



Impact Report

# Distress Centres of Greater Toronto

Strengthening Support. Expanding Reach. Saving Lives.

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# Letter from the Chair and Executive Director

Since our founding in 1967, DCGT has supported tens of thousands of people through some of the most difficult moments of their lives. At the heart of this work are our volunteers—individuals who step forward, time and again, to offer compassion, presence, and hope when it is needed most. They give the very best of themselves so that someone else might find their way to a better place, even if only for a moment.

This is humanity at its finest. And it remains the foundation of everything we do.

As we approach our 60th year, we are reflecting on our vision: to be a leader in providing resilience and hope through innovative crisis and mental health support. Leadership, for us, is not a static achievement—it is an ongoing commitment to challenge ourselves, to question our assumptions, and to continuously improve. We are all stewards of DCGT, with a shared responsibility to strengthen our impact in meaningful, measurable ways. That means staying curious, being self-reflective, and always striving to serve more people, more effectively.

In 2025, we were honoured to be recognized as one of Canada's Top 100 Charities—the only crisis centre included. This distinction reflects not only our operational integrity and transparency, but also the confidence that donors and partners place in our work and our future.

Our focus on continuous improvement is translating into real impact. Over the past year, we achieved a 48% increase in calls answered on our 408 helpline, a 7% increase in calls answered through the 988 National Suicide Crisis Helpline, and a 13% increase in fund development revenue. In fact, 2025 marked the most successful fundraising year in our history—a powerful vote of confidence in our mission and momentum.

This year was also marked by profound loss. In December, we said goodbye to a dear friend and colleague, Alex Shendelman, Manager of our Survivor Support Program. Over his 20 years with DCGT, Alex touched thousands of lives. He was a world-class listener—patient, non-judgmental, and deeply present. For Alex, the person in front of him was always the centre of his universe. He embodied the very essence of DCGT and helped build a survivor support model that will continue to guide us for years to come.

In 2026, we will honour Alex's legacy by revitalizing the Survivor Support Program, incorporating his insights and vision into its future. We are also launching a new inbound quality program to strengthen and measure the impact of every interaction, and we will continue to deepen our engagement with volunteers through recognition and community-building efforts.

To our volunteers, staff, and Board members: thank you. Your dedication improves the lives of thousands in our community every day. We are on a shared journey to expand our impact. Like any meaningful journey, progress is not always linear—but with each step, we move forward.

To our donors and funders: your generosity makes this work possible. We are deeply grateful for your trust and remain committed to earning it every day through accountability, transparency, and results.

Sincerely,

Mark Sklar, Chair



Robert Ridge, Executive Director



# A Message of Impact



In 2025, the Distress Centres of Greater Toronto (DCGT) experienced one of the most impactful years in our history. Through innovation, operational improvements, and an unwavering commitment to community care, we strengthened our ability to meet growing demand – ensuring more individuals in crisis had someone to turn to.

Every call answered, every volunteer trained, and every system improved represents a life touched. This report reflects not only what we achieved, but how we are building a stronger, more sustainable future for mental health and suicide prevention.

## Impact at a Glance

**54%**

increase in Toronto Distress Line activity compared to 2024

**374**

volunteers trained to support individuals in crisis

**39%**

experienced reduced loneliness and isolation

**97%**

of callers reported appreciating the support received

**71%**

of callers are calmer or content at the end of their call

**26%**


reported decreased distress or anxiety


These numbers represent more than data. They reflect real people finding relief, connection, and hope.

# Meeting the Moment


## Service Delivery & Reach

DCGT's crisis and distress services continued to play a vital role across the Greater Toronto Area, offering 24/7, barrier-free emotional support to individuals facing:

 Loneliness and social isolation

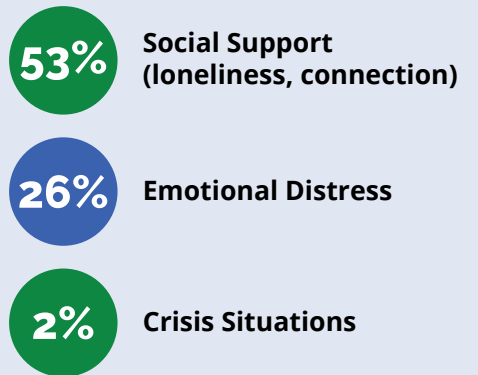
 Anxiety and depression

 Interpersonal challenges

 Crisis and suicidal ideation

Our services are grounded in compassionate listening, trauma-informed care, and early intervention, ensuring individuals receive support before situations escalate.

