

Our Kids Network (OKN)

Our Kids Network (OKN) is a partnership of community organizations and professionals in the Halton region who support the healthy development and well-being of children and youth. Our focus is on support for Halton professionals who work with children, youth, and families in various areas such as child welfare, education, libraries, government, health, mental health, special needs, and recreation services, within a multicultural community. Our vision is that all children and youth thrive.

Through research and collaboration, we work to identify and address factors that influence the lives of children and youth. By utilizing key frameworks to guide our efforts, we support professionals in their work to strengthen relationships, conduct and share research and resources, build relationships, and assist with the planning and evaluation of outcomes.

Why ON-Marg?

In 2021, we held discussions with our Data Portal steering committee to discuss which indicators we needed to add. Our partners told us they were getting questions about ON-Marg so we asked our data team to add ON-Marg to the existing datasets on the portal. When our team started working with ON-Marg, we were happy to find a user guide and clear instructions. We also reached out to the teams who co-created ON-Marg at St. Michael Hospital and Public Health Ontario when we had questions. This made a huge difference in our responsible use and interpretation of the data as the framework and processes were clearly defined.

How Do You Use ON-Marg?

The OKN Data Portal is a free online interactive inventory of data available at the neighbourhood level in Halton. The portal allows access to research developed by OKN, and other data sources, such as Census, IntelliHealth and EQAO. At OKN, we wanted to further enhance our exploration of neighbourhood-level indicators and added the ON-Marg index to our data portal. Using the instructions provided in the ON-Marg user guide, we calculated the percentage of the population in each marginalization quintile.

As a result, our partners and other agencies working with children, youth, and their families in Halton can quickly see the distribution of people by marginalization quintile in each neighbourhood to better understand contextual challenges and strengths when working in those neighbourhoods.

Current and Future Use of ON-Marg

ON-Marg data allows our community to have meaningful conversations about marginalization and wellbeing. In the past, our Data Portal lacked robust indicators of social wellbeing – the ON-Marg Index has helped to fill this gap.

As we continue to work with the data we like that there are no “good” or “bad” numbers; how we read and interpret the data depends on questions we ask. Our approach is that data is more than numbers: It is about asking questions, telling stories, and inspiring action. We love how the user guide showcases the importance of thinking critically about the numbers and what they mean for a particular outcome. For example, a higher marginalization quintile is not necessarily bad, and marginalization dimensions do not necessarily operate in the same direction. Those reminders help the network keep a broader perspective when approaching the data. The ability to use the data while thinking critically about how each

dimension may impact an outcome is a great asset. It allows our partners and organizations working in Halton to combine the data with other sources of information and their own experience with the populations they serve.

Going forward, we want to understand how other organizations use ON-Marg in order to support and inspire our partners in the network. We are still learning, and even though ON-Marg may seem difficult to understand at first, especially for people who are not “data people,” it is well documented and has a team willing to answer questions. If you have questions, do reach out – you will learn a lot, and your organization will benefit from using the ON-Marg Index. We are eager to see the 2021 index and will include it in our Data Portal as soon as it is released.



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