**AVATIL**

**ACTIVITY REPORT**

**2016-2017**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2017: Year 3 – Final Year of Strategic Plan**

The following committees actively participated in the implementation of AVATIL’s strategic plan: Admissions Policy Committee, Advisory Committee, Client Rights and Responsibilities Committee, Finance Committee, Fundraising Committee, Program Committee, Public Relations Committee and Space Committee. Many thanks to the board members, family members, clients and professionals who participated on these committees. AVATIL’s Advisory Committee is overseeing the completion of the strategic plan objectives for year 3, ending in August 2017, with the help of a facilitator, Vivian Wiseman. The following is a summary of the objectives and the work completed in year 3:

1. FINANCES: AVATIL’s funding from the CIUSSS West Island was transferred to the PSOC on April 1, 2017. An *entente de collaboration* will be signed with the CIUSSS.
2. CLIENTELE: AVATIL has provided outreach to adolescents and young adults and has maintained ongoing contact with professionals who refer clients within the CIUSSS. We will continue to evaluate how we can provide effective outreach to clients. A pilot project with 6 participants on the autism spectrum is running well. A decision will be made this year on the ongoing services that can be offered to an ASD clientele. The Admissions Policy Committee oversees the smooth functioning of the admissions process and reviews access information yearly. The Program Committee oversees the yearly evaluation of an AVATIL program. In 2016, AVATIL completed an evaluation of its community support services. AVATIL will explore involvement in research activities.
3. SPACE: The Space Committee met regularly this past year to plan a renovation project at the 40th avenue building. Architectural plans with a new space configuration including a centre to be developed on the first floor of the building and an access ramp to be added for clients with reduced mobility were submitted to the City of Montreal for approval. The implementation of the project is planned to begin July 1, 2018. AVATIL Special Projects funds have been designated for the project. The Fundraising Committee will develop a fundraising strategy to raise the additional funds needed to complete the project.
4. COMMUNICATION / VISIBILITY: The Public Relations Committee met regularly during October 2015 - October 2016 to plan AVATIL’s successful 50th anniversary celebration in October 2016. The committee developed promotional tools to sell ads for a 50th anniversary promotional booklet. Four newspaper articles were published highlighting AVATIL services and the 50th anniversary event. The AVATIL web site was updated regularly.
5. STRUCTURE: The modified Bylaws adopted in June 2016 included two changes to the board structure: a reduction in board size to 9 members and a limit of three two-year terms of office. Board member characteristics and qualifications were developed by the Nominating Committee to assist in recruiting qualified board members. The Client Rights and Responsibilities Committee completed a client rights and responsibilities document as well as a complaints procedure. Over 50 clients were consulted to complete this work. The Membership Committee oversees the smooth functioning of the membership process.

**CLIENT CENSUS**

During April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017, a total of 199 clients had access to AVATIL services.

**Service categories** (at March 31): Residential: 11; Community Support (apartments): 66; External/Social development (groups/activities): 62; Young Adult Outreach: 42; Adolescent Outreach: 10; Adults on autism spectrum (pilot project with WMRC): 6; Assessment: 2. Note: While clients are listed in one service category based on the primary service received, social development services are offered to all AVATIL clients.

**Territory**: While the majority of AVATIL’s clients live in the West Island or in the west part of Montreal, applicants who request services from other areas of the city can be accepted if they can travel on their own to receive our services. **Languages:** While AVATIL continues to provide services primarily in English, individual services to clients are also offered in French.

AVATIL is the only community organization in Montreal that provides services, primarily in English, that address the specific needs of individuals with mild cognitive limitations who have the potential for independent living. All our programs and activities are oriented towards meeting the needs of individuals who want to be as independent as possible, and who want to develop and maintain friendships with those who have similar goals. A challenge is to ensure we can identify changes in the needs of young adults during the outreach process and to try to adapt our programs accordingly.

S**UMMARY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES 2016-2017**

ADOLESCENTS/YOUNG ADULTS

Most of the recruitment of adolescents and young adults this past year took place through contact with and referrals from various professionals in schools and within the CIUSSS West Island. Activities organized include a weekly after-school young adult discussion group, a cooking/baking group held on alternate Saturdays and a day outing organized once per month. The weekly discussion group focuses on topics related to independent living. When the decision is made for a young adult to move into the transitional living program, a goal planning meeting is held with the family and the client establishes residential goals. Individual planning meetings are also held with a young adult prior to moving into the transitional living program apartments. An evaluation was completed of the adolescent/young adult program in 2015 and the changes made to the program following the recommendations made in the evaluation are still being implemented.

