



CREATING PATHWAYS
TO OPPORTUNITY

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of several cupcakes. Each cupcake is topped with a swirl of frosting in shades of orange and white, and is decorated with small, delicate white flowers and green leaves. The cupcakes are arranged on a light-colored surface, possibly a tray.

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2024**

1. ABOUT US
2. MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
3. SPECIAL THANKS TO MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF HAMILTON
- 4,5. POSITIVE CHANGES
6. BARAKAH BOX
7. SANAD
8. FASP WORK
9. MISHKA THERAPY
10. SENIOR WELLNESS PROGRAM
11. PARENTING SUPPORT GROUPS
12. THE SAWA SCHOOL INTEGRATION PROGRAM
13. HAMILTON SOCIAL PROGRAM
14. EXPANSION TO NIAGARA REGION
15. MISHKA BOUTIQUE: A COMMUNITY THRIFT STORE
16. COMMUNITY EVENTS
17. CLIENTS SERVED
18. EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION
19. FINANCIAL INFORMATION
20. CORPORATE PROFILE

ABOUT US

Mishka Social Services is a not-for-profit charitable organization that has provided essential services to the newcomer, immigrant, and refugee sector since 2015.

Mishka is committed to improving the mental, physical, and social wellbeing of those we support in Hamilton, and surrounding areas.

OUR MISSION

Drawing inspiration from the Arabic term 'Mishka,' symbolizing a niche illuminated by lamps, reflecting our commitment as a guiding light. Our mission and focus is on bridging service gaps in Hamilton, particularly for the racialized newcomer, immigrant, and refugee population. However, everyone is welcome, regardless of faith.

OUR VISION

A community where everyone has pathways to opportunity.

VALUES

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

MESSAGE

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The achievements highlighted in this annual report reflect the incredible strides Mishka Social Services has made in 2024, as we continue to expand our programs and deepen our impact. This year, we proudly introduced Parenting Support Groups and Respite Services for caregivers supporting loved ones with developmental disabilities. We opened a new thrift store and expanded our operations to a second location at the Dream Center. Our team has grown significantly, from three staff members to twelve, along with additional contractors and a dedicated cohort of new volunteers.

In 2024, we extended our reach to the Niagara region, offering halal food bank support and a variety of social services. Within the Hamilton community, we strengthened our presence, organizing impactful events that empowered women,

youth, and families. From distributing backpacks and winter gear to hosting activities that promote resilience and connection, our efforts have touched countless lives.

These milestones are a testament to the tireless dedication of our board, management, staff, volunteers, and partners. Their collective efforts have enabled us to deliver timely, compassionate support to the most vulnerable among us.

As we reflect on the year, we remain deeply grateful to our community of supporters, including donors, partners, and volunteers. Your belief in our mission fuels our drive to consistently deliver service excellence. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the leadership team, thank you for your steady commitment to building a brighter, more inclusive future for those we serve.

With gratitude,

Dr. Khalid Azzam, Board Chair



Omar Mahamed, Executive Director



SPECIAL THANKS

TO THE MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF HAMILTON

The Muslim Association of Hamilton (MAH) has once again been a pivotal supporter of Mishka Social Services throughout 2024. The board, leadership, staff, volunteers, and clients of Mishka Social Services express our heartfelt gratitude to MAH for their unwavering dedication and partnership over the years.

Your support has been instrumental in our progress, providing us with office space that fosters collaboration, advocating for our mission, and promoting our work within the community. MAH has championed initiatives that break down the stigma surrounding mental health treatment and empowered women through sports, including basketball programs.

Moreover, your financial contributions and collaboration on key events have significantly enhanced our ability to serve clients and create pathways to opportunity. The investments MAH has made in Mishka have been a cornerstone of our shared mission, enabling us to deliver meaningful, life-changing support to the most vulnerable in our community.

As we reflect on the impact of our partnership, we cherish the memories and milestones achieved together. Your enduring commitment continues to inspire and empower us, and we look forward to building on this strong foundation in the years to come. Together, we are making a lasting difference.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Mishka Social Services

IMPACTFUL POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS

Expanded Location

Mishka permanently has a satellite office
207-627 Main Street East



New Programs:

With the guidance of our leadership team, we launched:

Parenting Support Groups
Hamilton Social Program
(evening recreational programming for youth with developmental disabilities)
Mishka Boutique; a community thrift store.

Streamlining Services

Every service now features a registration form on our website. We've streamlined processes to collect testimonials, reward staff and volunteers, and schedule community office times.