## What People Are Calling About



## Top Concerns Identified

Interpersonal issues: 47%

Mental health: 27%

Physical health: 10%

Abuse/violence: 6%

Suicide-related: 4%

This highlights a critical truth: most people reach out before crisis – and that early support is lifesaving.



# A Human Impact

## The Power of One Conversation

*See, even now, after talking for so long, I wanna thank you.  
You saved me... my kids need me.*

Moments like this define our work. A single conversation can shift perspective, restore hope, and save a life.

## Strengthening Our Foundation

### The Power of One Conversation

Volunteers are the heart of DCGT.

In 2025, we made significant investments to improve how we train, support, and retain them, ensuring they are equipped to provide high-quality care.



### Key Advancements

- Redesigned training program with asynchronous learning modules
  - Enhanced live sessions to focus on practical skills and real-world scenarios
  - Introduced Volunteer Info Sessions to improve candidate readiness
  - Reduced staff delivery time by 50%, increasing efficiency
  - Trained 374 volunteers, expanding our capacity
- These changes created a smoother, more supportive learning journey while allowing staff to focus on mentorship and skill development.

## Enhancing the Volunteer Experience

Through research and engagement, we identified key areas volunteers value most:

Connection with peers

Clear understanding of impact and programs

Consistent, actionable feedback

Meaningful recognition



# What We Did

Increased volunteer engagement events (in-person & virtual)

Strengthened community through social and skill-building opportunities

Launched initiatives to improve feedback and coaching systems

Began development of a new Quality Assurance (QA) program



## Looking Ahead

Our upcoming QA program will provide:

- Structured feedback and coaching
- Data-driven performance insights
- Consistent skill development pathways

This ensures volunteers feel confident, supported, and continuously improving.

# Operational Excellence & Innovation

2025 marked a major step forward in modernizing our systems and operations.

## Technology & Systems

- Implemented Genesys Cloud to enhance service delivery
- Optimized Better Impact volunteer platform
- Redesigned call reporting systems for clearer insights and consistency

## Impact of These Changes

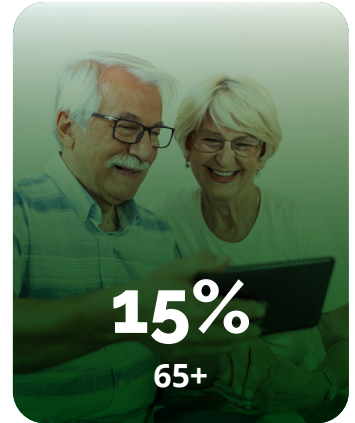
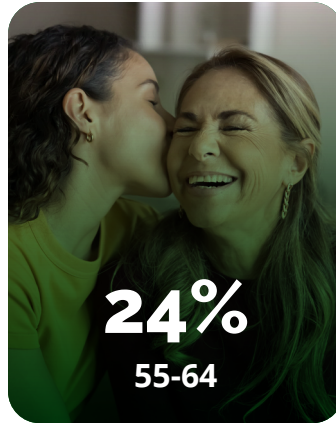
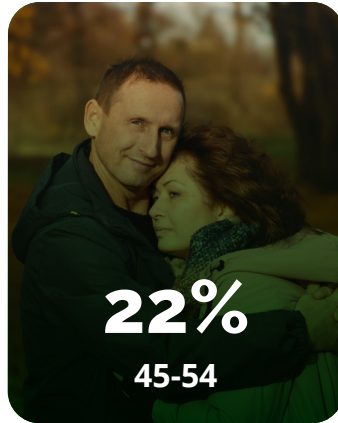
- Reduced administrative burden
- Improved service quality and consistency
- Enhanced data-driven decision-making
- Strengthened volunteer coordination

These improvements allow us to scale sustainably without compromising care.