RESIDENTIAL CLIENTS

AVATIL provided services to 11 residential clients in 3 residential programs this past year. The residential programs are located at The Fay and John Bland residence in Lachine, Kiwanis House in Lachine, and the Bessborough co-op in NDG. Both the Fay and John Bland residence and Kiwanis House provide transitions to independent living of 1-3 years in duration. Another important mandate is to provide a period of respite of up to one year to individuals living on their own who are experiencing difficulties. The Bessborough co-op has been providing 6 residents with longer-term housing.

The Fay and John Bland residence provides a cooking program Mondays - Thursdays, Saturday morning cleaning and groceries, a weekly life skills group as well as a weekly residential meeting that promotes effective communication and conflict resolution among residents. Meetings with residents and family members are held every 6 months.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT CLIENTS

A total of 66 clients received community support services this past year. These services are provided to clients who live on their own in the community. The overall goal of these services is to help our clients to have a good quality of life in the community. Interventions range from weekly assistance with practical skills and weekly home visits to more occasional contact with clients who require fewer supports. Important components of the service include assistance with a weekly budget and budget planning as well as assistance with groceries to promote healthy food choices. The majority of our clients living on their own are social solidarity recipients and manage very limited finances. Many are on waiting lists for low cost housing. A number of clients have benefited from both AVATIL’s emergency fund and apartment fund to subsidize the purchase of home essentials and/or to help pay for groceries during periods of financial difficulty.

Health: A health profile is maintained for each community support client. A schedule of health-related appointments is maintained and clients are accompanied as needed.

Safety and Security: The safety and security project is now fully in place. Clients living on their own receive free battery replacements on their smoke detectors on a yearly basis. AVATIL also provides clients with a client emergency card and key tag. With their consent, the names of clients living in apartments are submitted to the fire department.

Social Participation: Another important aspect of our interventions is to provide assistance with finding resources that promote social participation in the community.

Collaboration with Family Members: The provision of community support services to our clients living on their own takes up a significant amount of AVATIL’s full-time staffing resources. While AVATIL continues its commitment to provide its clients with long-term community support services, an emphasis will continue to be placed on providing these important supports in collaboration with family members and/or any other persons identified as being part of the client’s support network. This is especially important when a client requires more intensive supports. The importance of a collaborative approach and the development of networks of support for the long term will continue to be emphasized during client review meetings with family members.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES EVALUATION

As part of a yearly program review established by the strategic plan, the Program Committee oversaw the completion of an evaluation of AVATIL’s community support services during June – August 2016. The goal of the review was to assess the overall quality of our community support program. Eighty-two per cent of our clients living on their own agreed to participate in the evaluation. Clients were visited in their homes to complete a semi-structured interview. The content and structure of the interview process was reviewed by the organization COCo. The evaluation was comprised of 3 sections: collecting general data including type of dwelling and frequency of community support services; assessing the home essentials, safety, and quality of life of participants; completing semi-structured interviews with staff members involved in the clients’ community support services in order to gather feedback on their community support interventions with clients.

The results of the evaluation revealed that AVATIL’s community support program is functioning well at supporting the autonomy of individuals who live on their own in the community. Areas of need, as identified by clients, AVATIL staff members and the evaluator, as well as the recommended timelines for interventions, were compiled for staff to implement with clients. Recommendations for interventions regarding safety were prioritized while other interventions had a one year timeline (August 2017) for completion. Almost all interventions have been completed.

We thank Arianna Carosella for planning and implementing the evaluation as well as Olivia Faulconbridge and Olivia Emmanuel for their valuable assistance.

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

AVATIL provided, once again this year, a range of social development activities. These activities, including day outings, trips and events are an integral part of the services offered to clients and they play an important role in promoting a sense of community among participants. They provide important opportunities for members of the AVATIL community to socialize, to develop and maintain friendships, to strengthen networks of support and to reduce their risk for social isolation in the community. For the young adult clientele, groups and activities are specifically designed for them. They emphasize the development of independent living skills as well as communication and social skills.

