

Distress Centre HALTON

Annual Report 2020/21

Annual General Meeting
Wednesday, September 22, 2021



United Way
Halton & Hamilton

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You Can Make A Difference

Volunteer with Distress Centre Halton

- Our training will prepare you to take calls on our Distress Line, and make calls with TeleCheck (no prior experience required)
- Our training is currently being done online via Zoom
- Volunteer from home or from our Oakville or Halton Hills office
- Visit www.dchalton.ca for more information and to complete an application

Message from Regional Chair Gary Carr



Message from Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr

On behalf of Regional Council, I would like to welcome and thank all those attending the Distress Centre Halton Annual General Meeting.

For more than 40 years, Distress Centre Halton has provided critical supports for individuals experiencing crisis, loneliness and emotional stress. The telephone and online services provided by your team and volunteers make a remarkable difference in the lives of those requiring support.



The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the importance of taking care of our mental health; the services provided by the Distress Centre help to provide a connection for people when they need it most. Thank you for being there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help our community.

Whether through the Distress Centre or any other local supports available in Halton, I encourage everyone to continue to have conversations about mental health and wellness. I would like to thank the team and volunteers at Distress Centre Halton for the contributions you make each day to improve the quality of life in our community. By working together to improve mental health and well-being, we keep Halton a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Carr".

Gary Carr
Halton Regional Chair

Executive Summary

Message from the Executive Director



To review the unprecedented, unknown, and uncertain times of the past year I had to take a deep breath to revisit Distress Centre Halton's journey through the tumultuous months from April 1st, 2020 until March 31, 2021.

A volunteer who covered a Distress Line shift after the State of Emergency was called on March 17, 2020 imparted these wise words, "We will look back on this pandemic as a historic event and I want to be able to look back and be proud of how I stepped up and supported the community".

Be proud of how you stepped up were words that Distress Centre Halton lived by during the pandemic. Within weeks we took our 47-year-old agency remote – first with our outbound TeleCheck program and then our Distress Line with a volunteer base of 145. As an essential service we also kept our Georgetown and Oakville offices open for those who could not work from home, ensuring safe distancing between workstations. We immediately redesigned our volunteer training to remote classes without missing a beat.

When the world seemed to stop – Distress Centre Halton did not. Volunteers, board, staff, and our community funders all pulled together to ensure that we continued to support the most vulnerable in our community. With our new remote ability, we increased capacity. We reached out into the community to services that needed additional emotional support for their clients. We provided our active listening insight to agencies who could no longer meet face to face with clients.

Learning that people wanted to give back, we increased our volunteer training so that even more people could contribute during this continuing time of shutdowns, restrictions, and fear. Our trainers stepped up and we trained a record number of 104 new phone volunteers as we planned for the next wave of mental health support.

They say it takes a village; it took a Region. Thank you to all our supportive funders in Halton for stepping up to generously support us. The Oakville Foundation, The Burlington Foundation, The United Way Halton & Hamilton, Crisis Services Canada, Halton Region, and independent supporters too numerous to list here all stepped forward to provide financial assistance and ensure that our services were supported and strong. We would not be here without you.

And no one had a playbook for this. As Brad Park, United Way of Halton & Hamilton stated in many of our supportive meetings and emails, "we were building as we flew it" and he echoed what so many of the essential services were feeling and experiencing.

But ... we did it! With community services comparing notes and suggestions about learning this new remote world together, we shared our resiliency. We shared our strengths, stories, and a passionate commitment to our community and soldiered on, together. It is a privilege to work with so many committed community members and I give a huge and heartfelt thank you to everyone for facing this pandemic crisis with tireless determination and unstoppable commitment.

And to our small but mighty and incredible staff, during this past year we lived the Margaret Mead quote in our training manual, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

So very proud of how our entire region collaborated as a community to enable so many services to stay strong. Distress Centre Halton has never been more proud to be part of the continuum of mental health support during these challenging times.

Thank you,
Dara Eisner Clancy

Message from the Chair



What to say about the year that started April 1, 2020 and ended March 31, 2021?

