

# Gerstein Crisis Centre



## Annual Report 2019-2020



# Letter From Our Leadership

Dear Friends,

The words ‘unprecedented’ and ‘change’ have defined the overall experience of 2020, and as the world continues to make seismic shifts towards equity, justice, healing and reparations, remembering milestones from 2019 is challenging. However, change, collaboration and connection are key words that do come to mind when reflecting on 2019/20.

## Change

In March, Covid-19 caused Toronto to go into lock down and Gerstein Crisis Centre acted quickly and creatively to maintain 24-hour access to services while keeping clients and staff safe. Our committed staff continued to come to work, and we increased capacity on the crisis lines. We created new choices for people to connect with us and offered virtual services to make sure we were still there for people when so much was closed (see Responding to COVID-19).

## Collaboration

In April 2019, “collaboration” was a major theme during our Board Retreat. We examined our role in the health system recognizing our strengths and examining where we need to influence change to better meet the needs of people who seek our support. The evolving and changing needs of the people who use our services painted a powerful picture of disconnection, isolation and increasing complexity. We identified collaboration, advocacy, and community development as key enablers to creating pathways and opportunities that improve equitable and low barrier access to services (see Quality Improvement Findings for Collaboration with Emergency Room).

## Connection

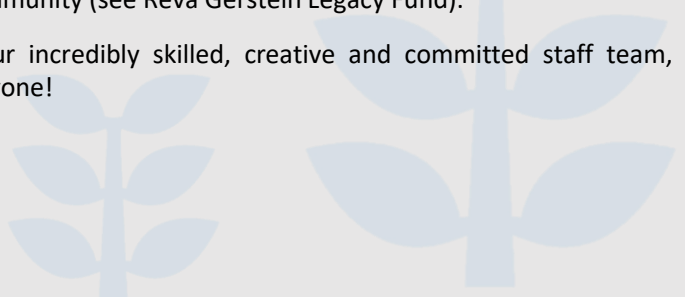
The mental health system was not built for everyone, and many continue to be harmed by persistent barriers and violence. Gerstein Crisis Centre continues to be committed to social justice and equity in all that we do. In 2019-2020, we engaged Adobe Consulting to do a full organizational review so we can action our values and create an environment for equity to be prioritized in all our operations. We also refreshed our Mission, Vision and Values (see updated MVV). Speaking with folks who used our services they could not have been clearer that they value being treated “like a person not a patient”, the ability to control the way their crisis gets dealt with, the nurturing, safe and soothing environments of the crisis beds and the respect, dignity and empathy the crisis workers show them in every interaction.

Gerstein Centre continues to take every opportunity to amplify the voices of people with lived experience, improving experiences when seeking service and ultimately supporting communities that promote well-being. The Reva Gerstein Legacy Fund provides us with the unique opportunity to provide seed money to survivors to work on projects that promote their own recovery and strengthen the survivor community (see Reva Gerstein Legacy Fund).

Finally, Gerstein Crisis Centre is extremely grateful for our incredibly skilled, creative and committed staff team, volunteers and Board of Directors. A huge thank you to everyone!

Sincerely,

*Christina Foisy*      and      *Susan Davis*  
Board Chair                      Executive Director



# Gerstein by Numbers



25,691  
Crisis Calls



1,948  
Crisis Visits



937  
House Stays



1,021  
Wellness &  
Recovery Group  
Sessions



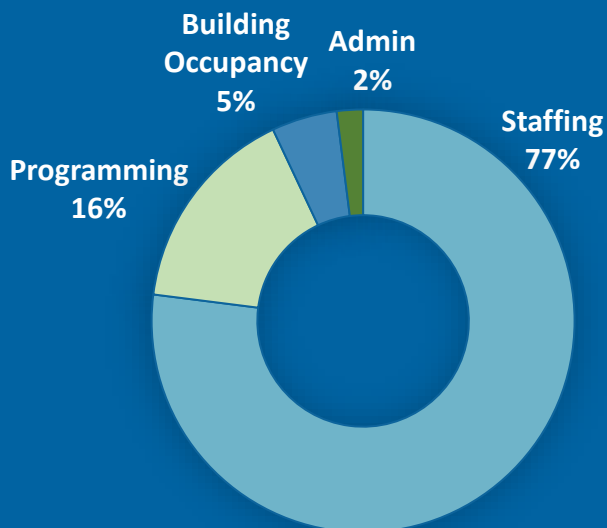
1,152  
Trained in Crisis  
& Suicide  
Intervention

## Revenue

Toronto Central LHIN **95%**

Foundation grants, donations,  
training revenue, City of Toronto,  
and other income **5%**

## Expenses



*If you would like a full copy of the 2019-20 Audited Financial Statements, please contact Pamela Rodgerson at [prodgerson@gersteincentre.org](mailto:prodgerson@gersteincentre.org) or (416) 929-0149 x226.*

# Pivot to Virtual: Responding to COVID-19



In Mid- March 2020, the City of Toronto experienced a lockdown due to COVID 19. Gerstein Crisis Centre provided access to 24-hour Crisis response throughout the closures however like many other services in the city, temporarily suspended some of it's "face to face" services. Our 24-hour crisis line remained open, and we increased capacity to respond to the high demand for services. Our phone calls increased by 100% during this lockdown period compared to the same period in the previous year.

