



***Distress Centres
of Greater Toronto***

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CO-CHAIRS

We will remember 2019 as the “Year of the Merger” where Distress Centres (Toronto) and Spectra Helpline (Peel) finally came together as **one** to form Canada’s single largest crisis intervention service for people of all ages. **Distress Centres of Greater Toronto** now provides 24-hour support, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to at-risk and vulnerable individuals in Toronto and Peel, including Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon. In 2019, the merged organization—DCGT, provided over 100,000 supportive interactions to these vulnerable individuals across our platform of 12 different programs and services.

How did we get here? In 2017, Toronto Distress Centres recognized that funding was becoming increasingly difficult to secure in the not-for-profit sector. We identified an opportunity to grow our organization, and in January of 2019, the Board of Directors for both Spectra Helpline (Peel) and Distress Centres (Toronto) voted to amalgamate. We brought the proposition before both memberships resulting in a resounding positive vote, and effective May 10th, 2019, we became Distress Centres of Greater Toronto. This successful amalgamation could not have happened without our dedicated staff and supportive funders. Alison Caird, Toronto Distress Centres’ Executive Director, was instrumental in making this all happen—her energy started amalgamation conversations. Unfortunately, Alison was forced to take a long-term medical leave of absence in the Spring of 2019 and passed away early in 2020 but her vision continues to be felt in our new organization.

We will be announcing an initiative to honour Alison’s memory and the positive impact she had on both Spectra Helpline (Peel) and Distress Centres (Toronto) in bringing the two organizations together.

In late 2019, after an extensive search for a permanent Executive Director, we onboarded Robert Ridge. Robert came to us a highly experienced CEO who has worked at MedicAlert for 18 years, including 11 years as CEO, and 7 years as COO and Director of Corporate Services. Robert also holds an MBA and CPA, bringing to DCGT a wealth of training and experience in strategic planning, risk and financial management, implementing KPI measurements, and program development.

We would also like to give our heartfelt thanks to our 500+ Volunteers and Staff who have worked so hard throughout 2019 to ensure our amalgamation was executed smoothly, professionally and efficiently. They are tremendously dedicated and passionate about what they do, care deeply about our success and are genuinely committed to DCGT’s mission. We also deeply appreciate our Board of Directors; they have supported this organization through amalgamation as we combined the best of what both organizations had to be an ever-improving centre of excellence for those at risk and vulnerable individuals in our community. And finally, it’s with the warmest appreciation that we acknowledge all of our core funders, including United Way of Greater Toronto, City of Toronto and Region of Peel, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and to all of our donors whose support is so critical to our success. With your help, we can continue to push the boundaries of best practices and crisis support programs to even greater heights.



Mark Sklar



Jass Aujla

Board Co-Chair(s), Distress Centres of Greater Toronto.

2019 Annual Report – Program Narratives and Results:

172,546 helping interactions across all programs.

Inbound Crisis Lines

408 Help

408 Help answered 62,732 calls in 2019 (2018 =69,315)

- 84% of callers were provided with emotional support and distress management
- 44% of callers were provided with mental health support
- 70% of service users reported a decrease in isolation and loneliness
- 66% of service users reported reduced emotional intensity

Callers consistently mention through the year that they are grateful for the support that our service provides. They have noted that they find it therapeutic, that our ongoing support has helped them move through a season of depression, and that speaking with a responder has helped them through low moments in their day to day.

Multilingual Lines (English, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Spanish, Portuguese, Cantonese and Mandarin)

Multilingual lines answered 18,127 calls in 2019 (2018=21,591)

Caller Issues

- 82%- *Mental Health Issues*
- 81%- *Interpersonal issues*

Call Outcomes

- 49% - *Decrease in social isolation and loneliness*
- 40%- *Increased ability to cope*
- 14%- *Immediate crisis diffused*
- 25%- *Decrease in harmful intentions*

