



Distress Centres
of Greater Toronto

Annual Report



2024

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 2024:

- In 2023, we supported over 127,000 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



2024 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES

DCGT recorded over 127,000 helping interactions in 2024.

408 Helpline	Calls Answered	19,495
Multilingual Lines	Calls Answered	20,333
Partnership Lines	Calls Answered	1,433
9-8-8	Text & Voice Interactions	12,380
Tele Check	Calls Placed	44,901
Touching Base	Calls Placed	17,294
CRP	Calls Placed	10,302
SSP	Helping Interactions	1,550

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 or postvention.

- 74% of callers were provided with emotional support and distress management
- Approximately 10% of callers were provided with mental health support
- Approximately 29% of service users reported a decrease in isolation and loneliness
- Approximately 34% of service users reported reduced emotional intensity
- 919 calls included a suicide risk assessment
- 159 calls involved some level of crisis intervention
- 13 calls resulted in 911 intervention/active rescue

2024 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSIONS 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: 69%
- Self-esteem/self-worth: 46%
- Relationships: 39%
- Isolation: 38%
- Bereavement/loss: 11%
- Cultural Issues: 11%
- Anger Management: 1,174 (9%)
- Caregiver Issues: 406 (3%)

CALL OUTCOMES

- Decrease in social isolation and loneliness: 59%
- Decrease in distress and anxiety: 30%
- Increased ability to cope: 27%
- Self esteem/self control/or confidence improved: 10%
- Action plan explored: 7%
- Reminder of those in the circle of trust: 5%
- Increased knowledge of resources/referral to appropriate resources: 2%

2024 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSIONS 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.

- 370 Clients served
- 4,4901 Calls
- 7,743 volunteer hours

"Some days, your call is the one thing that keeps me going. I don't have many friends here in Canada, most of my family is back in India. You've brought light into my life when I needed it most, and I'll always be grateful for that."

"I've had so many good conversations with different volunteers. Being able to share what's on my mind makes a big difference. It's helpful just knowing someone is there. Please don't ever stop. These calls are truly invaluable."

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.

- 222 Clients served
- 17,294 Calls
- 4,428 Volunteer hours

"I'm so grateful for the volunteers who choose to be here, even on holidays. Knowing someone takes the time to check in with me means more than I can say. I think about the past volunteers who used to call me; their care has stayed with me."

2024 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.

- 134 Clients served
- 10,032 Calls
- 1,098 Volunteer hours

"Every morning, I wait by the phone hoping to hear from you. Your calls give structure to my day — sometimes I don't even take my medication or eat until after we've spoken. These conversations are more than just check-ins — they help me feel seen and valued. Knowing someone cares enough to call makes a real difference in how I face the day."

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 we continued to grow. We returned to an in-person suicide loss event to recognize the International Survivors of Suicide loss Day, which was attended by over 100 participants. Over the past year we developed new partnerships with organizations in Peel to deliver suicide loss programming to survivors of suicide loss identified as youth.

- 1,550 Helping Interactions
- 407 Unique Program Participants
- 2,815 Volunteer Hours

"Thank you for taking me (and us) through these weeks with care and compassion. Your calm demeanors and ability to draw out what's needed to be drawn out, is rare. You have so graciously given us the gift of your journey as a beacon for ours. I appreciate you so much."

2024 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

PARTNERSHIP LINES (CRISIS LINK, PARO, EMS, CAMH and 988)

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.

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.

2024 PROGRAM RESULTS AND SUCCESSES CONTINUED

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 2024, 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
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Please Note: We are truly grateful for all donations under \$500 as well. However, we do not have the room to list everyone here. Thank you to all for your support.

STAY CONNECTED ALL YEAR LONG

Please follow us on social media for up to date information on all our happenings!

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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