With support from the Hamilton Community Foundation Participatory Grant, we recruited a Volunteer Engagement Coordinator and over 10 volunteers. Additionally, we enhanced donor stewardship by launching Mishka Lifeline, our monthly donor club.

Expanding Team

In 2024, our staff grew rapidly from 3 to 12, filling roles in community service, fund development, volunteer engagement, and administration. We also developed a dedicated volunteer base, providing program support and on-call assistance to those we serve.

Expansion to Niagara Region

We expanded our services to the Niagara region, partnering with Links for Greener Learning to provide the Barakah Box Halal Food Bank program and Sanad case management. Looking ahead, we plan to extend our reach to Brantford and Halton regions in 2025.



IMPACTFUL POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS

Research Initiatives

With McMaster University, we have been able to support their Crowdfearing research by implementing an innovative approach to ending food insecurity. Seniors and individuals with disabilities can now order on the website and have their halal food groceries delivered to their doorstep.

We were able to collect feedback from 45 newcomer seniors and individuals with disabilities to help enrich the City of Hamilton Community Safety and Well Being Report.

Social Media and Communication

We increased our social media followers by 25%, engaging them through updates, acknowledgments, and awareness campaigns. Additionally, we launched a media campaign featuring interviews, videos, and collages, all highlighting our impact through the voices and experiences of our clients.

Student Placement

In collaboration with Mohawk College, Mishka Social Services mentored three social service worker students, with two more set to start in early 2025. We provided on-the-job training and support, and in 2025, aim to work with recreational therapy students for our Hamilton Social Program.

Waitlist Management

Although our waitlists have grown due to expanded services, our management remains consistent. Clients continue to receive consultations and temporary support, such as gift cards, referrals to partner agencies for supplies, assistance with application completion, and more, while waiting for one-on-one support.



EMERGENCY HALAL FOOD BANK



Barakah Box has undergone a transformative journey throughout 2024. This year, registrants have been using reloadable cards monthly to shop at our local grocery store partner, Eastern Food Market.

With invaluable support from Islamic Relief of Canada, we have addressed hunger for 125 families each month, impacting over 500 families in Hamilton. Thanks to the backing of RBC Foundation, Show Kids You Care, and J.P. Bickell Foundation, we were able to expand our services and provide support to even more families throughout the year. We are deeply grateful to all our partners, whose collective efforts have helped us alleviate hunger for hundreds of families.

A significant milestone was the expansion of the Barakah Box Halal Food Program to the Niagara Region. In

partnership with Links for Greener Learning and funded by la Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso, we were able to support nearly 100 families in just three months, with a growing waitlist. We are thrilled that Humaniti Foundation has agreed to extend our three-month pilot into a year-long initiative, with plans to support over 200 families.

In collaboration with McMaster University and their CrowdFeeding Project, which addresses critical issues of hunger and food waste in Canada, we contributed valuable insights through our involvement in PROJECT 8: Retailer – Food-charity. This year also marked an exciting innovation in food bank services, allowing seniors and individuals with disabilities to order food online and have their deliveries sent directly to their homes. We look forward to the continued success of this four-year partnership and the positive impact it will have.



Humaniti



J.P. Bickell FOUNDATION

SHOW **Kids** YOU CARE



SANAD SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

This year marked a transformative phase for Sanad as we transitioned into four specialized streams of service: adults, youth, seniors, and individuals with developmental disabilities. This restructuring enabled us to better meet the needs of our diverse clientele, resulting in an astounding 315 community referrals—three times the volume from the previous year since the program's inception in 2021.

Strengthening Capacity to Meet Growing Demand

With the invaluable support of the United Way Halton and Hamilton, Sanad was able to add two part-time community service workers to the team, significantly enhancing our capacity to serve the growing community needs.

In addition to expanding our team, we introduced a comprehensive data analysis strategy to better understand client trends, including social issues (financial assistance, housing, medical coordination, mental health, and isolation), languages spoken, immigration status, family size, and more. This data informed targeted training for staff and volunteers, equipping them with the knowledge and resources to address the most pressing needs effectively.

Partnerships Driving Systemic Change

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Hamilton Child and Family Supports for their collaboration over the past year. Together, we have worked to find systemic solutions to improve the welfare of Muslim children in foster care and strengthen relationships with Hamilton's Muslim, newcomer, immigrant, and refugee communities.

As part of this pilot initiative, we introduced a cultural broker service at Mishka, enabling Muslim families to navigate the child welfare system with the support of professionals who share their values and traditions. This approach fostered rapport and trust, resulting in successful support for nine families and achieving high overall satisfaction ratings. We look forward to continuing this impactful partnership.

