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# Welcome to



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We hope that your experience with York Hills will be helpful and rewarding. This handbook gives you a brief description of our services, as well as important information about working with you and your family.

At York Hills we care a lot about children's mental health and wellbeing. This caring comes from the privilege of supporting many families over the years. During this time, we've learned that:

- Parents want the best for their children
- Families are resourceful
- Families go through a lot when they try to find professional help
- Parents become more confident and capable when their family is supported

## WHO ARE WE?

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Born from a merge between The York Centre for Children, Youth and Families and Blue Hills Child and Family Centre, York Hills became an entity in November 2018. The merge of these two agencies allowed for an expansion of services to serve more children, youth and families in York Region. York Hills is a not-for-profit accredited children's mental health centre funded primarily by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Attorney General.

We have specialized experience in responding to the social, emotional and behavioural challenges of children, youth, and their families.

York Hills has three primary sites – one in Aurora and two in Richmond Hill. In our efforts to be responsive to families' needs and schedules, therapeutic work can take place in various locations as well as virtually.

Families are faced with many complex challenges. York Hills has access to various disciplines providing services that best meet the needs of children, youth and families. Our staff have a variety of educational backgrounds,

experience, and expertise, including social workers, psychotherapists, child and youth workers and other mental health professionals. We also have consultants in the areas of psychology, speech and language, occupational therapy, family systems and psychiatry.

## “NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US”

York Hills is committed to family-centered and family-directed services, and we believe that all families have the capacity to grow, learn and change. We are committed to collaborative partnerships that highlight the importance of bringing family voice and choice into the center of all our work together. At York Hills families truly experience “nothing about us without us.”

We believe that the child, youth and family are:

- At the center of every decision
- Experts on their own needs and values
- Active participants and partners in the decision making about their work with us
- Able to provide their voice/opinion and choices which in turn guide our efforts
- Part of a collaborative partnership between themselves and their worker, and that this partnership is based on mutual respect

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

At York Hills we are committed to engaging families in various initiatives and activities. Family engagement is an ongoing process that includes families as active decision makers and equal partners in service delivery at individual, organizational and system levels. At the commencement of services, we will ask if you would like to be contacted for an opportunity to join future engagement activities. Periodically, we will also put out general calls for involvement, through email, flyers or on our social media. We

believe that engaging families in a meaningful way will lead to better service experiences and outcomes.

## CONSENT TO SERVICE

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Your involvement with York Hills is voluntary. You can choose to end services at any time.

You will be asked to sign a Consent to Treatment acknowledging that:

- You wish to receive service from York Hills
- Treatment is voluntary
- You understand the agreement clearly
- The agreement clearly outlines York Hills responsibilities and commitments to you, as well as your responsibilities while participating in our programs
- At any time, for any reason, you are able to stop the service.

If we are concerned that the agreement is not being maintained, we will contact you and ask for your continued commitment to the program. Should you not wish to provide it, we can assume that you are withdrawing your voluntary consent to participate.

If there is any confusion or lack of clarity, do not hesitate to ask questions and share your concerns with us.

Children and youth may be able to access individual services without the permission and/or involvement of a parent/guardian. This decision is based on multiple factors such as age and capacity to make sound decisions.

Youth, 12 and older will be asked to provide consent in order to proceed with services.

## RISKS AND BENEFITS

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Engaging in treatment can have many benefits, although there are some risks to consider as well. In every service that you attend at York Hills the risks and benefits related to that particular service will be reviewed with you. Some general risks that are possible for children and family when they engage in service could be that they experience a range of emotions that they may not be used to. They may also experience setbacks and regression in behaviours as they work on doing things differently. There may be periods of confusion and uncertainty within the family and disagreement about things changing.

There are also many possible benefits of treatment which may include achieving goals that have been identified, improvements in behaviour and relationships within the family, understanding each other better, and developing new ways to cope with difficulties and stress.

## VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

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All that we do here at York Hills is guided by our vision, mission and values. We believe that we are accountable to maintain and live out our values in each and every interaction.

### VISION:

Working in partnership to empower children, youth and families through their mental health journey.

### MISSION:

To build hope and resiliency in children, youth and families.

### VALUES:

The values of York Hills reflect the philosophy and beliefs of our organization, guiding all our decisions and actions. In our organization we undertake through our actions to promote a climate of trust and harmony in all our endeavours. Our values include being:

- Inclusive
- People-centered

- Collaborative
- Knowledgeable
- Courageous

## YORK HILLS SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

York Hills provides **assessment** and **treatment** for children, youth, and families within York Region.

**Assessment** means that we try to understand each family's experiences and challenges by finding out what is going on. We do this by talking with you and your family, by using various tools that have been designed to help us understand the challenges that you are sharing with us, and with your permission, we talk with other service providers or supports you have been involved with and are currently connected to. Assessment is a collaborative process where we work together as partners in developing a shared understanding of what might be going on.

**Treatment** means the things we do to help your child, youth and family. York Hills provides a variety of services including individual, family, play, group therapy, day treatment and residential programming. Each of our programs have a focus, and each meets many different needs. We work closely with families regardless of the origin of the problem/challenge, and regardless of whether the challenge is considered an "individual" or "family" issue. We know that involving families in solutions is often beneficial.

Here's what we offer and how you can access specific services:

### Clinical Navigation

Many families beginning their work with York Hills will meet with a Clinical Navigator. The Navigator supports you in developing an initial plan to respond to your concerns and will assist you in accessing services. Together with the Clinical Navigator, you will map out your vision for your family and the related services that help.

### Workshops/Webinars and Group Programs

Participating in a workshop, webinar or group allows parents, children and youth to learn about and discuss common challenges like anxiety, challenging behaviour, and how to create meaningful family time. If you are interested in a group you can inquire about accessing through your assigned clinician. Webinars and some groups can be accessed through our website found here:

<https://www.yorkhills.ca/services/workshopsandwebinars/>

### Here to Help (H2H): Phone-In, Walk-In Counselling Clinic

The Phone-In and Walk-In Clinics provide counselling services to children, youth and families by allowing quick access to a therapist and an opportunity to address issues or concerns in a timely way. The Phone-In and Walk-In clinics provide single session service where you identify what you would like to talk about and leave with ideas about how to manage and cope. Appointments are approximately one hour in length and are offered on a first come, first serve basis. You can access the Phone-In or Walk-In services whenever there is a need and you would like to find support. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.yorkhills.ca/services/here-to-help-line/>

### Brief Therapy

Brief therapy offers an opportunity to access therapeutic supports to work on a particular area of concern. We work with your family over a short period of time (average of 3 sessions), moving forward with different ways of looking at struggles, and offer some concrete methods and strategies to try in your daily life together.



## Counselling

When it has been identified that you and your family could benefit from ongoing counselling and therapy, you, your family, and a therapist will co-develop a treatment plan that includes a shared understanding of the needs and challenges, as well as the identification of your resources and strengths. This shared understanding will build on your vision for your family and lead to the development of clear, measurable, and attainable goals. This allows for consistent tracking of the work together that monitors positive shifts, no matter how small. Counselling seeks to uncover an understanding of how much service is meaningful at this moment in time, and what other community supports and resources may support continued gains.

## Kuumba

Kuumba is a specialized program that provides a safe place by centering culture and community to provide counselling and therapy to children, youth, and caregivers who identify as black and who could benefit from services with a black identified therapist.

## PRIDE

The PRIDE program provides consultation and program review to York Hills' internal staff and programs on cases where children, youth and families identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ communities. PRIDE supports the exploration of gender identity and expression as well as navigating environmental challenges in a cis normative world.

## FMNI

This program offers support to our First Nations, Inuit and Metis families in York Region by helping to navigate families to the support they are looking for, and by ensuring that services provided are culturally appropriate and respectful. Services may include group, individual or family counselling and are offered within the community.