Information on our groups and activities is distributed and also mailed to clients on a regular basis, Updated information on activities and special events can be found on our web site. Information on special events and trips is mailed to both clients and family members.

Our lunch and games activities held Mondays-Wednesdays have been very popular once again this past year. The CIUSSS West Island continues to refer older clients to this program. Due to space constraints, clients have been asked to choose a maximum of 2 days of participation out of the 3 days that activities are offered. An average of 14 clients per day participated at lunch and games activities this past year. One of the goals of the 40th Avenue building project is to create a larger space that can accommodate a greater number of participants.

The following groups and activities were offered this past year:

Weekly Groups: Young Adult Group: Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 p.m. Attended by an average of 12-14 young adults; Grad Group” for clients in the 25-40 age group living on their own in the community: Mondays 5-7 p.m. with an average of 8 – 10 participants; Comitas (Moonlighters alternating with Sunshiners) for clients over the age of 40: Wednesdays 5-7 p.m. These groups each had an average of 8-10 participants; Assessment Group: Primarily for applicants to the transitional living program with an average of 2 - 3 participants per group; Residential groups: A weekly residential meeting in each of 3 residences reaching 11 residential clients; ASD group held every 2 weeks for six clients referred by the CIUSSS West Island.

Day Program of Lunch and Games**:** Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11a.m. - 3p.m. Participants benefit from low cost, nutritious meals ($2). Approximately 13-15 clients per day attend this program. Activities after lunch include baking, games, arts and crafts and quilting.

Regular Saturday Activities: Adolescents and Young Adults: Cooking/Baking Group: Held on alternate Saturdays 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. An average of five participants per activity; young adult social activities one Saturday per month with 6-8 participants. Comitas program: Social activity one Saturday per month with 7-8 participants; 3-4 art classes per year with 6-8 participants; Comitas potluck lunches every six weeks on Saturdays (over 30 clients and volunteers); Choir practices every second Saturday during April - August with 12 -15 participants. Christmas Choir: weekly meetings October - December with 12-15 regular participants. Night on the Town activities are held one Saturday evening per month with over 20 participants. Monthly shared suppers: held on the last Tuesday of each month with an average of 40 participants

Summer Program: Once again, AVATIL provided clients with a popular calendar of summer recreational and social activities from mid-June to the end of August, 6 days per week, Mondays to Fridays between 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. and every Saturday alternating between day and evening outings. The summer program includes 6 lunches and 5 suppers per week. Activities include art, games, sports and day outings to cultural events as well as rehearsals for a summer variety show. Three full time summer students planned and animated these activities, assisted by two staff members. In order to promote the participation of families in social events with their sons/daughters, family members were invited to the three shared suppers held during the end of June, July and August.

Yearly activities/events: Cabane à sucre: Annual activity in March with 40 participants; Summer Camp/Travel and Culture Committee activity held in August 2016 (5 days and 4 overnights) at Perce Neige camp, with special day trip to Mont Tremblant, attended by 16 clients; Walkathon held in June 2016. Annual fundraising event with over 80 participants; Meg and David Day: Day trip to ostrich farm and lavender field in August 2016 attended by over 30 clients and two volunteers. This annual activity is held in memory of two AVATIL clients who passed away; TCC activity held in September - apple picking and Aviation Museum attended by over 20 clients and volunteers; a yearly Comitas Christmas dinner (over 50 clients, family members and volunteers) and anniversary event in May with approximately 30 - 40 clients, family members and volunteers; annual Christmas party attended by over 200 clients, family members and friends.

Special 50th Anniversary Event: 50th Anniversary lunch held in October 2016. This successful special event brought together over 200 clients, family members, volunteers, former volunteers staff members, former personnel, and professionals.

Travel and Culture Committee (TCC) Trip: The TCC has been hard at work this past year planning a trip to Cuba. The trip will take place June 2 – June 9 with 17 participants.

**COLLABORATIONS**

AVATIL continues to maintain a liaison with a number of partners in the community in order to provide effective outreach and to provide quality services to its clientele.

School boards: AVATIL continues to collaborate with the English Montreal and Lester B. Pearson School Boards and in particular with their adult education programs. AVATIL hosted an information meeting with a group of young adults from the Light a Dream program.