Regional Expansion and Additional Services

Sanad's reach extended beyond Hamilton into the Niagara region, addressing the rising demand for services in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines. In Hamilton, we continue to operate from our two locations: 1545 Stone Church Road East and 207-627 Main Street East.

Supporting Families with Young Children

Through our partnership with The Baby Depot, eligible Sanad clients were provided with a unique one-hour free shopping experience for essential items for infants two years old and younger. This initiative eased the financial burden for many families, allowing them to access clothing and other necessities for their young ones.

Acknowledging Our Funders

Our ability to expand and deliver these critical services is made possible by the generous support of our funders: La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso, The Traquair Family Foundation, The Hamilton Community Foundation, United Way Halton and Hamilton, The City of Hamilton, Muslim Association of Hamilton.

Their contributions have significantly enhanced our capacity to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of our community.

FINANCIALLY ASSISTED SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

Did You Know?

*Mishka Social Services offers social prescribing!
We didn't know either - until recently.*

In late 2024, Mishka Social Services became part of The Collective, a community initiative designed to foster learning, sharing, and collaboration to create a shared vision for social prescribing in Hamilton.



Hamilton's neighborhoods are marked by significant health disparities, especially in lower-income areas. The 2010 Code Red Report brought attention to the challenges faced by residents in Wards 2, 3, and 4, highlighting the urgent need for innovative solutions like social prescribing to address these systemic issues.

In 2025, Mishka Social Services will focus on helping make social prescribing a cornerstone of health equity in Hamilton. We are committed to raising awareness about the broad benefits of social prescribing,

while also working to improve access to community-based services that can support residents. Additionally, we aim to help remove barriers that prevent individuals from connecting with the essential resources they need.

By participating in The Collective and advancing social prescribing, Mishka Social Services is proud to be part of a transformative movement that will help create a more equitable and connected Hamilton. Together, we are ensuring that all residents have access to the support necessary for them to thrive.

MISHKA THERAPY

Mishka Counselling, now rebranded as Mishka Therapy, has entered its second year of service in 2024. This year has been marked by several key developments, including a modest update in client support, the addition of two new therapists, volunteer supervision, the launch of new platforms, and several successful outreach events. Notably, we hosted two mental health conferences aimed at breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health treatment within Muslim communities, as well as among newcomers, immigrants, and refugees.

Currently, we offer services through our registered psychotherapist (qualifying), with a team proficient in English, Arabic, Somali, Urdu, and Punjabi. Our program operates on a sliding scale, ensuring affordability for a wide range of clients. In cases of financial hardship, as identified through referrals from community partners, we are committed to providing fee waivers to ensure access to support.

Looking ahead, we plan to expand our presence in the community by offering both webinars and in-person support services, such as biweekly grief counseling. We also aim to live up to our new name, Mishka Therapy, by diversifying our therapeutic offerings. This includes the addition of services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and more. By broadening our range of services and increasing the languages in which we offer support, we are committed to making a deeper, more positive impact on the community.



Amna B.
Registered Psychotherapist
(Qualifying)



Dalia M.
Registered Psychotherapist



Omar M.
Registered Psychotherapist
(Qualifying)

SENIOR WELLNESS PROGRAM

Computer Literacy & Elder Abuse Education Classes, Friendly Visiting, and Friendly Calling Mishka Social Services is deeply grateful to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, whose support helped launch the Senior Wellness Program on June 12, 2023. As we approach the end of 2024, we are proud of the significant progress made across all three distinct service streams.

Our two Skill Development Instructors have successfully completed six cohorts, empowering over 50 adults and seniors with certificates in basic computer skills and knowledge on elder abuse prevention, including where to seek help. These classes have featured rotating locations across Hamilton, with the highlight being our partnership with the Hamilton Public Library Central Location. This move has brought such success that we've seen waitlists of over 24 participants for subsequent sessions. In 2025, we're excited to return to the library to support even more seniors in the downtown core.



Our Friendly Visiting Stream has blossomed through a valuable collaboration with the Alzheimer's Society, leading to increased referrals and helping us recruit additional volunteers to expand our support services. In late 2024, we also launched the Friendly Calling program, offered by a bilingual staff member fluent in both English and Arabic. This service addresses language barriers, helping alleviate isolation among seniors in our target population through engaging conversations, activities, and meaningful connections.

