



Distress Centres
of Greater Toronto

Annual Report



2023

REPORT FROM CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The pandemic is now far enough behind us to have a clearer picture of its lasting impacts on DCGT. Certainly, the accelerated shift to digital operations and virtual service delivery has created a more flexible and agile organization. The pandemic also appears to have shifted normal patterns of volunteering and giving. Volunteers now have more options – with DCGT and elsewhere. Going forward this will cause us to turn our attention to making the volunteer experience at DCGT even better. Increased Federal funding for mental health led to new opportunities, including funding for a Volunteer Management System and the Distress Line Equity project, which started in 2023 and will be executed in 2024.

A few highlights from 2023:

- In 2023, we supported over 140,000 helping interactions ranging from inbound crisis lines, outbound support to individuals and group support for those who have experienced loss due to suicide or homicide.
- Our Walk to End Suicide continued to be our signature event to bring the DCGT community together to raise awareness about suicide, raise money and have a little fun. In 2023, the event raised \$175,000 to support DCGT programs and attendance almost doubled that of the previous year.
- A focus on awareness building through social media resulted in both the number of postings and views tripling during the year.
- In addition we attracted funds to improve diversity in our crisis line offerings (\$250k). These funds will further improve our crisis support to marginalized communities and also help us embed EDI expertise in the organization.

REPORT FROM CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONTINUED

- We began to implement Genesys, a world class call management platform, and a Volunteer Management system. These technology improvements will lead to better volunteer management, cost savings and improved service to our users.
- Our financial strength remains strong, we will continue to add to our reserves due to strong financial results in 2023

DCGT was one of the founding members of the national suicide response network, first known as the Canada Suicide Prevention Service, then Talk Suicide and now 988. The move to a number that is consistent across Canada helps ensure that all Canadians can easily access support when needed. Our team did an amazing job preparing for this service.

Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers for the difference you make in the lives of thousands of people across the GTA. We appreciate you and many rely on you. Our Board of Directors and staff are also working tirelessly to improve the lives of those needing help.

DCGT could not exist without the support of numerous funders and donors. A big thank you to those who are supporting us for the first time as well as those who have been behind us for many years. We are sincerely grateful for your support.



Mark Sklar, Chair



Robert Ridge, Executive Director



2023 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES

DCGT recorded over 140,000 helping interactions in 2023.

408 Helpline	Calls Answered	35,630
Multilingual Lines	Calls Answered	25,751
Partnership Lines	Calls Answered	1,787
9-8-8	Text & Voice Interactions	14,471
Tele Check	Calls Placed	43,152
Touching Base	Calls Placed	22,777
CRP	Calls Placed	9,018

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 + postvention.

- 73% of callers were provided with emotional support and distress management
- Approximately 12% of callers were provided with mental health support
- Approximately 27% of service users reported a decrease in isolation and loneliness
- Approximately 34% of service users reported reduced emotional intensity
- 1,695 calls included a suicide risk assessment
- 329 calls involved some level of crisis intervention
- 15 calls resulted in 911 intervention/active rescue

2023 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

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

- Loneliness/social contact: 11,568 (92%)
- Self-esteem/self-worth: 8,831 (70%)
- Relationships: 8,084 (64%)
- Isolation: 7,241 (58%)
- Bereavement/loss: 1,926 (15%)
- Cultural Issues: 1,230 (9%)
- Anger Management: 1,174 (9%)
- Caregiver Issues: 406 (3%)

CALL OUTCOMES

- Decrease in social isolation and loneliness: 9,372 (74%)
- Decrease in distress and anxiety: 5,323 (42%)
- Increased ability to cope: 5,076 (40%)
- Self esteem/self control/or confidence improved: 2,406 (19%)
- Action plan explored: 1,169 (9%)
- Reminder of those in the circle of trust: 1,035 (8%)
- Increased knowledge of resources/referral to appropriate resources: 703 (5%)

2023 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

PARTNERSHIP LINES (CRISIS LINK, PARO, EMS and 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 **EMS** (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.

DCGT partners with **CAMH** to provide a priority warm transfer line that allows switchboard operators at CAMH to connect clients/patients/callers with a support service if/when they are unable to connect with someone at CAMH directly. This allows callers to CAMH who may be experiencing crisis or distress to find immediate support from a responder at DCGT to de-escalate and/or provide a listening ear.

2023 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

TELECHECK

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.

394 clients served

42,411 calls

5,315 volunteer hours

"This program and the people have bene very helpful. I have been a long time client, ever since I had my fall. I feel safer because of the program, and I like having someone to talk to, or I else I would just talk to a wall."