Logements James Turner*:* Logements James Turner owns and manages the 3 buildings that house AVATIL’s residential programs. These programs provided 11 AVATIL clients with residential services and low-cost housing this past year. Joint participation on the Space Committee has facilitated the process of making recommendations for changes to the space configuration in the building on 40th avenue to accommodate AVATIL programs.

CIUSSS Ouest de l’Ile de Montréal: Ongoing collaboration around client referrals and service provision to joint clients. *Entente de collaboration* to be finalized.

West Island Local Table for Intellectual Disability and Autism(WILT): AVATIL participates at this Table which brings together approximately 15 agencies and organizations in the West Island.

CRADI (Comité régional des associations pour la déficience intellectuelle): AVATIL participates as a member of the *comité porteur* on 2 committees : *comité ressources résidentielles* and *comité habitation* in collaboration with AMDI (Association de Montréal pour la déficience intellectuelle), Rêvanous and APDITED. Three successful parent meetings were organized in French this past year.

Action Main-d’oeuvre: AVATIL clients benefit from the subsidized employment services offered by Action Main d’oeuvre in the West Island.

McGill School of Social Work and Vanier College: AVATIL maintains an ongoing collaboration with the McGill School of Social Work and has re-established its collaboration with Vanier College this past year. AVATIL provided two student fieldwork placements this past year.

Volunteer West Island: AVATIL continues to benefit from their ongoing support for the recruitment of volunteers.

Borough of Lachine: AVATIL greatly benefits from the support offered by the Borough of Lachine by providing venues at no cost for client groups meetings and activities.

**FUNDING PARTNERS**

Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires (PSOC): It provides AVATIL with recurrent funding towards its global mission - to work with individuals who have mild cognitive limitations. Note: As of April 1, 2017, AVATIL no longer receives funding from the CIUSSS West Island. The funding has been transferred and added to our recurrent PSOC funding.

West Island Community Shares: For the past twelve years, AVATIL has been benefiting from funding from WICS. Many thanks to their Executive Director, Leanne Bayer, and the WICS fund distribution committee for their support of AVATIL.

Human Resources Development Canada**:** During summer 2016, AVATIL once again benefited from a subsidy under the Canada Summer Jobs Program to hire two full time students to animate social and recreational activities.

Emploi Québec (PAAS Action program): Once again this past year, eight AVATIL clients participated in this preparation to work program. Participants receive a monthly allowance for their participation and AVATIL receives funding to oversee the activities related to each client’s participation.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks to our board members, staff members, students and volunteers, for their hard work and for their support.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*President:* Marjie Rutherford

*Vice-President:* Lise Hogue

*Secretary:* Margaret Stevenson

T*reasurer:* Marius Moldovan

*Administrator:* Marianne Boesch

*Administrator:* Edward Haase

*Administrator:* Carita Dubuc

*Administrator:* Richard Held

*Administrator:* Evy Lusthaus

**STAFF MEMBERS**

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Carmela De Lisi

*Admin. / Office*

Mojgan Yazdani

Angie Shepitko/

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Challette Calbert

Amanda D’Aversa

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Dyana Merino-Arevalo

Emily Shrider

*Summer/Part-time Staff*

Arianna Carosella

Collin Dobie

Olivia Emmanuel

Jennifer Smiley

Tomie Trepanier

**STUDENT INTERNS**

*McGill School of Social Work*

Charlotte Garneau-Bertrand

*Vanier College Special Care Counselling*

Deanna Crowshaw

**VOLUNTEERS**

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers, who contributed so much of their time this past year. AVATIL benefitted from the support of 39 volunteers who contributed over 1,600 hours of volunteer work. Special thanks to Mr. Ernest Thayer with his great assistance with our building repairs as well as to the Friends of Comitas volunteers and their chairperson Mrs. Elaine Whitton.

AVATIL Board president, Marjie Rutherford, was awarded AVATIL’s 2016 Fay Bland Award for outstanding contributions to the AVATIL community at our last Annual General Meeting. Congratulations!

We thank Maureen Anderson for her volunteerism during the past 20 years and we congratulate her for being named by Volunteer West Island one of the West Island’s 50 extraordinary volunteers!