The board and staff of Distress Centre Halton had been holding strategic planning sessions in January and February of 2020 even as we were hearing more and more about the pandemic that was growing at the same time. Those plans had to be put on hold as the world changed around us.

In March 2020 the impact of the pandemic could not be ignored in Canada and Ontario. All but essential services were ordered closed and social distancing and masking were required.

I am very proud to say that the volunteers and staff of Distress Centre Halton stepped forward as an essential mental health service and did not close. Our volunteers and staff found ways to continue to support our clients, both callers to our distress line and those who were receiving regular calls from our TeleCheck service.

The Board of Directors continued to meet every month through Zoom calls to assist our Executive Director and her small staff as they worked day and night to keep our services going. Individual board members volunteered in many roles and met many times between board meetings to ensure timely decisions could be made to support the work of the Centre.

The staff quickly found the technology to make it possible for volunteers to do their work from home. The training staff, in a very short time, modified the training materials so that new volunteers could be trained online. Many new volunteers joined the Centre during this year.

In September 2020, we held our first ever online Annual General Meeting. It went smoothly with over 60 participants.

“First ever” are words I use over and over to describe what happened this year at the Centre.

To those who worked at the Centre this year, both volunteers and staff, I say be proud of what you achieved. What you have done was appreciated by our clients and was noted by our funders. Distress Centre Halton stepped forward in unprecedented times, and is now recognized as a key member of the mental health service community in Halton Region.

I have to single out Dara Eisner Clancy, our Executive Director. She was a mighty force of nature this year. We are so blessed to have her at the helm. I know she will continue to lead the Centre to achieve better and better things for our clients.

For everyone connected to Distress Centre Halton, thank you for all you did to help our Centre help our clients.

Richard Darjes

About Us

Distress Centre Halton is a non-profit charitable organization that provides telephone and online support to people 365 days of the year. We are a unique service in that we train volunteers for front-line work providing emotional support, befriending, and suicide risk assessment to people in distress or crisis.

Our service improves the health and wellness of people in our community and the quality of life of those who are feeling alone, isolated, and vulnerable.

Our Mission

Distress Centre Halton supports people in our community to better cope with crisis, loneliness, and emotional stress.

History

Distress Centre Halton is an amalgamation of 3 small Centres that originated in the 1970s – Distress Centre Oakville, Distress Centre North Halton, and Telecare Burlington. In April 2019 the Centres legally amalgamated and officially became Distress Centre Halton.

Originally volunteers answered the phone lines on Friday and Saturday nights only. As the demand for the service grew, the hours were extended to 24/7, 365 days of the year. In 2018/19 we responded to 16,200 conversations.

Board of Directors: April 2020-March 2021

Richard Darjes, Chair
Gail Cartwright, Secretary
Allison Boyd
Kimberley Calderbank
Jodi Dwyer
Eric Hotson
Michelle Lee
Kristin Madarasz
Craig Redick
Brandie Stevenson
Feroza Suchak
Nick Tansley

Staff: April 2020-March 2021

Dara Eisner Clancy, Executive Director
Brenda Buchanan, Manager, Volunteer & Client Services
Kathleen Bontigao-Legaspi, Coordinator, TeleCheck & Community Outreach
Rose Ford, Coordinator, Office Operations & Administration

Volunteer Trainers: April 2020-March 2021

Brenda Buchanan
Dionne Downer
Linda Jaklich
Dan Kaloutsky
Michael Miu
Sue Munro
Feroza Suchak
Michael Thornton
Dianne Woodall

Our Services

DISTRESS LINE – available 365 days of the year

Oakville: 905-849-4541

Burlington: 905-681-1488

Halton Hills: 905-877-1211

People call for lots of reasons,
including:

- Feelings of loneliness
- Relationship issues
- Thoughts of suicide
- Bullying
- Bereavement
- Addictions
- School or work issues
- And many more ... no issue is too big or too small

Call us. We Listen. We care.