Staff at York Hills have access to ongoing support and learning opportunities and are encouraged to grow and develop their awareness,

literacy and understanding of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in Canada.

## Play Therapy

Play therapy involves using creative and playful ways for children to begin to sort out their feelings and to feel better. Play therapy involves many elements - including games, activities, music and art. This variety of methods makes it easier for children to understand and share thoughts about themselves and their experiences.

## Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)

The PATH program works with families during times of significant distress and heightened levels of crisis that require a more concentrated level of service. The program provides more frequent sessions over a shorter period of time in order to support the stabilization of a child/youth and the family. The focus of the program is to build coping skills and to increase the overall functioning of the family. Once stabilized, a transition to other supports and services may be necessary and will be supported by the PATH worker.

## Consultation and Assessment

Your Child and Family Therapist may engage in a conversation with you regarding the value of specialized consultation and assessment to support the understanding of the factors at play for your child, youth and family, as well as where and how to access services both here and in the wider community.

*York Hills also offers other services such as Family Mediation, Alternative Dispute Resolution, COMPASS (School based services), Day Treatment and Live-In Treatment. If you would like to know more, please ask your worker for more information.*

## MAKING THE CALL

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Each family's experience with York Hills' programs and services will be different; it depends on the supports your family needs. Here are the typical first steps in your journey:

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- Most families first reach out to us by calling our Intake Department through our main phone number (905) 503-5406
- Our Intake staff will listen to your concerns and hopes for services. They will collect information that you feel is important for us to best understand your situation
- When families can be better served by another service in the community, Intake staff will provide assistance in linking you with those services
- You will attend an orientation that will ground your understanding in York Hill's services and what to expect throughout your time with us.

## MEETING WITH YOUR WORKER

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When you first meet with a worker face to face or virtually, the material in this handbook will be reviewed with you, and we will take the time to discuss:

- Your hopes for service and review recommended services for you and your family
- The possible benefits and risks to receiving services from York Hills
- Any special needs or considerations that you would like us to accommodate
- Any other questions that you might have

## THE RIGHTS OF FAMILIES AT YORK HILLS

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**Children/youth and families have a right to:**

- Confidentiality (unless the child/youth is at risk)
- Participate meaningfully as a full partner in all aspects of you or your family's involvement. This includes identifying your needs, assisting with choosing and implementing strategies to achieve your goals, and helping to measure the outcomes
- Make decisions about services received
- Be treated without discrimination

- Receive respect and consideration in all aspects of the treatment process
- Privacy
- An accessible, safe and secure service environment
- Receive services in a way that is suitable to your communication needs
- Be confident in the knowledge, skills and qualifications of the professionals involved with you
- Have the client/service provider relationship clearly defined and shared with you
- Be informed of the risks and benefits of the treatment process
- Be informed about any alternatives to the services being offered
- Be made aware of the complaint procedure and how to voice your concerns or complaints
- Provide feedback to the service provider on the impact of the treatment process
- Withdraw from service at any time and be informed of any possible implications
- Have access to your file (some restrictions may apply) and, if necessary, correct agency information in your file/record

**Parents and guardians of children under the age of 12 have a right to:**

- Be an active participant in all aspects of determining which services would best meet you and your family's needs
- Be informed of all medical emergencies regarding their child/youth
- Be advised of the child/youth's rights and responsibilities and the complaint procedure

**WHAT WILL WE ASK OF YOU?**

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- To participate in the process and the development of treatment goals, and to be as open and honest as possible in your communication
- To collaborate with your worker in selecting the right mental health service for you and your family

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- To share with your worker if you do not understand something during the treatment process
- Attend scheduled meetings and appointments. Sessions may include all family members, children/youth alone, and/or parents alone
- To notify the appropriate individual(s) in a timely manner if you are unable to attend sessions.
  - By keeping your appointments, we can ensure that we are able to work with as many people as possible, keeping our waitlists low
- To respect the staff, other participants in service, and property of York Hills
- To allow York Hills access to information from community sources, i.e., hospitals, doctors, and/or other professionals that may help in the formulation of the treatment plan
- To provide York Hills with any information about your child, youth and family that will improve healthy family functioning

## WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM US?

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- To partner and be accountable to you about what would be most helpful for you and your family
- To have contact with your child/youth's teacher and school providing support or consultation when it is appropriate
- To contact other community agencies who can contribute information about your child/youth
- To ensure you are part of meetings that support planning for your child/youth and family
- To conduct ourselves within the realm of the Child and Family Services Act and legal responsibilities. This includes our obligation to inform the Children's Aid Society in cases of suspected abuse or neglect, and to contact the appropriate law or medical authorities where warranted
- To conduct ourselves in a manner respectful of your family's values and diversity

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York Hills' policies and practices are in full compliance with AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act). If you are a person with a disability, please let us know if you need accessible services. It is our goal to remove or reduce barriers and to treat people equally. We will work with you to find ways to allow you to use and benefit from our services in an equal and respectful manner.

Please contact us or leave a comment or suggestion in the designated area in our reception areas to clarify how we can assist.

## LEARNING ORGANIZATION

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York Hills is a learning organization that supports the ongoing learning of its employees through professional development opportunities, consultations, and clinical supervision. York Hills also provides learning opportunities to students in fields, such as, Social Work, Masters of Counselling Psychology, and Child and Youth Workers by completing their practicums with us. You may find in your time here that you and your family will be working with a student. This practice takes place under the guidance of a clinical supervisor. Should you wish to discuss working with a student please let us know by requesting to speak with the program manager.

## WHAT DOES YORK HILLS DO WITH YOUR INFORMATION?

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York Hills understands the importance of treating your personal information with respect and sensitivity. This means that in all aspects of our work with you the privacy of what we collect, how we use it, how we store it, and how we share it is just as important to us as it is to you.

We follow privacy principles as outlined in the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA). If you have any questions about our privacy safeguards, please ask your worker, or ask to speak with our Privacy Officer.

We collect personal and health information that could include: Name, address, date of birth, and health card information (if required). To help us provide the best kinds of services we may also collect information on your family background and history. Your personal information could be used to:

- Offer the best kind of service
- Get some feedback from you on the quality of the service you received
- Help us meet all legal and other regulatory requirements
- Contact you about upcoming community events, workshops, or other programs that you might be interested in
- Contact you about volunteering

## Direct and Indirect Collection of Information

Our main goal is to collect information from you directly. There may be circumstances where we collect information from others, for example when it reduces risk, or when it is not possible to collect it from you directly.

## Your Right to Access Your Records

You have the right to access your file. You may request to see and/or receive a copy of information from your file. Certain exceptions apply as outlined in our access to records policy which will be shared with you at the time of request.

## Your Right to an Accurate File

You are responsible to provide accurate and up-to-date information and have the right to correct and update information in your file. You may request that staff make corrections to your records where the record is shown to be incomplete or inaccurate. Staff may require that you put the request in writing to ensure accuracy of changes (i.e., changes in address, phone number, guardianship, etc.)

## Storage of Records

Your records may be in paper and/or electronic format. Paper files are kept in a locked file cabinet within a locked room. Electronic files are part of a web-based system that has many security features in place. Your file

cannot be accessed by anyone without an assigned and secure password. Your personal information in all forms (i.e., electronic, hard copy, audio/video) are maintained by York Hills for as long as you are a client here. Records will be kept 10 years after the day on which the client reached or would have reached 18 years of age.

## CONSENT

### Your Informed Consent

A consent is your verbal or written permission allowing us to ask for and/or share information with specific agencies, organizations or individuals. An "informed" consent for collection, use and release of information, means that the purpose has been explained to you in language and format that is understandable. York Hills does not share any information about you with anyone outside of York Hills and our associates (e.g., consultants, lawyers, accreditors) without your consent with the exception of limited to confidentiality outlined below.