# Who We Serve

Our data reflects a diverse community seeking support

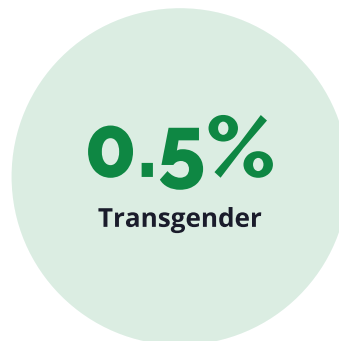
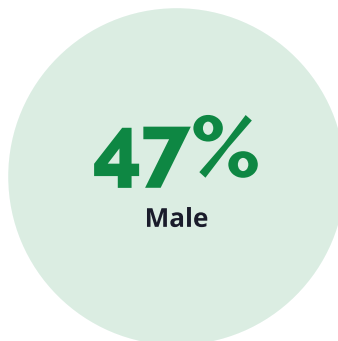
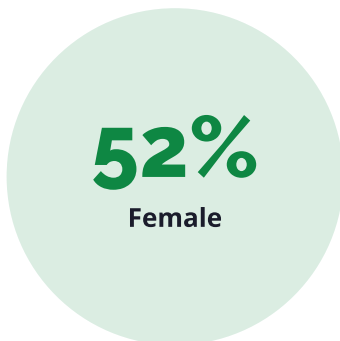
## Age Demographics



## Caller Profile



## Gender & Identity



This highlights both trust in our services and the ongoing need for accessible mental health support.

# How We Help

## 408-Helpline & Multilingual Distress Lines

In 2025, DCGT's 408-Helpline and Multilingual Distress Lines continued to serve as vital lifelines for individuals experiencing crisis, emotional distress, and social isolation. Through compassionate, non-judgmental support, responders provided emotional support, suicide prevention services and crisis intervention to individuals navigating some of life's most difficult moments.

DCGT's Multilingual Distress Lines continued to play a critical role in reducing barriers to care by providing culturally responsive support in eight languages. Together, these services ensured more individuals could access meaningful support, feel heard, and connect with the resources they need.



## Impact at a Glance

**42,588**

Total Helping Interactions

**16,679**

Total Volunteer Hours

408 - Helpline

**28,813**

Helping Interactions

Multilingual Distress Lines

**13,775**

Helping Interactions

The impact of this work is best reflected in the voices of those we support:

*"The volunteer I spoke with didn't rush me or try to fix everything. They simply listened and gave me space to share what I was carrying. Sometimes that's exactly what a person needs."*

This reflection highlights the profound impact of compassionate listening—how connection, empathy, and support can provide comfort and stability during moments of crisis.

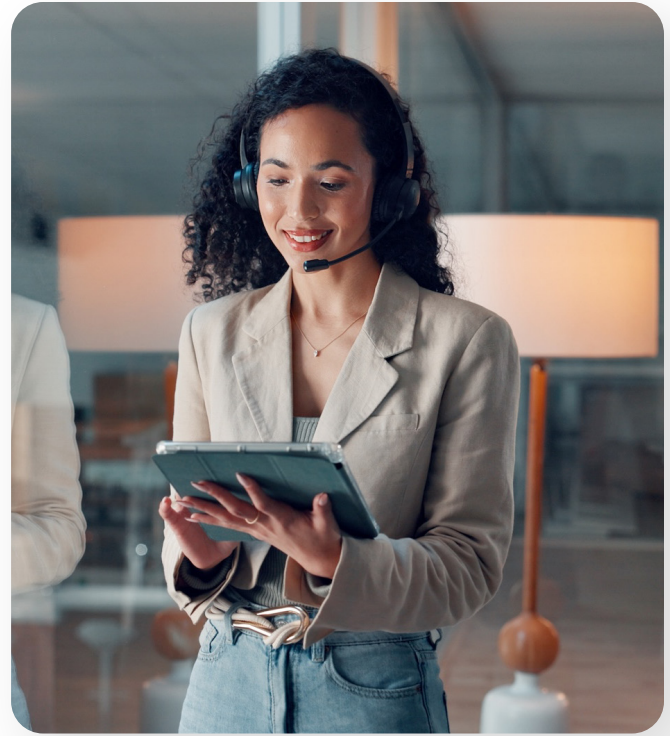
Through continued dedication and accessibility, the 408-Helpline and Multilingual Distress Lines remain a vital part of DCGT's commitment to ensuring no one faces difficult moments alone.



## 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline Partnership

In 2025, DCGT continued to play a vital role in suicide prevention through its partnership with Canada's 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline. Through free, 24/7 call and text support, trained responders provided immediate assistance to individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts, emotional distress, and crisis.

As demand for suicide prevention services continued to grow, helping interactions increased by 17% year over year. Through compassionate, non-judgmental conversations, responders helped individuals navigate moments of crisis, reduce feelings of isolation, and reconnect with hope, safety, and support.