Many of our service users were experiencing anxiety and social isolation which were exacerbated by the Pandemic. To respond to the need Gerstein Crisis Centre created new choices for individuals in crisis to get support. We created a Virtual Platform for Face-to-Face Visits and a Follow-up Support Service where a crisis worker would call the person in crisis to check in post the initial crisis call.

Within a couple of weeks of the lockdown we also started virtual recovery-based support groups for service users as well as front-line workers. The groups were in high demand. We heard from 119 Frontline Workers within the first week it was offered. A participant who attended the group for service users shared ***"The skills I learned in the sessions and the support I received helped me to cope more effectively with feelings of loneliness". A participant from the front-line workers group stated, "We've all been able to takeaway valuable lessons on self-reflection and coping strategies".***

In partnership with Davenport Perth Neighbourhood & Community Health Centre we began a group for Italian speaking participants and with Woodgreen Community Services we began a group for seniors. A participant from the Italian speaking group stated, ***"I was so happy and pleasantly surprised to connect via Zoom with other members of this group whom I was not able to connect with over the past few weeks".***

While seeing someone face to face remains the preferred way to interact, some people have really enjoyed being able to join a group from home and others have built their confidence learning the new software so they could connect with others. While we are happy now to be back to face-to-face mobile visits and to have reopened crisis beds, we think some of these virtual services will endure and will certainly be an important resource in any further lockdowns.



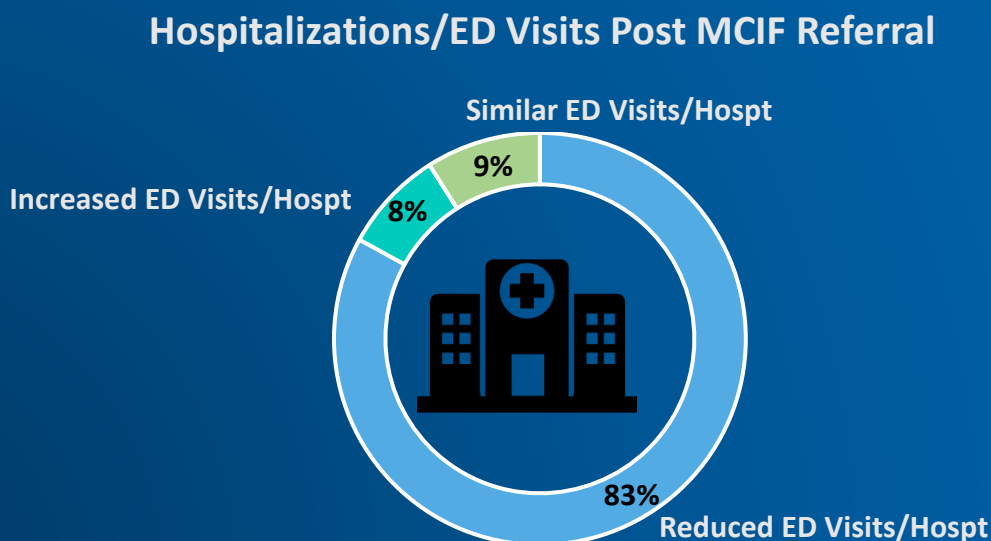
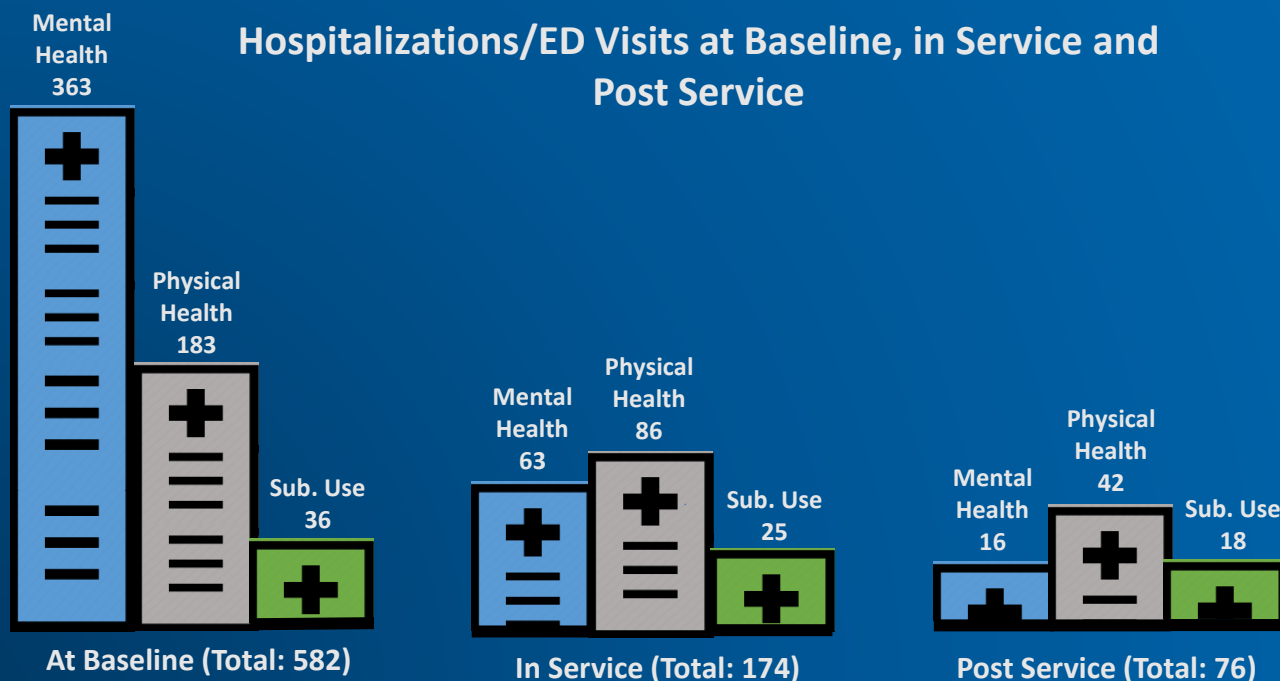