### Your Implied or Understood Consent

We would like you to be aware that as a participant in a York Hills program or service, your personal health information may be shared with other relevant York Hills staff members and joint service delivery partner staff who are working with you and your care team. All staff, associates, volunteers, members of the Board of Directors, and others associated with York Hills are bound by an oath of confidentiality. Rigorous systems have been established to ensure that information is maintained in a confidential manner. Should there be a breach, procedures are in place to inform you.

### Limits to Confidentiality

We will not disclose your information to any third party without consent except where required by law. Examples include: If we have knowledge that there is an intention to commit a crime which may cause harm to yourself or another person; that a family member is in danger of harming someone or of being harmed; that there is suspicion of child abuse or a child in need of protection; that there is a directive through the courts to provide information, through subpoena, search warrant or other legal order.



## Your Right to Withdraw or Withhold Consent

Consent can be withdrawn at any time by informing us in writing. Once consent is withdrawn, we can no longer seek or share information. Withdrawal of consent cannot reverse any action that was already taken with your previous consent.

## Non-identifying information

Sometimes York Hills uses “non-identifying” information to help us evaluate our programs, ensure quality of service (including accreditation), and ensure compliance with legal and government regulations. This means that we use general information about the people who use our services, but in a way that does not identify you or your family.

## WHAT IS A CLINICAL FILE?

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As soon as your child is referred to York Hills, a file is opened. This file is a record of our involvement with your child and family. The file helps in organizing, guiding and summarizing our partnership. It assures effective communication with internal staff and professionals. The record ensures accountability to you, to the agency, to the funding sources and to the professional community.

The content of a file includes:

- Basic demographic information about you, your family and/or your child/youth
- Permission forms, consents and any correspondence
- Information you have shared about your family and the work and services that you have engaged in
- Any specialized assessments are also a part of the record

During the course of your service with York Hills we will provide you with copies of important reports (i.e., treatment plan) and documents. You may

also request access to your information by making a written request to your worker or to a manager.

### Electronic Communication

In some situations, you and your worker may wish to use e-mail to communicate. There are both benefits and risks when using e-mail, particularly with respect to confidentiality. If you wish to use e-mail we need your informed consent, knowing that:

- We will not provide counseling or treatment using e-mail
- Any confidential information sent through our secure signing platforms or e-mail will be with an encrypted password
- We will only check e-mail during working hours (8:30-4:30)
- We handle email communication in keeping with our confidentiality policies, however we cannot guarantee that e-mail communication will be confidential
- Emails and text messages will be summarized and entered into your file as part of your record
- Deleted emails may not be permanently deleted; back-up copies may exist on a computer or in cyberspace
- Emails can introduce viruses into a computer system and potentially damage the files. Emails can be viewed by York Hills IT staff for security purposes
- No phone or online video software is entirely secure. York Hills computer systems have strong internal security which helps to protect your privacy and confidentiality. York Hills will not be responsible for breaches of your confidential information if they are not the direct result of intentional misconduct
- You are asked to inform your worker of any changes to your email/text address

Text messaging is used only with your informed consent and only for the purpose of confirming appointment times.

York Hills does not permit staff to accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site. This is because doing so can compromise confidentiality and privacy, and blurs the boundaries of the counsellor/client professional relationship. It is a different

kind of relationship, and needs to be treated that way if it is to be useful to you and your family.

## Phone and Video Services

The use of technology can sometimes be a helpful way to provide service to you and your family, when meeting in person is not possible or suitable. However, before we agree to offer services (such as support or therapy) through phone or video options, it is important that you and your family understand and accept the risks and guidelines involved.