DCGT is the only organization in Canada to have 8 multilingual helplines that directly support our community members in their own language (i.e., without third party translation). Individuals who are going through a difficult time can call the lines and feel comfortable speaking to someone who really understands their struggle. Our English Helpline is available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Our multilingual lines are available in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Spanish, Portuguese, Cantonese and Mandarin, Monday to Friday 10am to 10pm. These lines provide emotional support for anyone who needs a caring, compassionate, and non-judgmental listening ear. Majority of the callers are dealing with issues of mental health, interpersonal, social isolation, settlement, relocation and cultural issues. These lines serve as a model for other organizations because our services allow for an open dialogue about

depression, anxiety, and crisis and suicide ideation. Our trained staff and volunteers provide support and commend callers on having the courage to call and talk about difficult issues. Volunteers speak to the callers about the importance of mental health well-being and promotion of speaking openly about mental health issues as well as cultural and systemic barriers. These issues affect everyone, everywhere. Statistics show how many people are impacted by mental health and these statistics are not limited to one specific culture or race.

***The call:** I am going through a rough divorce where I cannot see my baby without supervision. This makes me angry. Makes me want to seek revenge with my ex-wife. Why me?*

***Support from Responder:** Wow, sounds frustrating how do you manage all of that? Where can I help you better the situation? You mentioned you wanted to go back to school and be a better person. Tell me more about that.*

Thank you for helping me. I have taken courses in college but quit. I must focus on me and am going to sign up in January. I look forward to talking to you and am glad that I can tell you my problems.

Partnership Lines (Crisis Link, PARO, EMS, CAMH)

Crisis Link is a unique poster/payphone program available on every TTC subway platform. It is a partnership between TTC, Bell, and DCGT. It is designed to encourage anyone contemplating suicide to use the payphone and reach out to speak to a DCGT responder for support, risk assessment, and possible intervention. If intervention is required, DCGT works with the TCC to react appropriately to limit risk and provide support to each individual in need.

In partnership with DCGT, **PARO (Professional Association of Residents of Ontario)** is a 24/7 Ontario phone-based Helpline available to medical residents, their partners and family members, as well as medical students to provide immediate assistance in emergency or urgent matters, or to provide emotional support.

DCGT partners with Toronto's **Emergency Medical Services** to provide a dedicated warm transfer line for callers to EMS who are experiencing suicidal ideation. At-risk individuals who have already provided their contact information and are awaiting EMS are connected with volunteers at DCGT for crisis support until EMS arrives on scene. This frees up EMS dispatchers to continue to respond to other emergencies, while at the same time providing emotional support to distressed individuals.

The **CAMH** partnership was designed to provide immediate crisis support to individuals while they navigate support options at CAMH, including accessing programs and individual mental health service providers.

There were 2,277 incoming calls to priority lines in 2019 (2018=1,318)

- 516 service users reported improved moods, reduced emotional intensity, or decrease in distress/crisis
- 1,160 service users reported a decrease in feelings of isolation and loneliness

Canada Suicide Prevention Service (CSPS) Voice and Text

DCGT partners with Crisis Services Canada in order to provide important and life-saving crisis support which is accessible via phone or text.

CSC is a national network of existing distress, crisis, and suicide prevention line services. These programs are committed to supporting any person living in Canada who is affected by suicide. DCGT is one of 8 partner sites supporting the Canada Suicide Prevention Service (CSPS). Services can be accessed via 24/7 phone line or via text from 4pm-midnight daily.

In 2019, DCGT responded to 17,880 CSPS Interactions (8,859 Text Interactions, and 9,021 Voice Interactions). (2018=6,701)

- 70% service users reported an increased ability to cope
- 155 emergency interventions were made
- 549 suicide plans were safely disabled

Elder Abuse:

DCGT Elder Abuse Support Program provides direct, phone-based support to seniors or loved ones of seniors who have been exploited, abused, and/or are experiencing challenges and struggles associated with abuse, neglect, and aging. We work in partnership with Family Services of Peel (FSP) to build community capacity through education, advocacy and linkages.

