gap in service will be further addressed.

Service Quality

Mishka Social Services believes that Muslim, Muslim-adjacent, racialized, marginalized, and low-income children, youth, adults, and families are a great risk for experiencing injustice, poverty, illiteracy, mental illness, and lack of opportunities. Through the Sanad and BarakahBox program, these risks are addressed through the help of diverse workers that can relate to, and provide professional care to reduce these negative experiences.

We have recently incorporated an interagency model where those on the waitlist for the BarakahBox food program receive consultation through Sanad staff to support them until they can gain access. The Sanad program works alongside families for a short or long duration depending on the person's supported needs. Despite the long waitlist, staff check-in and provide consultation and resources as individuals and families wait for service. Through this integrative model, we honor our vision to continue to create pathways of opportunities for all seeking support.

Moving forward, Mishka Social Services is interested in creating new programs that address the needs identified in the current services provided. Through our work, we have realized that seniors are not able to access virtual support, a great number of people supported are struggling with mental health, and Muslim families are having trouble navigating the developmental service system. The initial work has started in developing programs to respond to these needs identified.

Partnership and Collaboration

In 2022, Mishka Social Services, with the support of the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI) collaborated with the Children Aid Society of Hamilton to develop the Muslim Advisory Council, consisting of six organizations for building a model to support Muslim families in Hamilton. Currently, Mishka Social Services and CAS are working to build a partnership that addresses foster homes caring for Muslim youth, the lack of Muslim foster parents, and the challenges of Muslim youth transitioning into the community.

Over the past year, Mishka Social Services worked with various partners across the social service sector of Hamilton to better serve those seeking support collaboratively, and with a cultural lens. Mishka Social Services has also joined a research initiative based at the University of Toronto, working to explore the social service



needs of Muslims in Ontario. Mishka Social Services is now also a member of the Hamilton Chambers of Commerce.

The goal of Mishka Social Services' partnership and collaboration direction is to foster strong relationships that can produce programming that strengthens, expands, or creates new services in Hamilton.

Financial Strength

Mishka Social Services has received funding from Hamilton Community Foundation, Employment and Social Development Canada, and Islamic Relief Canada to help continue to serve Muslim, Muslim-adjacent, racialized, marginalized, and low-income members of the community. The goal for Mishka Social Services is to secure annual funding to sustain the Sanad and BarakahBox programs and to roll out new programs and services. Through building programs, engaging the community, and participating in research, Mishka Social Services aims to be a voice and continue to inform the valuable work we are doing.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Sanad Program

Over the past year, we observed that the case management and advocacy support the Sanad program provides expanded to which over 80 individuals and families were supported while our waitlist grew to 50 and counting. We have supported individuals and families with concerns around housing, employment, legal, disability, medical, financial, educational, interpretation, and emotional support. Through this work, we have identified more gaps in the pathways to opportunities among Muslim, Muslim-adjacent, racialized, marginalized, and low-income members of the Hamilton community. It was observed that seniors from this population were socially isolated and not familiar with computer literacy. Moreover, men, women, and youth expressed interest in mental health support and peer group support. Families who had a loved one with a developmental disability needed support that aligned with their traditional values, and much more.

Mishka Social Services had noted and taken measures to respond to these needs through future programming. Sanad will become a host to various forms of social services through which members of this vulnerable population can find the support they need. Further, along with the Muslim Advisory Council's role of becoming a hub to support the partnership between Mishka and CAS, this council will also serve as a multidisciplinary and integrative model that consults regarding complex and sensitive cases. These projects are at the formation stages and will aim to showcase our vision, of “creating pathways to opportunities.” This is not just a mantra, but a possibility as we work together as a united front and empowered team.

Case Example:

This Arabic-speaking family of 10 had their social benefits ceased due to insufficient information and faced challenges due to linguistic and technical barriers. Our Community Service Workers supported the family in communicating with Ontario Works and navigating online applications. They also faced eviction from their



current landlord and the CSW supported them by providing housing support and connecting/collaborating with the Good Shephard Family Centre.

New Location at 627 Main Street

As our services increasingly began covering west, east, and central downtown Hamilton, Mishka Social Services connected with the Somali Community in Hamilton to discuss shared space to help members of this vulnerable and underserved population gain easier access to our support.

This move will enable us to hold more community education and foster collaborations with community partners located in downtown Hamilton. This new location will allow us to create a continuity of care and support where people supported can come from various projects and programming run through Mishka Social Services.

EMERGENCY FOODS SERVICES

The Barakah Box Program



BarakahBOX area.

BarakahBox is a food bank operation in the Hamilton area that we have been running since 2015! It is Mishka Social Service's largest project and is a joint venture with Islamic Relief Canada and National Zakat Foundation. Barakah Box serves Halal foods to more than 400 families each month in the Hamilton

As we have transitioned to a gift card system, families are now able to go to the local halal food market (Eastern Food Market) and purchase foods of their choice within their allocated budget that is based on income, family size, and eligibility. This transition has given them the dignity and power to make their own choices about the products they need when they need them. Barakah Box's food bank registration can be done online or on the first Saturday of each month at the Hamilton Mountain Mosque (MAH).

Mishka Social Services aims to develop this program by first assessing the needs of this population. Some programs may include the introduction of clothing donations and/or healthy eating education. Mishka Social Services always asks, "So where do we go from here?"



People Supported Testimonials

“The support I received from my care worker has been extremely helpful and I am so grateful for all the ways my life and my disabled son's life have changed. Please continue this work, you are all angels.”

“I appreciate the quick response and the timely support.”

“As I said before, it feels really good to have support from my community and culture. This was the major barrier back in New Brunswick.”

“This service has helped my life here in Canada and I am very grateful for the support I have been receiving.”



Employee and Volunteer Recognition

Mishka Social Services staff and volunteers work tirelessly to meet the needs of those we serve and support. We thank them for their dedication, commitment, and perseverance.

Mishka Social Services, in partnership with National Zakat Foundation and Islamic Relief, aim to hold what will become an annual appreciation dinner for staff and volunteers.

100% of staff and volunteers consider their work at Mishka Social Services to be meaningful.

CLIENTS SERVED

April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023

82

Sanad Program

432

Barakah Program

514

Total Served

Sanad Program



82

Barakah Box

432

Total Served

514

CORPORATE PROFILE

Board of Directors

- Dr. Khalid Azzam (Chair)
- Nagham Azzam (Founder/Director)
- Sabreina Dahab (Director)
- Zeshan Arshad (Treasurer)
- Abdullahi Abdi (Director)
- Dr. Waleed Kishta (Director)

Senior Management

- Omar Mahamed (Programs Manager)

Locations

Mailing Office

154 Mohawk Rd.
Ancaster Ontario
L9G 2W9

Corporate Office

1545 Stone Church Rd E.
Hamilton, Ontario
L8W 3P8

Satellite Office

627 Main St. East
Hamilton, Ontario
L8M 1J5