TeleCheck – Mon to Fri 9am-5pm

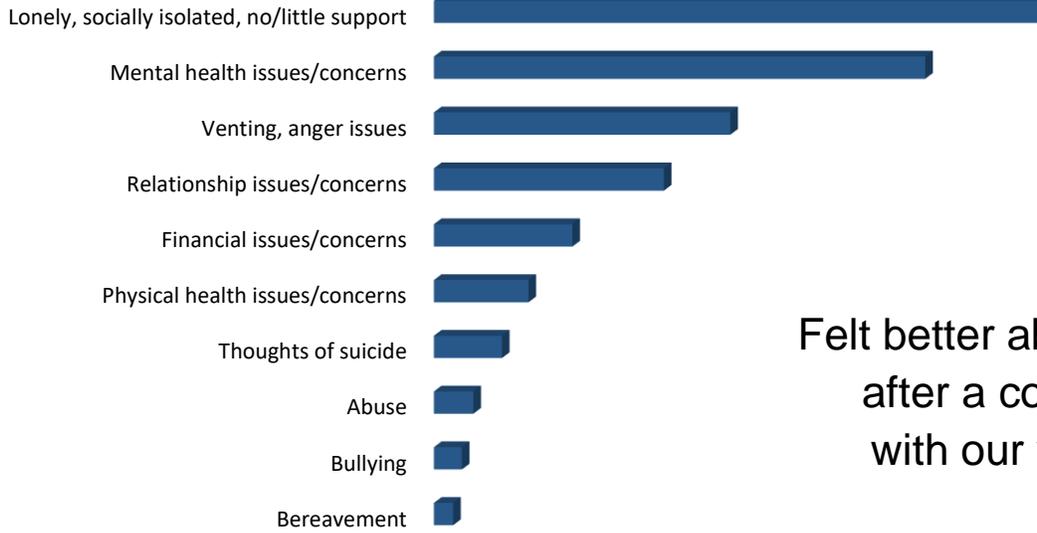
Distress Line Volunteers will call you
at a scheduled time to:

- Check on your safety & well-being
- Provide medication or appointment reminders
- Provide respite to caregivers

Calls can be once a week, several
times a week, or daily. You can
cancel anytime, or stop and restart
as needed.

**For more information contact us at
905-849-4559**

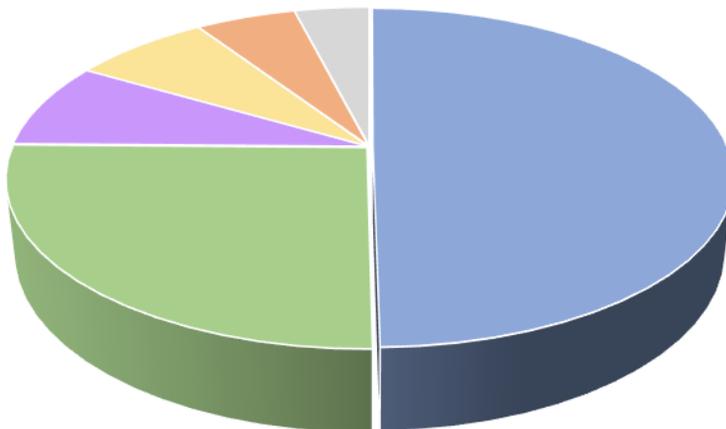
Impact



96%

Felt better able to cope after a conversation with our volunteers

Supports Offered



- Listened, befriended, provided emotional support
- Let client vent, get things off their chest
- Discussed self-care, coping strategies
- Explored options, next steps
- De-escalated the situation/client
- Ensured client safety, well-being

286

Total Volunteers

13,562

Volunteer Hours

1,864

Average Conversations Per Month

Financials – Fiscal 2020/21

Fiscal 2020/2021

Revenue

Donation and Funding Income	\$ 206,058	48%
Fundraising Revenue	222,845	52%
Interest Income	26	0%
	\$428,929	

Expense

Administrative Expenses	\$ 217,438	75%
Communication Expenses	23,270	8%
Contract Services	8,966	3%
Fundraising Expenses	1,508	1%
Program Expenses	5,002	2%
Occupancy Costs	31,500	11%
HST Rebate and Adjustments	1,556	1%
	\$ 289,240	

Excess of revenue over expense

\$ 139,689

Complete audited financial statements are available through our office.

