

TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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# THE TERI PROJECT

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# INTRODUCTION

**The Teri Project is an initiative aimed to address social isolation amongst elderly residents of long-term care homes by building meaningful intergenerational friendships.**

**Students and seniors are matched to build intergenerational relationships through weekly visits and consistent interactions. The pairs develop meaningful connections rooted in mutual respect, empathy and care.**

**The students and seniors engage in conversation, art and storytelling. In the context of relationship, the pairs work to uncover and represent the stories and lived experiences using art and creative expression. The seniors are at the centre of this experience sharing their voice and guiding the artistic process.**

**Toronto Metropolitan University students in the Faculty of Community Services participate for their undergraduate placement lasting 1 or 2 semesters. Students are responsible for attending weekly visits to the LTC homes, completing all assigned work, and meeting hourly requirements.**

*THE TERI PROJECT IS INSPIRED IN CELEBRATION OF TERI TRUSCOTT, TMU'S OLDEST CHILD AND YOUTH CARE STUDENT. TERI WAS A KIND, RESILIENT, LIFE-LONG LEARNER WHO COULD SPARK A CONNECTION WITH ANYONE SHE MET. READ MORE ABOUT TERI AND TARYN HERE:*

[HTTPS://CYC-NET.ORG/CYC-ONLINE/DEC2019.PDF](https://cyc-net.org/cyc-online/dec2019.pdf)



# FOUNDATIONS & PRINCIPLES

**The Teri Project functions under the foundation of a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, social justice and person-centred lens.**

**This placement is designed to provide learning experiences for students to develop the skills necessary for relational work. Students will participate in building empathetic bonds, practicing their reflexive praxis, and developing relationships based on respect, trust, and care. Students will also gain experience working with marginalized and vulnerable populations, advocacy, and creating social change. All students are required to complete their work under an anti-oppressive, trauma informed lens. TMU FCS believes in equity, justice, and inclusivity and this standard must be upheld throughout the placement period.**

*We are privileged that people want to share their time and stories with us. It is our responsibility to protect their privacy and dignity with what they share. It can be difficult for people to share their personal life story, so we must honour their openness and have trust in your empathetic bond.*

*The elderly people that take part in the Teri Project participate voluntarily. In many cases, they are individuals that are identified by the staff as people that need more interaction and engagement. Some participants may be facing extreme social isolation and the depression and malaise associated with the effects. Your weekly visits may seem like just an hour of chatting, but for someone that does not get to engage with people outside their immediate space, these visits can make a huge impact.*

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# MISSION & VISION

## MISSION

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Our mission, based on the fundamental values of the Faculty of Community Services at Toronto Metropolitan University, is to build meaningful relationships with elderly individuals to combat the effects of loneliness and social isolation.



## FIELD SUPERVISOR

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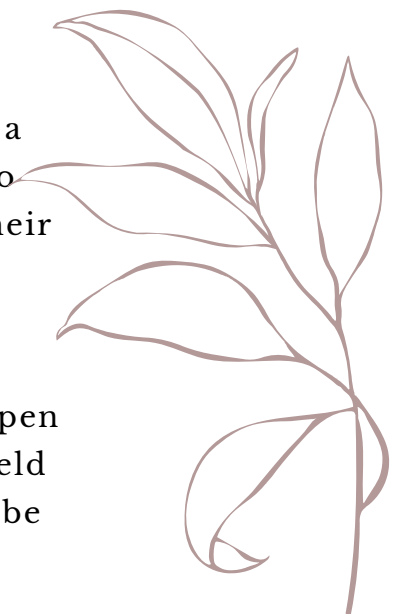
The Field Supervisor is responsible for supporting and guiding the student's learning in their field placement on a consistent basis. They guide the activities of the student to meet their learning goals and promote best practices in their field placement.

At the Teri Project the field supervisor acts as a liaison between students and long-term care homes. The field supervisor supports students through training modules, open communication, and weekly supervisory meetings. The field supervisor for the Teri Project is Taryn Cicchelli and can be contacted at [taryn.cicchelli@torontomu.ca](mailto:taryn.cicchelli@torontomu.ca)

## VISION

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Our vision is to create enough opportunities for social engagement, comfortable and genuine relationships, and empathetic care to address the effects of social isolation. We envision that students can create intergenerational bonds that encourage meaningful connections and enjoyment consistently to prove that every participant in the Teri Project has a friend. Furthermore, these relationships are supported through the lens of a trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, social justice, and person-centred approach. Fundamentally, we strive to build meaningful intergenerational relationships under a socially conscious discipline.



# PLACEMENT EXPECTATIONS & ACTIVITIES

*Students are to required to meet the expectations outlined throughout their internship with the Teri Project*

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Students are expected visit residents weekly at an established time to engage in building connections developed on the foundation of a trusting and meaningful relationship

Provide an opportunity for the elderly person to reflect on their lived experiences, their triumphs and their challenges, in the form of stories; this element is driven by the elderly person who can choose what stories to tell and how to tell them

Students are encouraged to make an art project with their senior partners to represent them, their story, the intergenerational relationship, or any other relevant themes that strike inspiration

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Students are encouraged to assist LTC staff facilitate group activities, and when possible, create and lead activities on their own

In addition to engaging in thoughtful weekly discussions, students are responsible to inform themselves on any relevant information about their senior pair, the long-term care system, historical references, and evidence-based recommendations on engaging with the disabilities that the residents may present

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Students are expected to be on time, prepared and present for every visit. In the event that a student will be late, or cannot make the call they are responsible for informing the field supervisor and/or their staff contact at the LTCH

The foundational theories outlined on page 3 are expected to be maintained throughout each student's contributions to the Teri Project. Students are expected to provide a caring, supportive, empathetic connection to their senior pairs. The safety and well-being of elderly people must be upheld to the highest standard of care. Even in a virtual setting, one must make every effort possible to do no harm

In the event that a student witnesses or receives a report of abuse or negligible care, report the incident to the field supervisor and LTC manager at the soonest possible time

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The Teri Project aims to address the pervasive problem of social isolation amongst residents of long-term care homes and works to promote healthy ageing through social connectedness. Students will build one-on-one intergenerational relationships while also advocating for aging with dignity and care.

- Social isolation and loneliness among older populations is a growing health, social and economic concern. The WHO declared social isolation a growing epidemic amongst elderly populations.
- **Loneliness** is the pain we feel when our social connections do not meet our needs
- **Social Isolation** is the state of having smaller number of social contacts, which may contribute to loneliness <sup>1</sup>

The Teri Project is an age-friendly practice as established by the WHO, that in turn contributes to creating a more age-friendly world where seniors can engage with community while maintaining autonomy, health and dignity.<sup>2</sup>

## **Social isolation can be reduced through connections!**

**Frequent face-to-face or digital contact**

**Creating more age-friendly environments by including seniors in community**

Students provide consistent undivided attention to residents that might otherwise not be truly seen or heard. Students also work to understand the needs and barriers that residents face, and make efforts to meet them where they are. The virtual option of this initiative allows residents to socially engage from the comfort of their own room, allowing them to maintain these connections despite lockdowns, distance, and any other barriers to in-person visits. The intergenerational friendships built in this initiative support the understanding that emotional connections are essential to well-being. The Teri Project is an important intervention to address social isolation for these vulnerable populations through the mutual support, growth and empathy displayed in intergenerational relationships.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/social-isolation-and-loneliness>

<sup>2</sup> <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/about-us/t>