- To ensure your privacy, you should choose a private and quiet place where our conversation cannot be overheard and you are free from distraction. When meeting by phone or video, there is a risk of others finding out about you working with York Hills if you did not want them to know.
- You are asked not to record the session without the direct permission of everyone involved.
- All individuals present for the phone or video session must be within view of the camera or acknowledge their presence so that everyone is fully aware of who is participating.
- It is necessary to let staff know of your location and provide an emergency contact, and that in the event of an emergency, emergency services may be called to your location.
- There could be interruptions in meetings due to technology or connection failures, and we will create a plan in advance for what to do if this happens.
- Everything outlined in the service agreement that applies to in-person meetings also applies to phone and video meetings. Phone and video meetings will be summarized and entered into your file as part of your record, in the same way as in-person meetings.
- Phone and video meetings are not always the best way to communicate, and staff may decide that they are no longer appropriate. Face-to-face meetings with staff or other alternatives may be suggested if phone or video meetings are no longer suitable.

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- You are requested to use a private internet connection rather than public/free wifi, as this increases confidentiality and security.
- You are responsible for paying for your own internet costs.
- You are to use passwords on all your devices as this controls who has access and improves confidentiality and security.
- No phone or online video software is entirely secure. York Hills computer systems have strong internal security, which helps protect your privacy and confidentiality. York Hills will not be responsible for breaches of your confidential information if they are not the direct result of intentional misconduct of York Hills.

## STEPS FOR RESOLVING ISSUES OR CONCERNS

Your thoughts, concerns and feedback are important to us. York Hills wants to provide the best possible service to children, youth and families, but sometimes you may find you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving or think something needs to change. If so, we encourage you to talk to someone about this.

A good place to start is with your worker or primary contact at the agency. If you are not satisfied with the result then you are encouraged to speak with your worker's manager and/or a Clinical Director or the CEO.

Your complaint or concern will be acknowledged within 2 business days and resolved within 14 business days from point it was acknowledged. If meeting defined timelines is not possible, you will be notified verbally or in writing that it will take longer and the reason for the delay.

If you have a complaint but are not a client of York Hills, it is hoped that you would address your concern directly with the appropriate individual or their manager.

The following steps apply only for the children residing in York Hills' Live-In Treatment Program:

If you do not feel that it was resolved with the CEO, you may submit in writing your concern to the Central Regional Office of the Ministry of Health. Staff will provide you with the necessary assistance in order to do this.

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There is also the Children and Youth Unit through Ombudsman Ontario who will try to help if you ever feel that you need to complain about services. They can be reached at 1-800-263-2841, or through

[cy-ej@ombusdman.on.ca](mailto:cy-ej@ombusdman.on.ca).

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY

We will make every effort to accommodate the uniqueness of each child, youth and family who seeks our service and to make our services and resources accessible. Please do not hesitate to tell us how to be helpful to you!

York Hills is committed to meeting the needs of all of our clients. At this point in time services are primarily offered in English only. If you speak another language, we will employ a translation service.

## WHEN A CRISIS ARISES

If you or your family is in a crisis or emergency situation, we encourage you to call the following services for help or assistance:

- If someone is at imminent risk of suicide or physical harm call 911 for immediate assistance or take the person to your local hospital emergency department
- During office hours, you can call your worker. If your worker is not available, the receptionist will direct your call to another worker or manager
- You can also access 310-COPE (1-855-310-2673)
- Here are a few more numbers that might be helpful to you
  - Tele health Phone 1-866-797-0000
  - Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
  - Mental Health Helpline 1-866-531-2600

## YOUR FEEDBACK IS HELPFUL

We look forward to working with your family. We value your opinions about our partnership and the services we provide. We will be asking you to comment on your experience with our services at various times. Offering us your input (compliments or concerns) in a timely way helps us understand what is working well for your child and family, and what changes we might make to improve our services.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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By Mail:	402 Bloomington Road, Aurora, ON, L4G 0L9
By Phone:	905-503-9560   1-866-436-7608
By Fax:	905-773-8133
By email:	<a href="mailto:yorkhills@yorkhills.ca">yorkhills@yorkhills.ca</a>
Web site:	<a href="http://www.yorkhills.ca">www.yorkhills.ca</a>