# Effective Collaboration

In response to calls for enhanced mobile crisis services in downtown Toronto, Gerstein Crisis Centre launched the **Mobile Crisis Intervention and Follow Up Team (MCIF)** in partnership with **St. Michael's Hospital and Street Outreach Services**.

Part of this project focused on reducing emergency room visits for individuals in crisis and showed some very promising results.

See the data in the graphs below to see how effective collaboration can make a difference.





# Mission, Vision & Values

Our Mission, Vision, and Values were updated including Board, Staff and the voices of people who use our services.



## Mission

To be an accessible source of support and recovery for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, work collaboratively to improve timely and equitable access to services, and be guided by the voices of people with lived experience and promote wellness, recovery, and psychiatric survivor/service user community initiatives and networks.



## Vision

People are connected to communities where they feel included and valued and have the resources they need and want to live safe, secure, and self-defined lives that are free of stigma and discrimination.



## Values

Respect, autonomy, dignity, diversity, social justice, equity, collaboration, and accountability are at the core of all we do. We value the whole person and acknowledge and respect their needs and wishes for recovery.



## Approach

We provide a community-based, non-medical, trauma informed, harm reduction approach to crisis that respects people's ability to define their own identity, experience, and goals.

# Reva Gerstein Legacy Fund

The Reva Gerstein Legacy Fund was established in 2007 through a generous gift from Reva Gerstein's sons. It honours their mother's significant contributions to the mental health community and her interest in education, research and other projects that celebrate the independent spirit of the survivor community.

In 2019, the fund supported several initiatives including recovery-based education groups through the Ontario Peer Initiative, A-WAY food project, Mad Pride BBQ, Parkdale Green thumb Initiative, South Asian Poetry Project, Ink Well Writer's Collective, and a few visual arts projects including film. Congratulations to the successful applicants and thank you for the great work.



**Reva Gerstein, C.C., O.Ont.,  
Ph.D., LL.D.**

# We gratefully acknowledge, with thanks, the foundations and key donors supporting our work:

Bertrand Gerstein Family  
Foundation  
PayPal Giving Fund  
Philip Smith Foundation  
Rotman Family Foundation

Ontario Power Generation  
Employees' & Pensioners' Charitable  
Trust  
Jackman Foundation  
ECHO Foundation

Special thanks to **Q30 designs inc.** who reviewed and updated our website to make it AODA compatible and accessible to all.  
Please visit [www.gersteincentre.org](http://www.gersteincentre.org)



...and to the hundreds of individuals who have generously given to Gerstein Crisis Centre over the past year.

**We appreciate your support!**

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Our Links  
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 [Gersteincentre.org](http://Gersteincentre.org)

Charitable Registration # 13058 6522 RR001