We took 104 calls on the Elder Abuse line in 2019 (2018=96). Of these calls:

- 17% of calls resulted in referrals to Family Services Peel
- Over 56% of callers reported an increased knowledge of the Elder Abuse Program at both DCGT Peel and FSP as well as other appropriate support resources in the community
- 78% of callers reported decreases in distress, anxiety, isolation, and loneliness
- 32% of calls explored action planning with service users

Outbound Support Programs:

TeleCheck:

TeleCheck for Seniors program provides ongoing support for isolated seniors. These regular calls provide safety check-ins, medication reminders, and emotional support. This program aims to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, provides positive coping skills, offers referrals to community services and keeps people safe.

469 active clients
41,743 calls (2018=47,023)
6,585 volunteer hours

"It's been years and I know I can depend on you, always reminding me to take my medication. There have been lots of nice people at TeleCheck who have come and gone and always talk with me and make jokes."

"I am very happy when you call me in the morning, your calls make me feel connected to people and that I am not alone."

"I'm happy to get these calls because it means someone is thinking of me."

"I love you guys and love your voice. You have been calling me for a long time and asking me if I have taken my medicines. Thank you!"

Touching Base:

Touching Base program provides ongoing transitional support for people in the community identified with a mental health issue. The regular calls that provide safety check-ins, medication reminders, and emotional support provide consistency and connection to the community.

265 Active clients
19,841 Calls (2018=15,662)
3,836 volunteer hours

Caller Reassurance Program (CRP):

48 Active clients
4,252 calls 2018=3,897
2,640 hours

CRP program provides ongoing support for isolated seniors. These regular calls provide safety check-ins, medication reminders, and emotional support. This program aims to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, provides positive coping skills, offers referrals to community services and keeps people safe.

Survivor Support Program:

Our professionally developed traumatic loss support program is a safe space in which survivors of suicide or homicide loss can identify/explore/clarify their thoughts as well as feelings and begin to navigate the aftermath of suicide or homicide loss with peer-to-peer support. Highly trained grief facilitators (many of which are survivors of suicide loss or homicide loss themselves) and our professional staff have come together to create a safe, caring and non-judgmental environment that empowers program participants with pathways forward. Those conversations move from safely exploring their losses to their adjustments after a life-altering traumatic loss. The program is offered in 1:1 and group support formats.

In 2019, in response to participant feedback we added new programming including a group specifically supporting parents after the suicide loss of a child. We continued to utilize partnerships to meet the needs of underserved communities-in Peel and to the east through a partnership with the Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities.

Survivors attending 1:1 sessions:	201 (2018=205)
Survivors attending group sessions:	101 (2018=116)
Homicide survivors attending the program:	31 (2018=29)
1:1 support sessions delivered:	1,508 (2018=1426)
Group sessions delivered:	82 (2018=90)
Volunteer activity (hours):	4,150 (2018=4300)
Participant satisfaction (satisfied/very satisfied):	90% (2018=93%)
Participant recommend program to others:	95% (2018=100%)

Community Outreach and Education:

All of the program staff are involved in the delivery of this program, which includes volunteer/community fairs, workshop presentations, networking and consultation. Staff continue to be active in United Way's Speaker's Bureau, including participation in the high-value donor events.

Last year, there were invited presentations with a continuing shift, to consultation requests. These included case consultation, protocol/policy review, program development, volunteer management and participation on advisory panels. We work particularly closely with Toronto Public Health and the TTC in this area. In 2019, we also worked with the Ontario Patient Ombudsman Office as well as The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons in 2019, both of which requested and were provided with training and consultation services.