### Impact at a Glance

**14,440**

Helping Interactions

**10,777**

Volunteer Hours

The voices of those we support remind us of the life-changing importance of timely intervention:

*"I was overwhelmed and didn't know who to talk to. Being able to speak with someone who listened without judgment made a bigger difference than I can put into words. That conversation helped me get through the night."*

This feedback reflects the life-changing impact of timely intervention—how compassionate support in moments of crisis can help individuals feel safe, supported, and connected to hope. Through this critical partnership, DCGT continues to strengthen its commitment to suicide prevention, ensuring that life-saving support is available whenever it is needed most.

# Survivor Support Program

In 2025, our Survivor Support Program continued to provide a safe, peer-supported space for individuals navigating the profound impact of suicide and homicide loss. Through compassionate, mentored support, participants were able to identify, explore, and begin processing the complex emotions that follow sudden loss.



## Impact at a Glance

**1,581**

Helping Interactions

**412**

Unique Program Participants

**2,750**

Volunteer Hours

This past year marked meaningful growth for the program. We successfully hosted another in-person event for International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, welcoming over 100 participants who came together in community, remembrance, and healing.

At the heart of this work are the lived experiences that shape and sustain our community:

*"In 2007, my 17-year-old daughter took her life. She had been struggling emotionally. I too had suffered from depression – this was the tipping point in my life.*

*When I returned home from the hospital after a two-week stay, I began sessions with two kind and supportive volunteers from the Suicide Support Program (SSP). They made me feel seen, heard, and valued, and helped me rediscover a sense of purpose.*

*I have since been volunteering with SSP for twelve years. I have gone from surviving to thriving, thanks to those two volunteers who were there for me at the worst time in my life."*

Stories like this reflect the lasting impact of peer support – how compassion, connection, and shared understanding can not only help individuals heal, but empower them to give back and support others on their journey.

Through continued growth and community connection, the Suicide Support Program remains a vital part of DCGT's commitment to supporting individuals beyond crisis: offering care, understanding, and a path forward after loss.



## Outbound Programs

In 2025, DCGT's Outbound Programs—including TeleCheck for Seniors, Touching Base, and the Caller Reassurance Program—continued to provide proactive, ongoing support to individuals experiencing social isolation, mental health challenges, and barriers to connection. Through regular scheduled check-in calls, participants received meaningful support that fostered safety, stability, and connection.

These services provided emotional support, safety monitoring, medication reminders, coping strategies, and referrals to community resources. For many participants, these consistent connections played a vital role in reducing loneliness, promoting wellbeing, and supporting independence.



## Impact at a Glance

**64,383**

Helping Interactions

**13,378**

Volunteer Hours

Every interaction represents a meaningful connection that helps reduce isolation and build reassurance:

| *"I'm old, alone; no one else calls me. The kindness I get through the phone is what keeps me going."*

This experience speaks to the power of connection—how small, consistent acts of care can profoundly strengthen someone's sense of belonging, wellbeing, and quality of life.

Through continued outreach and compassionate support, DCGT's Outbound Programs remain an essential part of our commitment to reducing isolation and strengthening community connection.

# Build for the Future

2025 was a year of transformation, but also preparation.



We are now positioned to:

- ♥ Grow volunteer capacity by 34%
- ♥ Expand reach within underserved communities
- ♥ Increase service efficiency and responsiveness
- ♥ Strengthen quality assurance and feedback systems

## 2026 Focus Areas

Scaling the 408 Distress Line  
(projected 26% growth)

Strengthening volunteer  
engagement and retention

Expanding language-based services

Enhancing service quality  
through QA implementation

## Our Commitment

At DCGT, we believe:

**No one should have to face their darkest moments alone.**

Every improvement we make, whether in training, technology, or volunteer experience, is rooted in that belief.

## Closing Reflection

The impact of our work cannot always be measured in numbers, but it is felt in every conversation, every moment of relief, and every life changed.

**In 2025, we didn't just grow, we strengthened our ability to care.**

And because of that, more people were heard.

More people felt supported.