We are immensely thankful to our partners, including the Muslim Association of Hamilton, Ibrahim Jame Mosque, Hamilton Public Library, New Horizons, and the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, for their unwavering support of this program. In 2025, we are fortunate to receive additional funding from the Hamilton Community Foundation, which will allow us to continue these essential services while we await renewed funding in the new fiscal year.

PARENTING SUPPORT GROUPS

Mishka Social Services' Parenting Support Group, originally known as "The Cross-Cultural Parenting Program," was born out of a collaborative effort with Hamilton Child and Family Supports. In mid-2024, we rebranded the program to better reflect its true purpose: to create a supportive space where parents can connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. Through ongoing evaluation, we discovered that many parents hesitated to join a program that appeared to "tell them how to parent," so we shifted our focus to offer a more welcoming, peer-driven environment.

Launched on September 13, 2023, the program initially operated as a 12-week rotating course but quickly evolved into a flexible drop-in format, allowing greater accessibility for parents. Although participation numbers were low at first, the program gained momentum with the invaluable support of Compass Community Health, who were simultaneously developing their own parenting initiative. This partnership has been instrumental in sustaining the group, and since January 2024, the Parenting Support Group has continued to run drop-in sessions every 12 weeks.

Each session covers a variety of important topics such as healthy discipline, child development, creating a positive

home environment, and problem-solving. We are grateful for the contributions of our guest speakers, including representatives from RBC Bank, who provide valuable financial literacy resources, Hamilton Child and Family Supports, who share insights into the critical services they offer to families, and Compass Community Health, who highlight their community services.

Over the past year, the program has successfully supported more than 35 parents, offering certificates of participation. Parents enjoy light snacks and refreshments while their children receive care across the hall, provided by an Early Childhood Educator and volunteers, creating a safe and welcoming environment for all.

In 2024, we also completed a joint application with the Nisa Foundation for Ontario's Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. This funding will enable us to take the Parenting Support Group online, expanding our reach to serve Muslims and other newcomers, immigrants, and refugees in up to six additional municipalities across Ontario. We are excited to continue our work with the Nisa Foundation as we grow and expand this vital program.

THE SAWA SCHOOL INTEGRATION PROGRAM



In 2024, we continued our volunteer support at the Hamilton Downtown Islamic School, focusing on youth development in key areas such as personal growth, social skills, and academics. A particular emphasis was placed on supporting youth with learning disabilities, where we provided specialized assistance. In this effort, our valued partner, SMILE Canada Support Services, played a key role by offering training to both volunteers and staff on best practices for supporting individuals with disabilities.

Looking ahead to 2025, we aim to further strengthen our partnership with the Hamilton Downtown Islamic School. Our goal is to establish a more integrated presence within the school and its broader religious community. We envision creating a wraparound service model, where direct referrals can be made from the school to Mishka programs. Additionally, we aim to serve as a liaison between the school and other community partners, including child protective services, shelters, and other organizations, to provide comprehensive support to the youth and families we serve.

HAMILTON SOCIAL PROGRAM

Twilight Connections

In 2023, in collaboration with SMILE Canada Support Services, we hosted a two-week summer camp for youth with developmental disabilities at Ibrahim Jame Mosque. Despite the combined efforts of both agencies, which work closely with hundreds of families supporting loved ones with disabilities, the camp saw a lower turnout than expected. As a result, the camp was shortened to one week. This experience highlighted the need for more tailored and accessible programs for youth with developmental disabilities, sparking the idea for further community engagement.

In early 2024, we conducted a needs assessment at the Downtown Mosque Community Hall, gathering caregivers and parents of loved ones with disabilities for an intimate forum to discuss their needs. One of the main concerns raised during these discussions was the lack of recreational programming for youth with developmental

disabilities. This input directly informed the creation of the Hamilton Social Program, which launched in the summer of 2024 in partnership with Deen Support Services.

The Hamilton Social Program provides recreational activities, skill-building opportunities, and community outings for individuals with developmental disabilities. It aims to address the gaps identified through the needs assessment and continue the work initiated by the SMILE Canada summer camp.

Building on this momentum, Mishka Social Services, with funding and support from the Sick Kids Foundation, will host an annual forum in 2025 for caregivers and parents of loved ones with disabilities. The forum, titled Finding Abilities within Disabilities, will serve as a platform for continued dialogue, support, and resource-sharing within the community.



EXPANSION TO THE NIAGARA REGION

October 2024 marked a significant milestone for Mishka Social Services as we expanded our programs to the Niagara Region. Partnering with Links for Greener Learning, we introduced the Barakah Box Halal Food Bank program, providing culturally appropriate food assistance to families in need.

