



**Distress Centres
of Greater Toronto**



ANNUAL
REPORT

2021

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



REPORT FROM CO-CHAIRS OF THE BOARD

As we write this report, it looks as though the pandemic is primarily behind us. As you might guess, the pandemic created unprecedented demand for our programs, and in 2021 we engaged in over 186,000 helping interactions, almost a 7% increase from 2020. It is important to note that these interactions were generally of a higher severity as the pandemic persisted and exacerbated the loneliness, isolation and anxiety experienced by many.

Our community needed us more than ever. We were there with a full suite of support programs, including our emergency call in helplines, available in eight languages, outbound support calls for individuals in need and our unique suicide survivor support program.

Thanks to over 500 volunteers, whose dedication and agility in adapting to a new remote service delivery model ensured seamless and uninterrupted services. The pandemic allowed us to think critically and thoughtfully about who and how we serve. As we advance, DCGT will be stronger as a result.

In 2021 we continued to re-align our operations to reflect how volunteers want to work. Our responder training program is now entirely virtual, allowing many more individuals the opportunity to volunteer with DCGT. We continue to work on how we best support our volunteers so we can deliver the very best service remotely.

Our Survivor Support Program successfully expanded to Peel Region, and we are piloting drop-in support groups. Our COVID-19 support groups were very well received. As we look ahead, 2022 will be an exciting year as we build on our strengths, further enhance our current programs, and look at new and changing ways to support our community.

Most significantly, we have taken a more single-minded approach to Equity Diversity and Inclusion. As part of this, we have established a dedicated committee made up of volunteers, staff, and board members to oversee everything we do through an EDI lens. This will ensure that all our programs serve the needs of all community members and that we attract talent at all levels that are reflective of our community.

In 2022 our goal is to continue to enhance the services and support we offer our community. We are excited to be launching a new Volunteer Leadership Program in 2022, which will recognize and better support our most senior volunteers in mentoring and guiding newer volunteers.

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In addition, we will be creating toolkits to help smaller communities benefit from the wisdom and experience of our Survivor Support Program. We will also completely redesign and rebuild our website to improve our user experience and ensure that those who need our services find them quickly and easily.

We cannot express strongly enough our appreciation for the many people whose hard work and dedication underpin our success: our inbound distress line volunteers, our outbound volunteers, our survivor support program facilitators, our Technology Advisory Council and, of course, our staff Board of Directors worked together to provide fantastic support to our community.

Our goal in the years ahead is to ensure DCGT continues to be a relevant, sustainable, and thriving organization that very capably serves an ever-increasing number of those in need. Not only will we serve more people, but we will serve them even better than we do today by ensuring that we provide services that are relevant and accessible to all members of our diverse community.



Jass Aujla, Co-Chair



Mark Sklar, Co-Chair



Robert Ridge, Executive Director



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PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES

DCGT recorded over 186,000 helping transactions in 2021, an increase of 7% over 2020.

408 Helpline	Calls Answered	58,174
Multilingual Lines	Calls Answered	27,369
Partnership Lines	Calls Answered	1,584
CSPS	Text & Voice Interactions	14,995
Elder Abuse	Number of Calls	63
Tele Check	Calls Placed	44,462
Touching Base	Calls Placed	25,114
Caller Reassurance Program (CRP)	Calls Placed	8,994

408 HELPLINE

Our 408-HELP (4357) line provides telephone support to individuals in the community who are at risk and their most vulnerable. Highly trained volunteer responders (with the support of professional staff) connect with callers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Our team provides callers with emotional support and crisis intervention when they are socially isolated, marginalized, struggling with chronic mental health problems, in distress, attempting to navigate family violence or in need of emergency response or suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

- **78%** of callers were provided with emotional support and distress management
- Approximately **15%** of callers were provided with mental health support
- Approximately **24%** of service users reported a decrease in isolation and loneliness
- Approximately **39%** of service users reported reduced emotional intensity

MULTILINGUAL HELPLINE

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 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.

THEMES OF CALLS

- Anger Management: **930 (3%)**
- Bereavement/loss: **1,883 (7%)**
- Caregiver Issues: **247 (1%)**
- Cultural Issues: **914 (3%)**
- Isolation: **12,025 (44%)**
- Loneliness/social contact: **19,349 (71%)**
- Relationships: **15,992 (58%)**
- Self-esteem/self-worth: **11,085 (40%)**

CALL OUTCOMES

- **54%** - *Decrease in social isolation and loneliness*
- **37%** - *Increased ability to cope*
- **30%** - *Immediate crisis diffused*
- **55%** - *Decrease in harmful intentions*

ELDER ABUSE:

DCGT's 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.