"With your support in my language, I feel much less lonely and isolated; and physically and mentally stronger to face the challenges. Your work is meaningful to me and has immeasurable merit; this is the charm of your service. Thank you for easing my emotional pain and making me smile every day."

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.

232 Clients served

18,776 Calls

2525 Volunteer hours

"I am so satisified with the calls, as these are the only people who call and check on me. Truly the volunteers are the people that keep me going."

"Every day I look forward to your call after work in the evening to lessen my sadness and wind down for sleep... Thank you for your companionship and help in getting me out of this difficult moment."

2023 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

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.

88 Clients served

7,925 Calls

755 Volunteer hours

"All of the volunteers have been genuinely kind and positive. It's refreshing to know there are good people out there who care. I didn't realize 10 minutes a week would have such a reassuring and warm effect."

SURVIVOR SUPPORT PROGRAM

Our 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 year of growth as we began an outreach to the LGBTQ2S+ community, developing a partnership with the 519, a critical organization providing support to the LGBTQ2S+ community in Toronto. Over the past year we developed new partnerships with organizations in Peel to deliver in person group supports to survivors of suicide loss in that area.

Program results:

- 405 total participants
- 1,899 helping interactions.
- 3,520 volunteer hours

In partnership with a Bereaved Families Halton and returned to offering an annual survivor gathering in recognition of International Survivor of Suicide Loss Day.

2023 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

9-8-8 SUICIDE CRISIS HELPLINE

*Note: Prior to its launch, our national suicide/crisis line partnership was with Talk Suicide (formerly Canada Suicide Prevention Service, CSPS). 988 is an evolution of the CSPS and Talk Suicide services. The following numbers are based on our service support to Talk Suicide from January-October 2023 and to 988 from November-December of 2023.

In November of 2023, 988 launched nationally. 988 partners with crisis centres across Canada to provide important and life-saving support which are accessible via phone or SMS (text).

988 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 nearly 40 local, provincial, territorial, and national crisis lines who co-deliver the service.

As a 988 partner, we provide existing crisis services locally while also taking 988 calls and texts. As a partner, we are here to support the goal that service users are able to connect to a responder in their local community.

988 is a 24/7 service. DCGT responders provide service via phone 24/7 and text 4pm-1am, daily.

14,348 Total interactions (# of Text, # of Calls)

- 13,520 of these interactions were during our Talk Suicide partnership (Jan-Oct 2023)
- 828 of these interactions were from the 988 partnership (Nov-Dec 2023)

Talk Suicide (13520 total interactions)

- 8,294 (61% of total interactions) said 'yes' to having thoughts of suicide
- 7,148 (53% of total interactions) said 'yes' to having thoughts of suicide in the last 2 months
- 1,096 (13% of those who had thoughts of suicide) said 'yes' to having a current plan for suicide

2023 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

9-8-8 SUICIDE CRISIS HELPLINE Continued

- 321 suicide plans were safely disabled
- 386 emergency interventions were completed
- 5,411 (40% of total interactions) inferred or stated an increased ability to cope
- 70 follow up calls were arranged/completed

988 (828 total interactions)

- 490 reported thoughts of suicide
- 20 Crisis interventions completed
- 9 follow up calls were arranged/completed

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. In 2023, DCGT was invited to provide mental health presentations that led to a number of consultation requests. These included case consultation, protocol/ policy review, program development, volunteer management and participation on advisory panels.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

City of Toronto
Ministry of Health
Public Health Agency of Canada
Region of Peel
United Way Greater Toronto

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Valentia Lee-Brotherton
Vivian Ene
Woodlands Community School

Distress Centres of Greater Toronto



Statement of Operations

For the year ended December 31, 2023

	2023	2022
Revenues		
Fee for service	\$ 666,729	\$ 395,940
Fund development	634,467	828,289
United Way Greater Toronto	519,342	518,345
Provincial grants	328,014	335,970
Municipal grants	254,873	380,617
Other revenue	50,742	31,631
Federal grants	39,094	321,782
	2,493,261	2,812,574
Expenses		
Salaries and benefits	1,938,931	1,895,111
Systems and telecommunications	244,890	273,539
Office, general and administration	90,130	107,276
Accounting, audit and legal	56,735	44,945
Fundraising expenses	38,670	40,734
Insurance	30,293	30,731
Program and volunteer related	27,841	43,888
Repairs and maintenance	10,325	29,067
Building occupancy	4,567	33,688
Amortization	2,990	1,495
Marketing and communications	1,235	116,244
	2,446,607	2,616,718
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ 46,654	\$ 195,856

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

THANK YOU

Our 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.

Our Vision

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

CONTACT



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of Greater Toronto

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