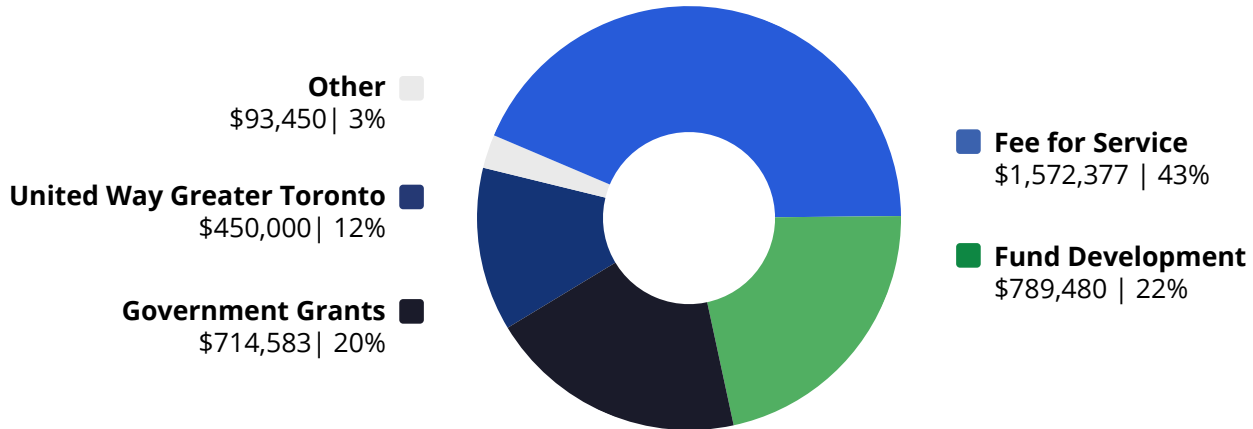
And more people found hope.



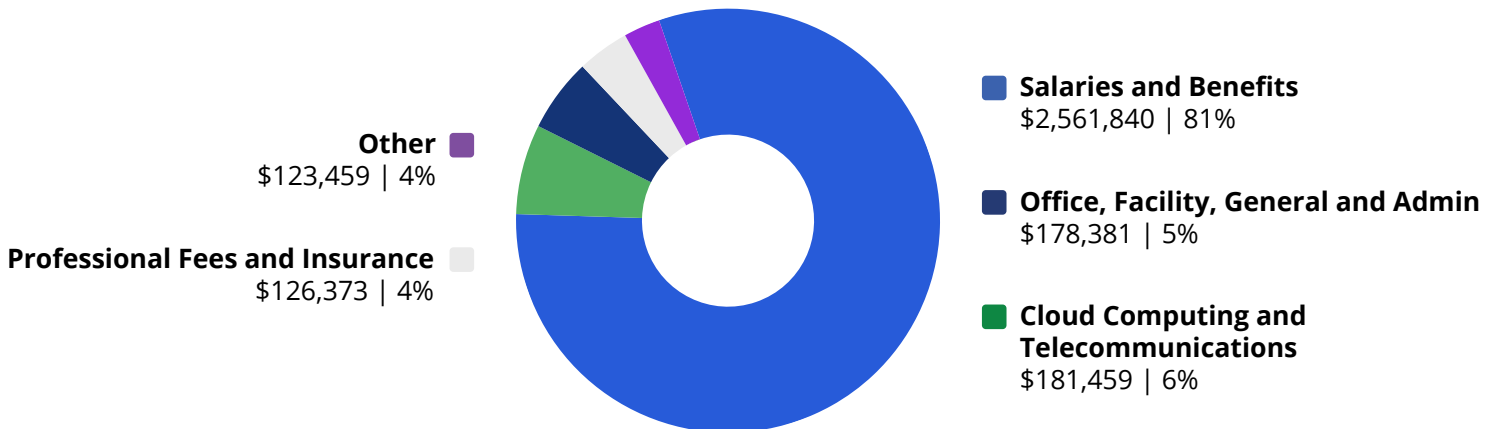
# Financials

Full set of audited financial statements are available on our website [dcoft.com](http://dcoft.com)