- **43%** of calls resulted in referrals to FSP
- **67%** 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
- **54%** of callers reported decreases in distress, anxiety, isolation, and loneliness
- **21%** of calls explored action planning with service users

TELE CHECK

Tele Check 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.

- **472** active clients
- **44,462** calls
- **11,725** volunteer hours

"I really appreciate the calls, all of you have a big heart to call us, giving your time so we can have nice company. I always enjoy your calls. "

"Thanks to your daily calls, I not only take my medication on time, but also get to share my daily life, express my fears and challenges. Now with your continued support, I feel safer in the home by myself, physically and emotionally stronger to fight with cancer."

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.

- **320** Active clients
- **25,114** Calls
- **8,014** volunteer hours

"Having someone listen to me has been really helpful. I feel as though my mental health has improved so much"

"I've been getting calls from Touching Base for a while and they are nice. I experience anxiety and I feel like nobody understands me and how I feel. I am happy to hear from you guys"

CALLER REASSURANCE PROGRAM

The Caller Reassurance Program (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

- **109** Active clients
- **8,994** calls
- **1,146** Volunteer hours

"I really look forward to the CRP calls. They really make my day"

"I look forward to these calls every morning. Sometimes I won't even have my breakfast until you guys call or won't take my meds until I get the reminder. I sit by my phone waiting for these calls"

SURVIVOR SUPPORT PROGRAM:

Our professionally developed traumatic loss program, provides a safe peer mentored environment in which, survivors of suicide and homicide can identify, explore, and begin to navigate the aftermath of sudden, violent death. The past year was a busy year for the program as demand for services provided online continued to grow. We also diversified our programming, adding 2 new critical services designed to meet identified trends in the survivor base: We piloted a permanent drop in group feature to help meet the added demand for services and the trauma we are witnessing in the survivor group. As well, we added a new grief skills group for survivors hoping to develop a toolkit for coping with their unexpected losses. Below are some statistics reflecting the demand for our services in 2021:

Survivors attending 1:1 sessions: **215**

Survivors attending group sessions: **112**

Homicide survivors attending the program: **37**

Volunteer activity (hours): **4,600**

1:1 support sessions delivered (each volunteer delivered session, intake = a session, interim support with contact = a session): **1,914**

Group sessions delivered (each volunteer delivered session): **134**

Participant satisfaction (satisfied or very satisfied): **100%**

Participant recommend program to others: **100%**

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 everyone 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 Warm Transfer** program is a partnership between Distress Centres of Greater Toronto and CAMH. It is intended for those seeking CAMH services who are also in need of immediate emotional support at the time of calling CAMH. Calls transferred to DCGT's CAMH Warm Transfer line are considered priority calls and answered by trained and empathetic responders who assess and provide support based on each individual caller's needs.

CANADA SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICE (CSPS) VOICE AND TEXT

DCGT partners with Crisis Services Canada to provide important and life-saving support which are accessible via phone or SMS (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.

- **14,995 Total interactions** (# of Text, # of Calls)
- **49%** service users reported an increased ability to cope
- **305** emergency interventions were made
- **1,803** suicide plans were safely disabled

**Note: 2,375 calls where imminent risk, attempt in progress, or plan/intent was present; and 8,760 calls where suicide ideation was noted, but ideation doesn't mean risk is imminent or plan in place*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION:

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.

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THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 FUNDERS AND DONORS!

\$250,000+

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Statement of Operations

For the year ended December 31, 2021

	2021	2020
Revenues		
Fund development	\$ 588,067	\$ 615,758
United Way Greater Toronto	570,076	643,087
Fee for service	463,775	334,183
Provincial grants	335,962	334,141
Municipal grants	262,635	283,790
Federal grants	38,869	99,910
Other revenue	31,217	38,886
	2,290,601	2,349,755
Expenses		
Salaries and benefits	1,550,028	1,597,725
Systems and telecommunications	294,390	193,445
Building occupancy	137,692	136,883
Office, general and administration	119,945	88,523
Program and volunteer related	71,019	64,388
Accounting, audit and legal	55,330	51,667
Insurance	26,147	16,370
Repairs and maintenance	22,329	65,577
Amortization	747	12,968
	2,277,627	2,227,546
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ 12,974	\$ 122,209

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.



MISSION:

We provide support for those in crisis, at risk for suicide and those experiencing emotional distress through 24/7 multi-lingual inbound, outbound, and in-person programs.

VISION:

We are the leader in providing resilience and hope through innovative crisis and mental health support.

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