Client Feedback

"Very grateful someone is there to take my call on Christmas day, especially this year, I've been feeling lonelier. Thank you."

"Really nice talking to you. My head was spinning like a vortex before this call. I appreciate you talking with me. Thank you for what you do."

"I'm very thankful for the Distress Line, it's an important coping strategy for me and for many others during these hard times."

"Thank you. I feel much better after talking. I don't know what I would do without the Distress Line, especially now during the lockdown. I feel like I can talk about anything, say anything, and I'm so thankful for it."

"Thank you to you and your staff you're all amazing, you've helped me so much, never underestimate what you mean to someone like me, everyone there has really helped me so much, anytime I need to talk they're always there for me."

"I can't thank you enough. I like the coping strategies we talked about and I'll call again if my thoughts go dark. Really, I mean it, thank you."

Caller had thoughts of suicide, volunteer listened and worked with caller to create a safety plan.

"I'm calling to express my appreciation for the empathy and compassion shown by the volunteer I spoke with last night."

They called the night before in crisis, it was their first time calling us. The volunteer helped them to de-escalate and feel safe.

"Thanks for calling. Good to have someone to talk to, to listen and not contradict how I am feeling."

"Thank you for calling. I need to talk. I want a positive way to vent and keep my sanity. I am glad to have connected with you guys. You listen and care about people."

"I'm a senior and these calls help me a lot, I don't feel as isolated, especially during COVID."

Our Supporters

Distress Centre Halton is a United Way Funded Agency. We also receive donations from service clubs, churches, local businesses, and individuals. Your donations allow us to support the people of Halton to better cope with crisis, loneliness, and emotional stress. **Thank you!**

Funders:

United Way Halton & Hamilton
Altruists of Oakville
Backman Family Foundation
Burlington Foundation
Crisis Services Canada
Halton Region Community Investment Fund
Knights of Columbus Oakville, Marian Council
Lion's Club of Oakville
Oakville Community Foundation
The Graeme Moffat Memorial Fund (a fund held within the Oakville Community Foundation)
The MacDonald Family Foundation (a fund held within the Oakville Community Foundation)
The May Court Club of Oakville

Donors:

Rattlesnake Golf Club
Magna International Inc. - Magna Karmax
Alex Irish Management Company
Knights of Columbus
Altruists Club of Oakville
P.V. & V. Insurance Centre Ltd.
Boehringer Ingelheim Canada Ltd.
Meridian Credit Union Ltd.
Oakville Blueprinting
Norval United Church Women
St. John's United Church Women
The Georgetown Bridge Club
Oakville Shrine Club
The John Dax Charlton Foundation
Snap Home Financial
Integrity Tree Financial
White Elm Design Build Inc.
100 Women Who Care Oakville
100 Women Who Care Burlington
Individual Donors

Partners:

Distress & Crisis Ontario
Delta Bingo Oakville
Canadian Mental Health Association
St. John's United Church
Norval United Church
Halton Suicide Prevention Coalition
Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce
Sherwood Digital Copy & Print
"VintageBeef" aka Daniel M
Oakville Meals on Wheels
Milton Meals on Wheels

THANK
YOU!

Call to Action

Donate: Donations make it possible for Distress Centre Halton to support people in our community to better cope with crisis, loneliness, and emotional stress. Donations over \$25 are tax deductible, a charitable receipt will be issued. Donations can be made online here: www.dchalton.ca/donate.

Volunteer: Volunteers are the lifeline of our service! No prior experience is needed, we provide the training. For more information about volunteer requirements and upcoming training dates, visit our website: www.dchalton.ca.

Connect with us: Follow us on our Social Media channels to keep up with the latest news and events. Like and share posts to help us spread the word about our services.



Distress Centre Halton

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