

March 4, 2026

United Way of Halton and Hamilton 'What Serves Us' Survey

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by United Way of Halton and Hamilton to identify community strengths and needs. The results will be used to support their funding approach.

This intro explains what the study is about, possible risks and benefits, and your rights as a participant.

Description and Selection of Participants

To participate in the study, you must be:

- 16 years old or older
- Living in or receiving any community services in Halton or Hamilton

We anticipate approximately 2000 individuals, who are representative of the diversity of their communities, will complete the survey. The researchers will monitor demographic data of respondents to ensure both that the overall sample of individuals respondents reflects the communities, and that there are enough respondents from specific communities (for instance immigrants, those with disabilities, young adults) to allow accurate conclusions about that community's needs.

Taking the Survey

There are three options for taking the survey. 1. It can be taken online from wherever you are; 2. It can be taken at a What Serves Us survey-taking event at a local social services organization. At these events, there will be individuals there to help you if anything is unclear or there are technical problems. There will also be snacks and computers that you can use to take the survey; 3. Individuals who wish to take the survey in American Sign Language (ASL) or who would benefit from having the questions read to them in one of the non-English languages can contact us at <need phone number and email> to arrange an online or in-person session with a proctor.

The survey is available in these languages:

English

Arabic

Chinese (Traditional)

Chinese (Simplified)

French

Hindi

Spanish

Urdu

It can also be proctored in ASL. Email Kayla Willet at kwillet@uwhh.ca to request ASL.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can decline to answer any question. Declining to participate in the research does not impact your access to any community services. All participants will receive a body products kit for participating in the survey. If you choose not to answer certain questions or complete the survey, you are still able to keep the body products.

Confidentiality

All answers to the survey are anonymous unless you have someone proctoring your survey, in which case your involvement and answers will be held confidential. Contact information for those wanting to participate in the gift card raffle will be in an entirely different system and unconnected with your survey responses.

All data is stored on secure servers and password protected. Your information will be stored by Brighter Spark Applied Research and Consulting, Inc. Only approved members of the research team at Brighter Spark will have access to the data collected in this study. United Way of Hamilton and Halton or social service organizations will not have access to the data. We expect this survey to be repeated every few years, and so will store the data for an indefinite period in order to allow for comparison over time.

We may use quotes from those participating in the survey. We will not use any quote that could identify an individual.

The data collected may be used for follow up projects with individual community service agencies.

Remuneration for Participation

Participants will receive a body products kit for participation in the study. Kits are available at community service centres throughout Halton and Hamilton. See our website for locations – <http://uwhh.ca/survey> - where you can pick up a kit.

You can also enter into a raffle to win a gift card. Gift cards will be valued at \$100 and the odds of winning will vary but be no worse than 1 in 20. Drawings will be specific to each social service organization that has over 15 participants, ensuring that one user of that organization's services will win. Those not affiliated with a social service organization will be entered into one or more draws (to protect the 1:20 odds) for unaffiliated survey respondents. At the end of the survey, there is a link to a different survey platform where you will enter your name and email address. We will contact winners by email within 15 days of the closing of the survey (expected closure date is August 30, 2026 but this may change depending on survey uptake) and arrange for delivery to you or pickup at a local community service.

Risks of Participation

The discomforts to you of participating in this study include being asked about difficult or sensitive aspects of your life and experiences. We have attempted to address this by making all potentially sensitive questions optional, and also have a help line available if the survey triggered anything you wish to discuss with a mental health professional.

Benefits of Participation

Participation in the study may benefit you by helping you identify services that would benefit you and your family. The study may benefit the community by supporting a major funder of community services in the region in incorporating lived experiences of clients into their decision making.

Findings and Feedback

The research results will be shared in both a detailed report provided to United Way, and a high level public version that will be posted on the project website (<http://uwhh.ca/survey>) by November 1, 2026. Those who provide an email address related to the gift card drawing will receive notification when the report is posted.

Further Use of Results

In addition to the public and United Way-specific reports, organization-specific reports will be available to social service organizations. This will allow individual organizations to make use of a high quality research study to help their own planning for how best to support those using their services or those with similar needs who are not using their services. To protect confidentiality, the researchers will summarize any finding that is true for less than five individuals as <5 rather than reporting actual numbers.

Questions and Approval

If you have questions about the research, its procedures, your rights as a participant, and/or your role in this study we invite you to contact Evan Gravely at evan@brighterspark.ca or Allison Van at allison@brighterspark.ca.