Donor/Supporter Roll for 2019 Annual Report

\$250,000 +

United Way Greater Toronto

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

\$100,000 +

City of Toronto

Region of Peel

\$20,000 to \$99,999

Toronto Hong Kong Lions Club

Bell Let's Talk

The Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation

\$10,000 to \$19,999

The Tenaquip Foundation

Morningstar Air Express Inc

Malcolm Dunford

E.W. Bickle Foundation

Janet McDonald

Daniel DaCosta Memorial Baseball Tournament

Richard White

The Longo's Family Charitable Foundation

The Mariano Elia Foundation

The Henry White Kinnear Foundation

Toronto Community Foundation (Shelagh & David Wilson Fund)

Tippet Foundation

Harriet Powelson

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Alain Thibault

Stephen Schober

Strategic Charitable Giving Foundation

Dylan French Hope Foundation

Sharon Chandler-Bainson

Laidlaw Foundation

Robert J Orr

Cadillac Fairview - Toronto Eaton Centre

Unifor

\$4,000 to \$4,999

Hope Volleyball Tournament

F.K. Morrow Foundation

F Densem

Daniel Freudman

\$2,000 to \$3,999

Nicole Brandolini

The Benjamin Foundation

Robert Campeau Family Foundation

Judith Bussey

Jeco Foundation

Liuna! Local 183

Mr. Jack Oliveira & The Executive Board
B&B Hamilton Foundation
Mr. Mark Sklar
Leslie Vine
Pilkington-Henniger Charitable Foundation
The McLean Foundation
Jackman Foundation
Isabel Henniger
Caroline Landry
Jehad Aliweiwi
Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) Ltd.
CMHA Peel

\$1,000 to \$1,999

Shelley Norris
LCBO
Google Inc.
Margaret Galati
Senning Luk
Cindy Blakely
Lisa Swartzman
Starcom
Laura Bixel
PayPal Giving Fund Canada
Allison King
Ancaster High School
Meredith Lordan
Adrian Lee
Priya Balasundaram
Linda King
Gion Marles
Mrs. Nicki Perpick
Sam Deacon
Anonymous Donor
Anthony Longo
Ms. Nabanita Merchant
Monika & Carlos Dacosta
Tom Thomas
Isberg Charitable Trust
Valerie Devine
PMI Lakeshore
C & C Family Foundation
Mrs. Betty Calvin
William Szego
John H. Watson
Judith Wilder
Knights of Columbus - JFK Council #5523
James Stewart
Anna Aguanno

Gary Slaight

\$500 to \$999

Richard Thomson

Ms. Elizabeth Harvey

David Martin

Helen Dixon

Ms. Andrea Kusters

Joan Ridout

The Lakeshore Chapter of the Project Mgmt Inst

Katherine Blake

Sarah Albo

Siddharth Kurien

Todd Soubliere

Pfaff Harley Davidson

Karen Ross

Jeffrey Barrett

Crysler Paton

David Belluz

Bosko Milankov

Kevin Noel

Mitch Hermansen

Madeline Stead

TD Bank Group

Lori Zucchiatti O'Neill

Mr. Joseph Triolo

Phil Ridge

Scott Walsh

Rochelle Michaels

Pamela O'Rorke

Davies Howe

Marje Virro

Maureen Kotopski

Carolyn Longo

John O'Dwyer

Anne Kaufmann

Burgundy Asset Management Management

Fairmont Properties

Alan Bilinski

Alan King

Hatherly Martin Professional Corp

2019 Financial Statements

Distress Centres Toronto merged with Spectra Community Support Services to create Distress Centres of Greater Toronto on May 10, 2019 and retained the corporate identity associated with Distress Centres Toronto, including adopting the fiscal year end of December 31st.

The following financial statements pertain to the initial merged period of January 1 to December 31, 2019 and are available on our website at www.dcoqt.com:

Spectra Community Services:	April 1 st , 2018 to March 31 st , 2019
Spectra Community Services:	April 1 st to March 9 th , 2019
Distress Centres Toronto	January 1 st to May 9 th , 2019
Distress Centres of Greater Toronto	May 10 th to December 31 st , 2019



OUR VISION.

To ensure that every individual in need receives life-sustaining emotional support.

OUR MISSION.

We foster hope and resilience one connection at a time.

Distress Centres of Greater Toronto
Box 243, Adelaide P.O. Toronto, ON M5C 2J4
416.598.0166

<https://www.instagram.com/distresscentresGTA/>

<https://twitter.com/distresscentres>

<https://www.facebook.com/DistressCentresGTA/>