The Barakah Box program operates through a monthly reloadable gift card valued at \$50, which registrants can use at Eastern Food Market, our local grocery store partner in Niagara Falls. Eastern Food Market also offers a 10% discount to Barakah Box recipients. This innovative approach enables families to purchase culturally appropriate halal and traditional food items, addressing a common frustration among newcomers who often encounter limited food options that align with their cultural or religious needs.

By offering this alternative to the conventional food bank model, the Barakah Box program reduces stigma, promotes autonomy, and empowers families to make their own food choices with dignity. The program supports a healthier and culturally aligned diet, fostering well-being and satisfaction among recipients.

Initially launched as a three-month pilot funded by La Fondation Emmanuelle

Gattuso, the program has already supported nearly 100 families in less than three months, with a growing waitlist. In November 2024, the Humaniti Foundation committed to extending the pilot to one year, allowing Mishka, Humaniti, and Links for Greener Learning to make a more sustained impact in the region. We anticipate additional funders will join this initiative in 2025, further expanding its reach and impact.

As part of our expansion efforts, we also introduced the Sanad social work program to Niagara. This program offers personalized case management to individuals and families, addressing challenges related to housing, healthcare, and other essential needs. With Canada's newcomer population projected to grow by 30% by 2036, the demand for comprehensive support services is expected to rise, making this expansion both timely and necessary.

Our long-term vision is to fully establish Mishka's programs in Niagara, ensuring the community has access to services that promote well-being, dignity, and empowerment for newcomers, immigrants, and refugees. Together, with our partners and funders, we are committed to building a stronger, more supportive future for the Niagara Region.

Humaniti



COMMUNITY EVENTS

HOMELESS WINTER HYGIENE KIT (JAN)

2024 IFTAR FUNDRAISER

RAMADAN CHOCOLATE DATES DELIVERY DRIVE

MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH

CANCER SCREENING & MEASLES PREVENTION WORKSHOP

EID AL ADHA TOY DRIVE

JULY COMMUNITY BARBEQUE

BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE

WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE (DEC)

YOUTH WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

COOKIES FOR GAZA

MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE



CLIENTS SERVED

Barakah Box Hamilton:

625+ served

Barakah Box Niagara:

94+ served

Sanad Hamilton:

121+ served

Sanad Niagara:

13+ served

Mishka Counselling:

15+ served

Seniors Wellness Program

6 cohorts completed

Over 40 seniors graduate from computer literacy and elder abuse classes
Combined 20 seniors support through friendly visits

Parenting Support Groups

3 cohorts completed

Over 30 parents graduated from the 12 week classes

Hamilton Social Program

Over 5 participants and their families provided respite through recreational activities

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD AND
OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM,
MISHKA SOCIAL SERVICES WANTS TO THANK OUR
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS
FOR THEIR CONTINUED EFFORTS
IN MAKING SURE
THOSE MOST VULNERABLE
HAVE THE SUPPORTS IN PLACE THEY NEED
TO LEAD
A QUALITY LIFE.

FINANCIAL PROFILE

Muslim Association of Hamilton: \$60,000.00

Islamic Relief of Canada: \$45,000.00

La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso: \$32,000.00

United Way Halton & Hamilton: \$30,000.00

Hamilton Community Foundation: \$79,464.00

Traquair Family Foundation: \$10,000.00

Sick Kids Foundation: \$5,000.00

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility: \$3,674.00

New Horizons: \$12,534.00

Canada Race Relations Foundation: \$9,000.00

City of Hamilton: \$6,600.00

Compass Community Health: \$4,750.00

Show Kids You Care: \$1,500.00

CORPORATE PROFILE

Board of Directors

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

Senior Management:

Omar Mahamed (Executive Director)
Marwa Farghaly (Executive Assistant)
Eimaan Shahid (Administrator)
Rania Mohammed (Cultural Broker)
Abdallah Saifan (Service Coordinator)
Maryam Qader (Volunteer Engagement Coordinator)

LOCATIONS

Mailing Office
154 Mohawk Rd.
Ancaster Ontario
L9G 2W9

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

Satellite Office
207-627 Main St. East
Hamilton, Ontario
L8M 1J5

4465 Drummond Rd.
Niagara Falls, ON
L2E 6C5

The logo for Mishka Social Services features the word "Mishka" in a bold, dark grey sans-serif font. A stylized orange flame icon is positioned above the letter 'i'. Below "Mishka", the words "Social Services" are written in a smaller, orange sans-serif font.

Mishka

Social Services

CREATING PATHWAYS
TO OPPORTUNITY