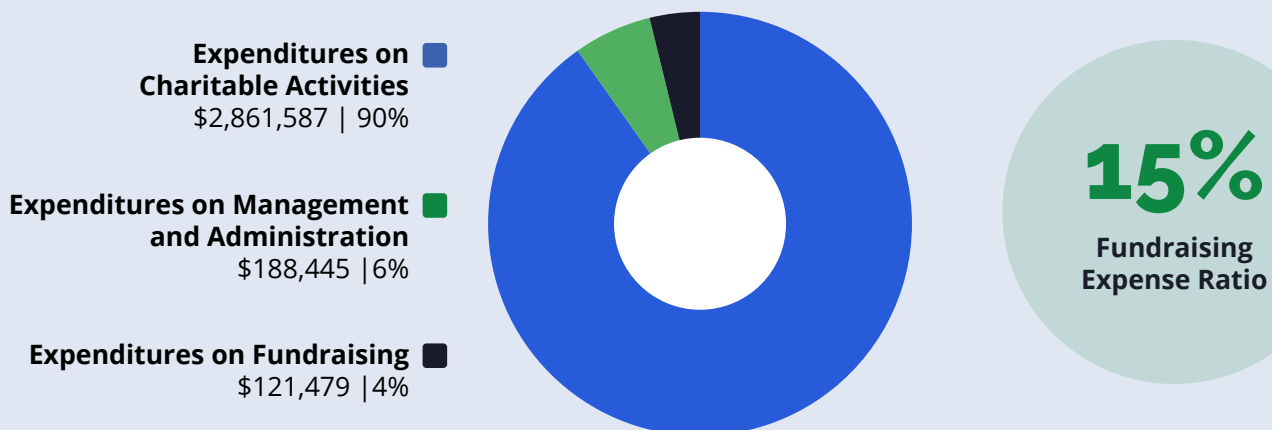
## Revenues



## Expenses



## Summary of Charitable Information Return



# Thank You to Our Funding Partners

City of Toronto

Public Health Agency of Canada

United Way Greater Toronto

Ministry of Health

Region of Peel

## Thank You to Our Donors

### Visionaries | \$25,000 to \$99,999

Metal Supermarkets

Taylor Family Foundation

Catherine & Maxwell Meighen  
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Ontario Trillium Foundation

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Bickle-Wilder Foundation

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### Champions | \$10,000 to \$24,999

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Raymond James Canada Foundation

Andrew Ferrone Memorial Fund

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Strategic Charitable Giving  
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(Toronto Foundation)

Michael Whitla Charitable  
Foundation

Andy & Beth Burgess Foundation

Robert & Joan Wright

Evald Torokvei Foundation

Michelle Natalie

McLean Foundation

Anonymous



## Advocates | \$2,000 to \$4,999

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Air Canada Foundation	Julie Medland	Gensler
Gail D'Eon	Rachel Barbeau	GWL Realty
Connor Natalie Memorial Golf Tournament	Maryann Curtis	Commercial Realty
Sean Purcell	Cadillac Fairview - Toronto Eaton Centre	QuadReal
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Chris Hales	Oxford	Brookfield
B & B Hamilton Foundation (Toronto Foundation)	Newmark	GBA Shared Services
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UJA Jewish Foundation of Toronto	Joe Almeida	CBRE
Starlight Group Property Holdings Inc.	Jones Lang Lasalle	Robert Campeau Family Foundation
Jeffrey Friedman	DPI Construction	Redpoll Foundation
	Epic Realty	Jackman Foundation

## Partners | \$1,000 to \$1,999

Cathy Bongard	Liuna! Local 183	Alison Gayle Percy
Liz Nucci	Pace Family Foundation	Du Sablon-Lank Family Foundation (Toronto Foundation)
Abby Fedosoff Memorial Fund	University of Toronto Faculty Association	Better Toronto Coalition Fund (Toronto Foundation)
Spicers Canada	George Brown College	Scott Walsh
Tanyss Price	James Stewart	Isberg Charitable Trust
Christine Blakely	Lorna Mc Kendry	Anonymous
Mark Sklar	Gift Funds Canada	
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## Friends | \$500 to \$999

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Kevin Haverty	Avi Cole	Fairmont Properties
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David Fickel	Aisa Shabani	Vasan Thuraiajah
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Diane Morgan	Jerry Barth	Caroline Crnekovic
Rogan Foundation	Arthur Cheng	Peter Miller
Martha Mallon Foundation	Timothy Skinner	Jayden Wong

## Thank you to Our Blue Bird Circle Monthly Donors

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Jennifer Cerini	Mikaeel Ghany	Udo & Margrit Kaul

**Please Note:** We are truly grateful for all donations under \$500 as well and those made anonymously through Canada Helps. However, our space is limited in this report. Thank you to everyone for your support.





**Distress Centres**  
of Greater Toronto

## 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.

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## Contact

### DCGT

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